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AND NORTHERN IRELAND
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HER MAJESTY QUEEN ELIZABETH II

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THE PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES

OFFICIAL REPORT

IN THE SECOND SESSION OF THE FIFTIETH PARLIAMENT OF THE UNITED KINGDOM OF GREAT BRITAIN AND NORTHERN IRELAND
[WHICH OPENED 25 JUNE 1987]

THIRTY-SEVENTH YEAR OF THE REIGN OF
HER MAJESTY QUEEN ELIZABETH II

SIXTH SERIES **VOLUME 143**

SECOND VOLUME OF SESSION 1988-89

House of Commons

Monday 5 December 1988

The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

MESSAGE FROM THE QUEEN

QUEEN'S SPEECH (ANSWER TO ADDRESS)

Mr. Michael Neubert (The Vice-Chamberlain of Her Majesty's Household) reported Her Majesty's Answer to the Address as follows:

I have received with great satisfaction the loyal and dutiful expression of your thanks for the Speech with which I opened the present Session of Parliament.

Oral Answers to Questions

WALES

Housing Waiting Lists

1. **Mr. Alan W. Williams:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will give the number of people on the housing waiting list in (1) Carmarthen district and (2) Wales for 1979 and at the latest available date.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Wales (Mr. Ian Grist): Information on the number of people on housing waiting lists is not held centrally.

Mr. Williams: Why will the Government not provide us with that information? Are they covering up and deliberately withholding embarrassing information? Does the Minister agree with the housing organisations SHAC and Shelter that the estimated number of homeless people in Wales has doubled since 1979, and that more than 6,000 families and single people are now homeless?

Is the Minister aware that 2,000 people are on the housing waiting list in the Carmarthen district? The Government's policies do not allow the district council to build houses even though it wants to do so. Why are the Government so heartless and irresponsible towards the homeless?

Mr. Grist: The hon. Gentleman does the Government an injustice with his first question. The figures are produced by different authorities in different ways and are not comparable. That has been so for a long time. Indeed, local authorities prefer to produce their own figures in their own way.

During the past two years 61 local authority houses and 398 private houses have been built in the Carmarthen district, compared with 35 and 187 respectively during the last two years of the Labour Government.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: What estimates does my hon. Friend have for additional rented accommodation that will come on to the housing market as a result of the new Housing Act?

Mr. Grist: We expect that a great deal of money will be made available through various means—for example, pension funds, insurance companies, housing associations and others—to expand the private and public rented sectors for socially rented housing.

Mr. Anderson: Is it not daft that no central figures are available so that the Welsh Office can assess the overall need? Will the Minister consider with some humility the figures for Swansea, where more than 4,000 people are on the waiting list—a three-year high—where there has been no new build because of Government policies and where there is a reducing housing stock because of council house sales? Is he aware that increasing numbers of people are falling behind with their mortgage payments and are having their houses repossessed? They look to the council

to provide them with houses, but it cannot do so. What advice does the Minister give the council in those circumstances?

Mr. Grist: The hon. Gentleman should be aware that there is new build in his city. His council should find the means to use flexibly the powers that other councils use for new build. It is not true that there has been a fall in the housing stock because of the right to buy? The housing stock remains exactly where it was—it just happens to be owned by people who were previously its tenants. They have a stake in the hon. Gentleman's city that they never had before.

Nurses (Grading)

2. **Mr. Win Griffiths:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what representations he has received on the new grading structure for nurses.

Mr. Grist: I have received 11 letters from Members of Parliament, a trade union, individual nurses, and members of the public.

Mr. Griffiths: Does the Minister acknowledge that, despite the total increase in funding available for the new wage settlement, the Government have made several strategic errors? First, in the pay review, they did not make any allowance for midwives' extra training. Secondly, they influenced health authorities, at least those in Wales, to review their own review of the pay structure. That has resulted in some nurses in the Mid-Glamorgan health authority area receiving altered forms giving their new gradings, and their gradings being reduced because of the cash limit imposed by the Welsh Office? Will the Welsh Office confirm that such an exercise did take place and that Mid-Glamorgan had to reduce the gradings that were offered to many of its nurses?

Mr. Grist: First, all the demands that were made on the grading structure were met by the Government. There was no cut at all. Every penny was paid that was agreed by the grading structure. Secondly, the hon. Gentleman mentioned midwives. Of the midwifery sisters on G grade, 86·7 per cent. have a rise of £1,925 to £3,025, which is rather above that of charge sisters and those with whom they are compared. There has been a slight mistake in thinking that, under the agreements that were reached with the unions, midwives have actually been done down. They have not.

Sir Raymond Gower: What use has been made of the appeals procedure that was agreed by the various unions at the onset of this matter?

Mr. Grist: The appeals system has been started. Each health authority is organising it, according to the agreement that was originally reached. I urge all trade unions involved to abide by that, not least because a warning has been given by most health authorities that they will not consider appeals while people are striking and demonstrating. Quite reasonably, most hon. Members would agree.

Mr. Rogers: Does the Minister accept that severe problems are arising out of the regrading? However the grades were set out, and however fair they might appear, the allocations within grades are creating anomalies. Many people, particularly those on lower grades, have received pennies in rises, not the pounds that the hon. Gentleman is talking about. Will the Government look at that matter? Will they remember that the appeals procedure is so long-winded that few appeals have been heard in Mid-Glamorgan?

Mr. Grist: The hon. Gentleman should appreciate—I hope that he will pass this on to others—that the appeals procedure should be carried out with good will. There is no intention of doing anybody down. Nobody is being paid pence. Nursing auxiliaries on A grade are getting a rise of between £435 and £445 a year. That is the very bottom level. Many nurses and staff have been somewhat misled about what to expect and about what they will receive in their pay packets any day now.

Sir Anthony Meyer: Is it not a fact that the overwhelming majority of nurses are getting substantial rises, many well in excess of £1,000 a year? Would not almost every profession in the public service regard such rises as very generous?

Mr. Grist: The rises are not merely remarkable—rises of 45 per cent. in real terms, on average, since the Government came to power—but they compare quite astoundingly with the 20 per cent. real fall in value under the Labour Government.

Mr. Michael: The figures sound nice, but, as the Minister has given such inadequate answers to hon. Members, will he answer a nurse who has written to me? She asks:

"Where is the 18 per cent. rise the nurses are supposed to have had? As one of the NHS nurses I can assure you I have had 4 per cent. along with the majority in Cardiff royal infirmary."

She goes on:

"We feel that Maggie Thatcher or the south Glamorgan health authority"—

[Interruption.] She went on to state that she felt that the Prime Minister

"or the south Glamorgan health authority has trampled on the nursing profession yet again."

We know who is trampling on the nurses. Will the Minister answer her?

Mr. Grist: I am happy to congratulate my neighbour on his new position, but I cannot congratulate him on his question. Even if his correspondent were to have received the 4·2 per cent. rise, she would have had a rise of about £500 a year. She would have been at the top of her grade. The lady who wrote to the hon. Gentleman should wait until she gets the next pay settlement. Perhaps she will be surprised.

Rural Housing

3. **Mr. Livsey:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he has any plans to provide housing for local people in rural Wales?

Mr. Grist: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State has announced an increase to £1 million in the funds available to local authorities in rural areas with a high concentration of second homes to purchase homes for sale or rent to local people. Housing for Wales will devote a substantial proportion of its development programme to rural areas, as the Housing Corporation has already done in Wales.

Mr. Livsey: Will the Minister acknowledge that £1 million is wholly inadequate to tackle the problem, but merely acknowledges that there is a problem? It will provide only 50 houses at £20,000 each, and it is impossible to find a house at that price in rural Wales. It is impossible for local people either to buy or rent them. Does the Minister agree that there should be a crash programme of building of affordable housing for first-time buyers and for those in the rented sector? In the Brecknock area 1,000 people are on the housing list, and in Crickhowell alone there are 100. Urgent action is needed. Will the Minister join me in calling for a housing forum in rural Wales next summer, and will he come to it?

Mr. Grist: The hon. Gentleman has put his finger on one aspect that he might like to explore further, and that is that his local authority should be more flexible and adventurous in the use of its powers. I was disappointed the other day when his planning officer made it clear that the authority seemed to have underestimated the powers which the various Acts had given him. If the local authority used the money available, mixed it with private money and worked with Housing for Wales, it could provide many more houses for rent than it may appreciate.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: When representatives of Pembroke council come to see my hon. Friend, will he bear in mind proposals for a rural housing initiative, similar to that already introduced for the Valleys by our right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales? Will he point out to rural authorities that in many cases their restrictive planning policies are stopping derelict buildings from being brought back into use because of the conditions that they impose on those who occupy such buildings?

Mr. Grist: I hope that that will not be the case, but I agree that we would be sympathetic to an approach from any local authority that wishes to be designated under this scheme.

Dr. Thomas: Will the Minister join me in condemning all forms of violent action allegedly on the issue of housing problems in Wales? Will he consider the need for a concerted housing policy which takes account of the needs both of those who wish to purchase property and those who wish to rent it? Does he realise that his Department, by failing to have an integrated policy, is contributing to the housing crisis? Will he look to England, where the work of the rural development organisations with the housing associations has produced a much more coherent policy than has the Welsh Office?

Mr. Grist: Housing for Wales understands—as the Housing Corporation before it did—the differences between Wales and England, in that 25 per cent. of the funding was invested in rural areas of Wales as opposed to England, so England has a long way to go to catch up with our record on that. The hon. Gentleman referred to the stupid but mainly criminal activities of certain individuals or groups. They do immense damage to the good name of Wales, they harm the cause which their perpetrators purport to support and they are wholly foreign to the peaceable welcoming attitude of most Welsh people. I am glad to have his support.

Mr. Raffan: In order to increase the supply of start-up homes for local people in Wales, will my hon. Friend discuss with housing associations the introduction of a building and selling at cost policy, provided that land can be made available at a reasonable price? Is he aware that under such a policy the difference between the cost and market value of a property, if sold on to an outsider, can be retained by the housing association to generate yet more low-cost housing?

Mr. Grist: Entry into low-cost home ownership through such flexible methods is exactly what we seek to encourage, and Housing for Wales will be taking a similar line. We hope that local authorities will join in this programme.

Local Authority Associations

4. **Mr. Murphy:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales when he last met representatives of local authority associations in Wales; and what topics were discussed.

The Secretary of State for Wales (Mr. Peter Walker): I met representatives of the Welsh Counties Committee and the Committee of Welsh District Councils at a meeting of the Welsh Consultative Council on Local Government Finance on 24 October. The main topics discussed were the provision of Welsh rate support grant settlement for 1989-90, the 1988 report of the grant distribution sub-group, the Rate Support Grants Act 1988, provision for community charge preparation costs, and the consultation paper on capital expenditure and finance.

Mr. Murphy: Why will the Secretary of State not listen to district councils in Wales, which have told him that his capital allocations for the implementation of the poll tax fall well short, by many millions of pounds, of the amount required and which are, in any event, loans, the repayment of which will place a great burden on future community tax payers in Wales? Does the Secretary of State not realise that the money would be better spent on reducing housing waiting lists, improving school building and helping to improve road systems? When will he admit that the poll tax is an imposition on the people of Wales and is deeply resented by all who live there?

Mr. Walker: First, I congratulate the hon. Gentleman on his new appointment and wish him a long and happy life there. He mentioned the allowances for the poll tax. In fairness, if he speaks to the district councils, they will inform him that when they put forward their original proposals on revenue I not only listened to them but pointed out that I thought that they had not requested enough. They applied for more because they had made a mistake in their calculations, which I pointed out. No one could accuse me of not listening. I not only listened, but told them how they should change their applications. The capital assumptions will be reasonable. The total per head allocation in Wales compares favourably with what is being provided in England. I can understand differences of opinion on the poll tax, but the hon. Gentleman will find that many people in his constituency and elsewhere will be considerable beneficiaries from the change.

Mr. Morgan: What is the right question to produce the now standard Cabinet answer that Cardiff, like Edinburgh, is a flourishing city? In seeking to find out which question will produce that non-sequitur, I shall ask the Secretary of State whether he thinks that the

Chancellor's high interest rate policy will have a devastating effect on the efforts of local authorities in Wales to bring in industrial development.

Mr. Walker: The effect will be nowhere near as adverse as it would be if we returned to the level of inflation under the last Labour Government.

Roads (Expenditure)

5. **Mr. Knox:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what has been the total spending by central Government on roads in Wales since 1979; and how many miles of motorway and trunk roads have been laid since that year.

The Minister of State, Welsh Office (Mr. Wyn Roberts): Expenditure on the improvement and maintenance of trunk roads and motorways since 1979 exceeds £1 billion. In addition, over £290 million has been provided to Welsh local authorities as transport supplementary grant for improvement of their roads. Twenty-two miles of motorway and 112 miles of trunk road have been provided.

Mr. Knox: Does my hon. Friend expect that expenditure will remain at a high level during the coming year? Does he expect many new contracts to be let during that year?

Mr. Roberts: We expect expenditure on roads to remain at a high level. Twenty two miles of trunk road are under construction at an estimated cost of £290 million. We expect to let a contract for one scheme costing over £10 million before the end of the current financial year.

Mr. Gareth Wardell: Will the Minister give a guarantee that the M4 will be completed by 1992?

Mr. Roberts: The hon. Gentleman is aware that one section of the M4 to which we have yet to attend—the stretch between Baglan and Lonlas—will be attended to as soon as possible. We shall probably put the contract out in sections, starting next year.

Mr. Raffan: Does my hon. Friend agree that, for the Government's massive investment in the A55 to be cost effective, adequate access or link roads to the expressway must be constructed? Does he agree that such roads are top priority, and will he do his utmost to impress that point on Clwyd county council?

Mr. Roberts: I am well aware of the point that my hon. Friend is making and of his interest in the connecting roads in Clwyd. We are discussing road programmes with Clwyd county council and I shall ensure that his point is borne in mind.

Sheepmeat

8. **Mr. Geraint Howells:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he has any plans to visit Brussels to help secure the future of the European sheepmeat regime.

Mr. Peter Walker: I am well aware of the importance of sheep production to the rural economy and, in particular, to the hill and upland areas of Wales. I intend to play an active part in assisting my right hon. Friend the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food in the important negotiations on the review of the sheepmeat regime.

Mr. Howells: Is it not regrettable that the Government will not allow our Secretary of State, who has full responsibility for agriculture in the Community, to go to Brussels? However, there is one ray of hope—I am sure that the Secretary of State is aware of this—in that the French sheep breeders have at last seen sense and are keen to introduce a sheepmeat regime, similar to ours, in France. As the Secretary of State is responsible for our present sheepmeat regime, will he now go to Brussels to talk to the French and others to safeguard the present scheme?

Mr. Walker: I should be perfectly happy to go to Brussels and, indeed, may well go to Brussels—there is no difficulty about my going there. As a tolerably old hand at negotiations in Brussels, I advise the hon. Gentleman that there are considerable advantages in having one negotiator rather than two. However, there are also advantages—my right hon. Friend the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Foods agrees with this—in my being present and if for certain talks and negotiations in Brussels he would like me to be there, I shall certainly be there.

The position of French sheepmeat producers has changed from time to time over the years, but that of the French Government has not changed. So far in negotiations there is not much sign that the French Government are changing their view. What is vital is that a scheme emerges that will ensure that, if anything, we get better access to the European market for our sheep production; that there is no discrimination against United Kingdom producers; that the income, especially of sheep producers in the hill areas, is maintained at a sensible level so that they remain viable, and that any transitional changes will not create difficulties during the transition.

Mr. Ron Davies: Does the Secretary of State recognise that the present sheepmeat regime will do nothing to meet the estimated £200 million that will be lost to Welsh farmers this year as a result of the current high interest rates? Given the Secretary of State's reported speech to the Carlton club, when he referred to the Chancellor as "incompetent" because of the impact of high interest rates on industry, and if the Secretary of State is to represent the true interests of the people of Wales, does the right hon. Gentleman think that he has any honourable course of action other than resignation?

Mr. Walker: While I do not think that the hon. Gentleman will ever gain admission to the Carlton club, had he done so, and listened to my speech, he would have found that the version of my speech that appeared in *The Observer* was totally an invention of *The Observer*.

Mr. Barry Jones: May I, too, congratulate the right hon. Gentleman on the wide publicity that yesterday's press gave to his criticisms of the Chancellor of the Exchequer? We agree with him in that. In relation to sheepmeat, is the right hon. Gentleman aware that the Welsh farming fraternity want to see him in Brussels more often, standing his corner, fighting hard and being on guard against opportunistic continental farmers?

May I ask him, as our Agriculture Minister, what advice he is giving to the people of Wales on eggs and salmonella? Does he agree that the Under-Secretary of State for Health, the hon. Member for Derbyshire, South (Mrs. Currie), should be relieved of her office following her

careless remarks at the weekend? Is the Department of Health not worried and is the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food not rather complacent?

Mr. Walker: First, I congratulate the hon. Gentleman on his election to the shadow Cabinet. I am sure that we are all relieved that at long last the Labour party has a Welsh spokesman in the shadow Cabinet.

I should like to thank him also for his kind and generous remarks, which have given me great confidence in my negotiating skills when I go to Brussels. I am glad that the view of the Welsh farmers is that I would negotiate well on their behalf, and I am also glad that that view is so enthusiatically supported by the hon. Gentleman.

It is vital to get a good sheepmeat regime for the future, in the same way as we have had a good regime in the recent past. I have no reason to believe that we will not be successful in that endeavour.

Professional, Industrial and Commercial Programme

9. **Mr. Gwilym Jones:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many persons have benefited from the professional, industrial and commercial programme in Wales; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: I refer to the answer that I gave my hon. Friend the Member for Pembroke (Mr. Bennett) in March this year, when I said that some 6,800 individuals were receiving updating or retraining and that the past two years had seen a 40 per cent. increase in the number of PICKUP courses and a 100 per cent. increase in the number of students benefiting from those courses.

The programme continues to have considerable impact, and the numbers of persons benefiting are steadily increasing. A survey of short vocational courses in the public sector further and higher education establishments in England and Wales is being carried out and the results will be available in 1989.

Mr. Jones: I know from my hon. Friend's answer that he fully appreciates the importance of the PICKUP programme. Will he take this opportunity to say what more will be done in the future to promote it?

Mr. Roberts: We have spent about £380,000 promoting the PICKUP developments in 1987-88 and we expect to spend another £261,000 in 1988-89. We are certainly giving PICKUP courses a high priority in Wales. We have two full-time PICKUP development agents and their support staff are funded by the Welsh Office. Funds have been provided for every local authority higher education institution and university college to appoint a PICKUP co-ordinator. *[Interruption.]* I am sure that the entire House and Wales will have noted the hilarity with which the Opposition regard training and retraining in Wales.

Council House Rents

10. **Dr. Marek:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he has any plans to advise local councils to increase the rents of council tenants in Wales.

Mr. Grist: It is for local authorities to determine actual rent increases according to their own circumstances.

Dr. Marek: Does the Minister recognise that Wrexham Maelor borough council is a good, value-for-money oriented, efficient housing authority, with a good standard of repairs, low rents and a housing revenue account which stands on its own and is not subsidised by the general rates fund? That being so, why is the Minister threatening to make that local authority increase its council rents by, in effect, threatening to withhold housing benefits and thus risking the poor subsidising the poorer?

Mr. Grist: The hon. Gentleman must explain that to me, because, as I said in my answer, it is up to local authorities to set their own rent levels. That is so both under the present regime and under the regime that we propose to introduce.

Environmental Problems

11. **Mrs. Clwyd:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales whether he will make a statement on his priorities in dealing with environmental problems in Wales.

Mr. Peter Walker: Our aim is to prevent undue risks to human life and health, to protect the natural environment and to improve public amenity, particularly in those areas with the worst environments.

Mrs. Clwyd: Is the Secretary of State aware that one of the worst industrial polluters remaining in Britain is in the Cynon valley? Is he aware of the considerable anxiety felt by the local council and by local people because the company intends to introduce the mild heat treatment process, which it claims will improve the environment? Is the right hon. Gentleman aware that that process, which operates in Hamilton in Scotland only, has caused considerable environmental difficulties? Will he also confirm that planning permission is needed before the process is introduced in the Cynon valley?

Mr. Walker: I am fully aware of local feeling about pollution from the phurnacite plant. I gather that the worst of the remaining Disticoke batteries were closed down last week and will remain so permanently. I understand that that will bring about some immediate improvement.

The company's applications regarding its future methods will, of course, be a matter that the inspectorate must consider fully. If the method has been used elsewhere and has failed, obviously that will be within the knowledge of the inspectorate, which could then impose its views as to whether the proposed method is desirable.

The hon. Lady is aware that I have previously discussed this matter with her. There always has been a balance of view in the locality as to the importance of the jobs involved as opposed to the environmental situation created by the phurnacite plant. I have to seek the advice of the inspectorate on these matters and, obviously, to listen to the opinions of the local authority. I shall do that.

Mr. John: Does the right hon. Gentleman share my disappointment that the Queen's Speech contained no promise of legislation to impose tough controls on industrial polluters? Does he accept that, on the jobs front, our experience is that if firms want to produce, they will? If they do not, no amount of anxiety among local people about pollution will stop them. In the past nine years, no firm has ever given a damn about the well-being of the locality when trying to preserve jobs.

Mr. Walker: To take the example that we have just been discussing, shortly after I became Secretary of State I

discussed with the Coal Board what it intended to do about improving the environment. It had committed itself to a heavy capital investment programme to do that. I took that attitude to get both the improved environment and the jobs. A balance must always be struck, but I agree with the hon. Gentleman that the environmental consequences can have not only an adverse effect on the immediate locality but a long-term adverse effect on inward investment in the locality.

Mr. Barry Jones: Has the Department not failed to meet the challenge of the 30 per cent. Club, the importation of poisonous waste and the filthy condition of many of our beaches? Why should my frightened constituents see poisonous soil from Rotterdam dumped at the bottom of their gardens, and why should the citizens of Torfaen grow ever more apprehensive about the Rechem smokestack? Does the right hon. Gentleman plan to stop the import of poisonous waste into Wales? I remind him that the Karin B wanted to dock at Neath. We want an end to these matters.

Mr. Walker: As the hon. Gentleman will know from his ministerial experience, the disposal of waste is under strict independent and impartial control, and no waste that fails those controls can come into this country, be used in this country or have any application in this country.

On the state of the beaches and the water, I urge the hon. Gentleman to examine the capital investment programmes to improve the rivers, beaches and water systems of Wales that have taken place in the lifetime of this Government. We should compare that with the total stagnation in investment under the Labour Government.

Housing

12. **Mr. Flynn:** To ask the Secretary of Wales what action he has taken to ascertain the views of Welsh local authorities on the future of housing in Wales.

Mr. Grist: Local authorities have been extensively consulted about the Government's policy proposals, and I have regular discussions with local authorities in the forum of the Welsh Housing Consultative Committee.

Mr. Flynn: Does the Minister agree that, according to the new voting rules approved by the Government in the Housing Act 1988, the Labour party won the general elections of 1979, 1983 and 1987? That is especially true in Torbay, where non-voters are counted as having voted in favour of Government policy. The non-voters are the lazy, the apathetic, the sick and the dead. In Torbay, 2,200 voters were outvoted by 700. Is that not a breach of democracy as serious as the selective franchise, the 30-year Parliaments and the rotten boroughs of the previous century? The same thing is happening in Wales. Is the Minister on the side of democracy, or on the side of vote-rigging?

Mr. Grist: I think that I speak not only for this side of the House when I say that other hon. Members may believe that the hon. Gentleman and the Labour party know more about rotten boroughs than we have forgotten about them.

Wales Railway Centre

13. **Mr. Adley:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales when he intends to visit the Wales railway centre in Cardiff; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Walker: I wish to visit the centre. I am pleased that it has received financial support from various public bodies and that this has enabled good progress to be made with the project.

Mr. Adley: While thanking my right hon. Friend for that reply, and welcoming the efforts of Cardiff Bay development corporation and the local authorities in renovating south Cardiff, may I ask my right hon. Friend to take note of the fact that if the Wales railway centre is to achieve its objective it must maintain a rail link, not only with Cardiff city centre, but with the new heritage park in the Rhondda, which he has supported substantially, and with the Big Pit at Blaenavon? Will he ensure that that vital point is not lost as discussions proceed?

Mr. Walker: Given my hon. Friend's expertise on railways both here and overseas, I shall of course take careful note of his points.

Council House Rents

14. **Mr. Rowlands:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what his Department's latest estimate is of the amount of council house rent arrears since April; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Grist: The only figures held centrally on local authority rent arrears refer to the end of the financial year. Local authorities' projections for the end of 1988-89 are incomplete but currently stand at £5·3 million.

Mr. Rowlands: Is the Minister aware that there has been a dramatic increase in arrears since April—50 per cent. in some of the communities that I represent—mainly as a result of cuts in housing benefit? Does he agree that those cuts in benefit are hitting some of the poorer tenants? What additional new action do the Government propose to alleviate the disadvantages of those people and the growing arrears of local authorities?

Mr. Grist: The hon. Gentleman might be interested to know that the estimated figures show a 2·1 per cent. shortfall of arrears compared with the total rent bill. It was 1·9 per cent. in the last financial year, 1987-88, 2 per cent. in 1986-87 and 2·6 per cent. in 1985-86. It is currently 2·1 per cent. There has been little, if any, change in arrears as a percentage of the total rent bill.

THE ARTS

Ethnic Minority Arts

27. **Mr. Bernie Grant:** To ask the Minister for the Arts if he will publish a table showing detailed expenditure by the Arts Council on ethnic minority arts by the Arts Council in *(a)* 1985-86, *(b)* 1986-87, *(c)* 1987-88, by (i) department, (ii) client and (iii) type of funding, whether revenue, annual or project.

The Minister for the Arts (Mr. Richard Luce): The Arts Council report on ethnic minority arts, now due in the new

year, will contain details on these matters. In the meantime, I refer the hon. Member to the answer that I gave on 28 April to the hon. Member for Leicester, East (Mr. Vaz).

Mr. Grant: Is it true that a paltry sum of less than 2 per cent. of Arts Council grants goes to black-led arts companies? Is that not a disgraceful undervaluing of those companies? Does the Minister agree that the abolition of the GLC and the Government-inspired cuts in local authority funding mean that black arts companies are finding increasing difficulty in getting funding, and what does he intend to do about that?

Mr. Luce: I think it is true that the ethnic minority arts, principally the Caribbean and Asian arts, have an important contribution to make to the diversity of arts in this country. The Arts Council has a clear objective, which is to set aside 4 per cent. of its resources to help sustain that development. At the moment it is undertaking a review of its support for ethnic minority arts and is planning to hold a seminar in the new year, which I plan to attend.

Mr. Soames: Does my right hon. Friend agree that the abolition of the GLC has had a remarkably beneficial effect on the funding of arts in London? Secondly, does he agree that, although it is true that the Caribbean arts have much to offer to the rich diversity of arts in our national life, nevertheless the question of ethnic funding is not the one to be considered? What matters is whether it is a worthy subject to be funded.

Mr. Luce: My hon. Friend is right on the latter point. Many Asian and Caribbean minority arts activities are worthy of being funded and the Arts Council is moving in that direction. The decision must be taken on the grounds of artistic merit and on those grounds alone. My hon. Friend mentioned the abolition of the GLC. I recall that three years ago there were prognostications of gloom and despondency by the Opposition about what would happen on the abolition of the metropolitan authorities. The opposite has been the case and the arts have been sustained in all those areas.

Mappa Mundi

28. **Mr. Simon Hughes:** To ask the Minister for the Arts if he has any plans to take action to ensure that the Mappa Mundi is retained by Hereford cathedral for public display in Hereford; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Luce: I am keeping in close touch with developments. In particular, I note that Hereford city council has taken a positive approach to the problem of the potential sale of the Mappa Mundi. I understand that my hon. Friend the Member for Staffordshire, South (Mr. Cormack), in his capacity as chairman of the all-party heritage committee, has had an informal meeting with the dean of Hereford, Lord Charteris, chairman of the National Heritage Memorial Fund, Lord Gowrie, chairman of Sotheby's, and my hon. Friend the Member for Hereford (Mr. Shepherd), who I know is playing a constructive role in all this. I now understand that the dean and chapter of Hereford cathedral have met today to consider the situation. In the light of all this, I hope that it will be possible to find a solution acceptable to all the parties.

Mr. Hughes: As a Herefordian, may I ask the Minister whether he will confirm that less than an hour ago the dean and chapter decided that until the matter is resolved they have no plans to revoke the decision to sell? In that event, what is needed from the Minister is a clear announcement that the Government support the retention of the Mappa Mundi in Hereford. They must say that they will work with the National Heritage Memorial Fund and the British Library to ensure that the moneys are forthcoming and that no stone will be left unturned to ensure that the map returns to where it was created and where it belongs. The Government must ensure that the heritage of our cathedrals is not sold off through auction rooms to the highest bidders no matter where they might be in the world.

Mr. Luce: I have yet to learn precisely what was discussed today by the dean and chapter. I have no shadow of doubt about the importance of this object to our heritage and the importance that the people of Hereford, let alone the cathedral authorities, attach to it. I recognise that fully. The chairman of the National Heritage Memorial Fund has already said that he would be prepared, because he has taxpayers' money at his disposal, to consider playing a role on behalf of the taxpayer, but I draw the attention of the House to the fact that all past experience and practice in this sector have shown that where an object deserves retention in this country the most sensible basis for a solution is an effective partnership between the public and the private sectors, and one that is acceptable to all parties. I will do whatever I can to help reach an effective solution along those lines.

Mr. Colin Shepherd: The close interest that my right hon. Friend is taking in this matter will be well received in Hereford, and on a far broader basis than that, because this is an important matter. I am not aware of the outcome of today's meeting of the Hereford chapter, but if the dean and chapter seek a meeting with my right hon. Friend, will he respond favourably to requests from me to arrange such a meeting?

Mr. Luce: I acknowledge the role that my hon. Friend is playing in all this. If the dean and chapter ask for a meeting I shall be happy to meet them and to hear their viewpoint.

Mr. Robert Sheldon: Is it not time to define certain treasures which must not be sold abroad, whatever the circumstances, by people who simply want to raise money? Italy and other countries with considerable treasures do better than we do in this respect by preventing the export of certain treasures. Should we not define certain categories to fit into that?

Mr. Luce: Each European country has a different procedure to deal with this matter. Italy places an almost total ban on the export of nearly all objects of heritage importance. I am not sure that I believe that to be the right way to proceed. We have to preserve the ability of people to sell their own objects, to preserve an element of market forces in all this, and to allow trade across national boundaries. History shows that in the past 200 years the number of objects that we have imported is a factor to be taken into account. Against that, it is important that we have procedures which allow us to preserve heritage items of the greatest importance. For that reason, it is important

that we have in existence the National Heritage Memorial Fund, which has substantial amounts of taxpayers' money at its disposal to help in this direction.

Mr. Cormack: Is my right hon. Friend aware that it was clear, not only from the meeting that we held last week, to which he referred, but from conversations that I had yesterday and today with Lord Charteris and the chapter clerk, that everyone concerned is desperately anxious to see a solution which leaves the map in Hereford cathedral, but also does something to help the cathedral's real problems? Is not Lord Charteris in an extremely difficult position while the map remains on offer? Would it not be exceptionally helpful if, accepting the real desire to help, the dean and chapter would withdraw the map from public auction, at least for the time being?

Mr. Luce: I am grateful for the constructive role that my hon. Friend is playing in this, with all his knowledge of these issues. I must leave it to the judgment of Lord Charteris, as chairman of the National Heritage Memorial Fund. What is the point of establishing such bodies unless I take their advice? If I were to ignore their advice, that would be wrong. I have no shadow of doubt that it is important to preserve the Nappa Mundi in this country —it is an important object of art and it is also important to the people of Hereford—and I shall play a prominent role in helping to achieve just that.

Mr. Fisher: The House will have heard the Minister's fine words, but will he respond to the very moderate and constructive remarks made by the hon. Member for Staffordshire, South (Mr. Cormack)? If he fails to do that, and in the light of his reply to the question from my right hon. Friend the Member for Ashton-under-Lyne (Mr. Sheldon), the House will have no alternative but to realise that the Government are introducing market forces even into this area of policy. The House will consider that a disgrace.

Mr. Luce: I cannot see how the hon. Gentleman can make that deduction from my remarks about the Mappa Mundi and its importance. I have no difficulty saying that I hope that a solution can be found that will lead to the map's withdrawal from auction on the market. It is important to preserve the map in this country and all parties concerned must work to that end. I have already pledged to do my best in that direction.

Secondments

53. **Mr. Chapman:** To ask the Minister for the Civil Service if he will give the latest number of secondments between the Civil Service and industry; and if he will make a statement.

The Minister of State, Privy Council Office (Mr. Richard Luce): A significant number of serving civil servants now have experience in the private sector as a result of secondments. There were nearly 500 secondments of three months or more between the Civil Service and industry in 1987. I hope that the recent White Paper on releasing enterprise will continue this process.

Mr. Chapman: I very much welcome the increased number of secondments between the Civil Service and industry. Does my right hon. Friend agree that the numbers are still too few? Given the understandable practical difficulties that can exist, will he take further initiatives to encourage part-time secondments between industry and the Civil Service, and encourage civil servants to take non-executive directorships in businesses, to the mutual benefit both of business and of the Civil Service?

Mr. Luce: I agree with my hon. Friend, who has taken a close interest in these matters for some time. The answer to the problem does not lie in one solution; for example, simply in two-year secondments between the private sector and business, which is already doing well. The answer lies in a number of solutions, including short-term loans, Whitehall and industry schemes and part-time executives, of which there are 45 at the moment. The answer lies in a package of means whereby there can be a greater interchange between the private sector and the Civil Service.

Civil Service Unions

54. **Mr. Harry Barnes:** To ask the Minister for the Civil Service when he last met representatives of the Civil Service unions; and what matters he discussed.

55. **Mr. Winnick:** To ask the Minister for the Civil Service when he last met Civil Service unions; and what subjects were discussed.

59. **Mr. Allen:** To ask the Minister for the Civil Service when he last met representatives of the Civil Service unions; and what matters were discussed.

Mr. Luce: I have meetings from time to time with representatives of Civil Service trade unions both centrally and during visits to Civil Service establishments. A wide variety of matters are raised.

Mr. Barnes: Did the Minister discuss the basic principles of trade unionism with the Civil Service trade unions which are to negotiate wages and conditions on behalf of their members under agreed and established procedures? Why are those rights denied to workers in GCHQ? The Government present themselves as dynamic and thrusting, but again they are reactionary in going back to legislation which this House got rid of some time before 1824, which had banned combination of workers.

Mr. Luce: Over the last four years the position on GCHQ has been made absolutely clear. It is only with security and intelligence organisations that the rules apply with regard to trade unions. GCHQ depends on continuity of service 24 hours a day flowing at all times in the national interest and in the interests of our national security. From 1979 to 1981, 10,000 working days were lost as a result of action. That was not acceptable in the interests of our national security. My right hon. and learned Friend the Foreign Secretary and his team have been taking pains over four years to deal with the real individual problems that have arisen as a result of the decision.

Mr. Winnick: Has the Minister heard from the Civil Service unions whether they intend to tell Mr. Gorbachev when he visits Britain that they are very much in favour of the basic rights being introduced in the Soviet Union at long last, while the Civil Service unions are trying to defend our existing rights, including the rights of people at GCHQ to belong to a trade union?

Mr. Luce: If the hon. Gentleman is seeking to draw an exact parallel between the conditions of trade unions in Britain and in the Eastern bloc, he had better go and live in the Eastern bloc and find out for himself.

Mr. Allen: Will the Minister comment on the scandal of the Intervention Board for Agricultural Produce computer programme—the private programme introduced for intervention board pricing? Will he make a statement in the very near future on how people who have been unduly affected by that computer catastrophe will be assisted?

Mr. Luce: As I understand the scheme to which the hon. Gentleman refers, it is principally a matter for my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer, to whom such questions should be directed.

Mr. Holt: Will my right hon. Friend say whether he has discussed the relocation of Civil Service departments in the north of England, particularly in the light of the report produced in June last year by two middle-ranking officials stating that in their opinion senior civil servants would not wish to live in the north of England?

Mr. Luce: Earlier this year my right hon. Friend the Paymaster General set out the framework of the Government's broad policy towards the relocation of civil servants in other parts of the country. As my hon. Friend is aware, four out of five civil servants work outside London, and there is now considerable encouragement to Departments, most of which are taking seriously the possibility—on the grounds of recruitment and retention and on other grounds—of moving more civil servants to other areas.

Mr. Soames: When my right hon. Friend next meets the Civil Service unions, will he pass on to them my admiration for the immense tact, discretion and thoroughness with which the DHSS office in Crawley deals with various matters? Will he tell them that it would be greatly in their interests to concentrate on trying to get their other members to behave in the way that their members in Crawley behave?

Mr. Luce: I am grateful for what my hon. Friend has said and for the tribute that he paid to offices in his constituency and the high standards of conduct of the civil servants there.

Dr. Marek: The Minister cannot get away from the great gulf that exists in the minds of the public in relation to GCHQ when they perceive their Prime Minister preaching and supporting free trade unions in Poland but abolishing free trade unions in Britain. If the free trade unions in Britain went to the Minister and said that they wished to negotiate a no-strike deal, with no holds barred, so that, to use the Minister's words, information could continue to flow and there would be no interruption in service, in return for being able to organise GCHQ freely, would he talk to them?

Mr. Luce: The hon. Gentleman is very familiar with the reasons for that. It is quite clear that the rule on trade unions applies only to security and intelligence institutions. GCHQ did have disruption, losing 10,000 working days between 1979 and 1981. The continuous free flow of information from that institution is essential in our national interest. It was on those grounds alone that the decision was taken. The decision applies only to security and intelligence institutions.

Agency System

58. **Mr. French:** To ask the Minister for the Civil Service if he will make a statement on the progress towards establishing agencies within the Civil Service.

Mr. Luce: With permission, Mr. Speaker, I shall answer this question and question 56 together.

Mr. Speaker: Order. The right hon. Gentleman cannot do that. We have already passed question 56.

Mr. Luce: I am sorry, Mr. Speaker. I will answer question 58 alone.

Two agencies have been set up, about 30 more have been announced and more are in the pipeline, I shall be making a progress report to the House before too long.

Mr. French: Does my right hon. Friend accept that the agency system will greatly improve the managerial abilities of civil servants, but only if adequate provision is made for management training? Will he tell the House what provisions he has in mind?

Mr. Luce: My hon. Friend is absolutely right. One of the main purposes of the establishment of the agencies is to devolve decision-making down the line of management in the Civil Service, and to give managers in the Civil Service greater authority and enable them to take more decisions themselves. It is essential that we should have proper training policies to enable them to become even better managers. To that end I have earmarked an additional £1 million, which will be used as a form of challenge funding with Departments to stimulate better training.

Mr. Madden: Will the Minister take action to ensure that the agencies do not place contracts with the Economic League—the jobs blacklisting organisation? Will he ensure that they do not place security contracts with the Securicor group or Group 4 Total Security Limited, which have had Government contracts for many years and subscribe to the Economic League?

Mr. Luce: The important point is that members of the agencies will be members of the Civil Service, under the direct control and overall responsibility of the Secretary of State, with delegated responsibility to the chief executive. Broadly speaking, the standards maintained by the Civil Service and the Departments will be maintained by the agencies.

Salmonella and Eggs

3.30 pm

Sir Hal Miller (Bromsgrove) *(by private notice)*: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will make a statement on salmonella and eggs.

The Secretary of State for Health (Mr. Kenneth Clarke): My Department issued guidance on 26 August and 21 November concerning salmonella and eggs. I am advised by the Government's chief medical officer that up to the end of October there had been 46 reported outbreaks of salmonella food poisoning in England and Wales, involving about 1,000 cases in which the most likely source of the infection was uncooked or partially cooked eggs. Recent studies show that some sporadic cases of salmonellosis have been caused by eggs. It is likely that these figures underestimate the total number of people affected.

The chief medical officer is today repeating his advice to the public not to eat raw eggs or uncooked foods made from them. He has advised caterers to use pasteurised egg instead of uncooked egg.

Some of the 46 outbreaks were assoicated with the consumption of lightly cooked eggs or foods containing them. Although the risk of harm to any healthy individual from consuming a single egg is small, it is advisable for vulnerable people, such as the elderly, the sick, babies and pregnant women, to consume only eggs that have been cooked until the white and yolk are solid. My hon. Friend the Parliamentary Secretary for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, who is in his place alongside me, is this afternoon publishing details of a voluntary code agreed with the poultry breeding industry to reduce the risk of salmonella infection in poultry breeding flocks.

To put the problem in perspective—30 million eggs are eaten every day—the risk of an individual becoming ill is very small. Nevertheless, there are grounds for concern, and my Department, the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food and the poultry industry are working closely together to tackle them.

Sir Hal Miller: Will my right hon. and learned Friend reiterate that the 46 outbreaks relate to a consumption this year of 9 billion eggs? Is he aware of the consternation and anger that have been caused by the rather rash statement of my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State for Health? Does he realise that there are signs in Birmingham market advertising Dutch eggs that are salmonella-free? The woman at the pub in the Cotswolds at which I stopped for breakfast over-cooked the eggs because of the salmonella scare. Is it not time that something was done to put an end to this uncertainty?

Mr. Clarke: We are all agreed that we must keep this matter in proportion. There is no doubt that there is genuine concern in this country and abroad about the increased incidence of salmonella poisoning from eggs. It is right that particularly vulnerable people such as the frail, the sick, the elderly and young children should be protected from eating raw eggs. I agree with my hon. Friend about the vast consumption of eggs in this country, but the risk of infection to any individual is small, and the risk to a healthy adult is small indeed. This is an international problem, so anyone advertising overseas eggs as being safer than our own is plainly wrong.

I noticed that my hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Health drew attention to this problem this weekend. The House should reflect on the fact that my hon. Friend was talking about a serious matter on which my Department had already issued public health advice twice this autumn. My hon. Friend's words have sought to draw further attention to the problem and, I trust, to warn people who are vulnerable to infection if they eat raw or uncooked eggs. I assure my hon. Friend the Member for Bromsgrove (Sir H. Miller) that I shall carry on eating eggs, as I am sure he will. The chief medical officer tells me that he had egg sandwiches for lunch. Every healthy individual need not be too worried about an unreasonable scare.

Mr. Robin Cook (Livingston): Does the Secretary of State recall that when his Department last issued guidance on eggs and salmonella, on 21 November, it stated:

"the risk of any individual egg being infected is likely to be very small"?

How does the right hon. and learned Gentleman square that with the claim at the weekend by the Under-Secretary of State that most of the egg production in this country is now infected? Which of those two statements reflects the Department's view? Is the right hon. and learned Gentleman content to preside over a Department that issues two totally and utterly contradictory views in the space of two weeks?

Is not the lesson of today that the Government will let the hon. Lady insult pensioners, caricature northerners and threaten child benefit, but that stubbing the toes of the National Farmers Union is going too far? Surely it must now be clear to the Secretary of State that the hon. Lady's embarrassment quotient exceeds her entertainment value? Is it not about time he removed such a major obstacle to our taking his Department seriously?

Mr. Clarke: The Department's position has been consistent throughout. There is a growth risk of salmonella. It is obviously right that the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, my Department and the industry should tackle it together. The risk of any individual being infected is quite small, but it is right that we should draw the public's attention to the need to be careful in the way that they handle and cook food. My hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State for Health is an extremely valuable member of the team in this Department and the Government. It may be that many hon. Members are a little envious of her natural gift for obtaining publicity. This is not the first occasion on which she has obtained great publicity on a serious matter and drawn the public's attention to something that might otherwise have passed their notice.

Sir Peter Emery (Honiton): Will my right hon. and learned Friend accept that unsubstantiable remarks by anyone must be denied by Secretaries of State? Will he make it clear to the House that there is no scientific evidence that there is any salmonella in an uncracked egg, one that is still in the shell? Therefore, statements made over the weekend which have a major effect on a large industry in agriculture are to be condemned.

Mr. Clarke: I do not hold myself out as having any scientific expertise. I obviously rely heavily, and with total confidence, on the advice that I receive from the chief medical officer to the Government and his staff. My understanding is not the same as my hon. Friend's. I do

not think that it is true that an uncracked egg can be guaranteed to be salmonella-proof. The advice that we are giving is that the public should be careful about how they handle uncracked eggs, that they should cook them thoroughly and use them sensibly. The remains relevant advice until the industry's efforts have reduced the present level of infection.

Mr. Richard Livsey (Brecon and Radnor): Will the Minister acknowledge that the statement of his hon. Friend the Under-Secretary has created a tremendous loss of confidence in the egg industry? How will he give more confidence now that that statement has been made? There is no question but that there needs to be an investigation and thorough inquiry into what has gone on. Does the right hon. and learned Gentleman agree that, if the facts are established and there is a problem, he should discuss with his hon. Friends in the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food the possibility of a thorough eradication programme, should that prove necessary?

Mr. Clarke: My Department put out information in August advising the public not to eat raw eggs. That advice was followed up in November with advice not to eat raw or lightly cooked eggs, together with a recommendation in caterers to use pasteurised eggs for any food that required raw or lightly cooked eggs. All we are doing is reinforcing that message.

As I have said today, my hon. Friend the Parliamentary Secretary to the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food is putting out a code that has been drawn up with the industry and will be followed by the industry to reduce salmonella infection to acceptable, minimal proportions. At the moment there is a source of anxiety which is being tackled by all concerned. Meanwhile, the public will simply have to be sensible and carry on eating their eggs in a way that ensures that the risk to health is the absolute minimum.

Mr. Robert Key (Salisbury): I would hazard the guess that millions of people will be infinitely depressed at the prospect of hard-boiled eggs and no fresh mayonnaise. What practical steps are he and the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food taking to investigate the cause of salmonella in poultry and to eliminate it?

Mr. Clarke: I agree that I would miss my mayonnaise, but, personally, I shall probably not desist from eating it. I imagine that that is true of most people in this Chamber who regard themselves as healthy adults and therefore the risk of infection to be acceptable. However, we have a duty to warn the public that salmonella infection is rising and appears to be poultry-based. The Ministry of Agriculture, my Department and the public health laboratory service will all be seeking to find more information about the full extent of the infection and the steps that can be taken to reduce it. We are sure that steps can be taken to get British poultry and eggs back to the high quality that we are accustomed to receiving.

Mr. James Lamond (Oldham, Central and Royton): Does the Minister unequivocally and strongly support the statement made by the Under-Secretary of State?

Mr. Clarke: My hon. Friend was quite right to answer a question put to her on another occasion, stressing the concern that we feel about infection in eggs and drawing attention to the advice that the Department had already been giving over the previous few months.

Sir Jim Spicer (Dorset, West): Does my right hon. and learned Friend accept that even the fact that he has come here today and said that there is a very small risk is doing damage? The risk is minuscule, but we have witnessed today, in this House, some embarrassment and laughter, and, outside this House, a fall in consumption of 1 per cent. or more, which may put egg producers out of business. My right hon. and learned Friend must address that matter.

Mr. Clarke: I agree with my hon. Friend that, despite the undertone of hilarity in the House, there is a serious problem. We must steer the proper course between, on the one hand, the ridiculous scares that my hon. Friend the Member for Bromsgrove (Sir H. Miller) described after his experiences, and, on the other hand, undue complacency which might leave some of the very elderly and the very young and the sick and frail at risk. All the public have to do is cook their eggs carefully—fry them or boil them properly—and for any frail person to make sure that they are hard boiled. I am sure that the industry and ourselves can tackle the risk together.

Mr. Roy Beggs (Antrim, East): The half-baked, half-boiled irrational statement by the Under-Secretary of State has caused tremendous concern in Northern Ireland. Will the Secretary of State acknowledge that no outbreak of salmonella has been identified in connection with any eggs or poultry products produced in Northern Ireland? Does he also accept that the sweeping allegations, which, from what we hear today, are largely unfounded, threaten egg production in Northern Ireland farms as we are virtually totally dependent on exports? Does he agree that greater attention should be paid to imports of foreign eggs into this country in future? Does he acknowledge the excellent health record of Northern Ireland poultry flocks and of Northern Ireland eggs exported to this country?

Mr. Clarke: I shall take advice on whether any of the cases involve Northern Ireland eggs, but it may not be possible to discover that.

We all realise the concern of egg producers, and I am satisfied that nothing that I have announced today or that my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State said at the weekend need threaten egg sales or egg consumption in this country. On the other hand, there have been one thousand cases of salmonella connected with eggs. Much as I would wish to give the industry a totally clean bill of health, we cannot suppress the advice of our own chief medical officer and his staff. That advice is sensible and balanced and need not worry any housewife or healthy member of the public and merely warns us all to be prudent until this sudden and worrying upsurge in salmonella is brought back under control.

Mr. Michael Shersby (Uxbridge): Is my right hon. and learned Friend aware that, according to the public health laboratory service, the majority of cases of salmonella in eggs are due to mishandling by caterers because the eggs are stored in high temperatures? Is he further aware that the British Poultry Federation has carried out a check on eggs throughout the country but has not found one case of salmonella?

Mr. Clarke: I was not aware of my hon. Friend's first point. I know that many poultry producers are making careful checks—and if they continue to do so, they will eventually discover salmonella in poultry flocks. The code is being drawn up with the industry to eliminate that risk. I appreciate the egg industry's concern and I am saying all that I can—it is the right thing to do—to reassure the public that they can continue to buy eggs. However, we cannot ignore the public health advice. There have been 1,000 cases, which is 1,000 too many. A little more care is required in the cooking of eggs to avoid infection. People should be warned not to eat raw or lightly cooked eggs. My hon. Friends should not consume prairie oysters in the foreseeable future.

Mr. Jack Thompson (Wansbeck): Does not the adverse publicity during the past few days, especially that created by the Under-Secretary, emphasise the lack of co-operation and co-ordination between the right hon. and learned Gentleman's Department and the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food? Are there not conflicting statements from the two Departments? Is not one reason for the current problem the reduction in research funding?

Mr. Clarke: There has been the closest co-operation between my Department, the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food and the Government's chief medical officer. We all agree on our statements and on our message to the public. Whenever there are minor public health worries, it is inevitable that people will exaggerate. Some of the reactions to my hon. Friend's statement, including all the publicity-seeking stuff this morning about dismissal, rebounded on those making the claims because it has drawn more attention to the problem. I hope that the House will get the matter in proportion and will accept that there is a health problem, which we are tackling, and that the average member of the public is not at risk.

Mr. Robert Hicks (Cornwall, South-East): Does my right hon and learned Friend agree that it is the obligation of any responsible Government to inform and not to alarm? Do not the Under-Secretary's remarks this weekend fall into the latter category?

Will my right hon. and learned Friend assure me that the next time that we attend a football match together we will have our customary lunch of beer, cigars and a couple of Scotch eggs—none of which our hon. Friend the Under-Secretary approves of?

Mr. Clarke: I accept that it is the Government's duty to inform and not to alarm, and we shall follow that course. The House must accept that we have a duty to inform people that the risk of salmonella is higher than it was and that we are tackling that. I shall continue to consume my customary fare when I attend football matches with my hon. Friend. I am sure that that will alarm a number of hon. Members, but I intend to persist in that habit.

Mrs. Rosie Barnes (Greenwich): Does the Secretary of State agree that, on available statistics, there is a one in 350 million risk of salmonella poisoning from eggs? Was not the remark made on the radio this morning—that it was as likely as being hit by a meteorite—probably true? Was it not highly irresponsible to put the egg industry at risk and to jeopardise the long-established eating habits of this nation?

Mr. Clarke: As I have already said, I do not have scientific experience in this matter. I shall consult on some of the propositions being made to me. I agree that nothing has been said that should put the egg industry at risk or justifies exaggerated public alarm. There is no point, however, in going too far the other way and exaggerating the minuscule nature of the risk. There have been 46 outbreaks of salmonella and 1,000 reported cases, and there may be others that have gone unreported. That is why we have taken action and made some comments. We do not believe that the public should be put off buying eggs.

Rev. Ian Paisley (Antrim, North): Can the Secretary of State explain to the House why both his statement and that of the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food agree, when the Northern Ireland Department of Agriculture —which is an agent of the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food—has made a clear statement that the egg industry in Northern Ireland has a clean bill of health and that there is no poisoning? Does he realise that the Under-Secretary's statement has greatly exacerbated an already difficult position in Northern Ireland?

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland and the Minister with responsibility for agriculture in Northern Ireland are better informed about the Irish situation than I am. I would certainly rely on their advice on the industry in Northern Ireland.

My hon. Friend the Parliamentary Secretary to the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food put out a statement this afternoon, which states:

"The industry are aware of the need to take effective action. And action is being taken on several other fronts."

The action is in proportion to the risk, which is not too grave. All we are giving is some sensible advice to the general public and, meanwhile, taking steps for the industry to get the situation back to normal.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. This is a private notice question. No doubt the House wil be able to return to this matter when we have health questions next week.

Sir Peter Emery: In view of the entirely unsatisfactory nature of the Minister's reply, I give notice that I will attempt to raise the matter on the Adjournment as soon as humanly possible.

Mr. Tony Banks (Newham, North-West): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: I shall take it afterwards.

"Employment for the 1990s"

3.52 pm

The Secretary of State for Employment (Mr. Norman Fowler): With permission, I would like to make a statement on the White Paper "Employment for the 1990s" which I am publishing today.

Over the last five years, almost 2 million new jobs have been created in this country. Unemployment has also fallen in each of the last 27 months. Since the 1987 general election, unemployment has fallen by almost 700,000, and there has been a particularly significant reduction in long-term unemployment. Our unemployment rate is now below that of the average in the European Community, and, with an estimated 700,000 job vacancies in the economy, there is no reason why unemployment should not fall further.

One of the main reasons why unemployment has fallen so far and so fast is that, over the last nine years, this Government have sought to remove some of the main barriers that stood in the way of employment growth. The theme of this White Paper is the need to tackle barriers which could impede employment growth in the 1990s.

Ten years ago, one of the most serious barriers was poor industrial relations. In the 1970s we lost an average of 13 million working days a year through strikes. As a result, British job after British job was exported overseas, and, all too often, our industries had a record for unreliability. We have moved decisively away from that position.

The number of strikes today is lower than at any period since 1940. There is no doubt that one of the major reasons for this improvement has been this Government's reform of trade union law. The White Paper makes it clear that we will take any further legislative steps which may be necessary and that, in particular, I will be reviewing the operation of the pre-entry closed shop.

There is a clear link between pay and jobs. Pay arrangements need to be more closely linked to local labour market conditions, differences in performance and the continuing profitability of the individual company. The Government also believe that the time has come to reconsider the future of the wages councils.

There are real questions about whether a statutory system of this kind is relevant to pay determination in the 1990s; about whether, even now, wages councils give sufficient weight to the impact of settlements on jobs; and about whether a system which is so shot through with anomalies should be preserved. I am therefore publishing, together with the White Paper, a consultation document inviting views on the future of the wages council system.

As we move into the 1990s, the greatest obstacle to employment growth is likely to be lack of skills. Over the next five years we shall see a significant slowing down in the growth of the labour force and, in particular, a dramatic fall in the number of young people in the work force. The number of people in the work force under the age of 25 will fall by over a million between now and 1995.

Therefore, employers will not be able to rely solely on young recruits to meet their new skill needs. They will need to look increasingly to other sources of recruitment, such as women, unemployed people, and older workers. Above all, employers must train the people they already employ. If we are to have the skills our economy will need, employers must undertake a massive retraining effort.

This White Paper describes the radically new training framework to which the Government believe we must now move. The key element in this framework is the establishment of a network of local employer-led training and enterprise councils. These councils will be responsible both for promoting training by employers and for operating the Government's existing training programmes. They will also become responsible for the day-to-day operation of most of my Department's small firms and enterprise programmes. I shall be inviting employers to come together at local level and contract with my Department to set up these councils.

Two thirds of the council members will be drawn from private sector companies at chief executive level. Chambers of commerce, the CBI, and local employer networks will all have a vital part to play. The other council members will be drawn from organisations in the local community which want to play an active role in promoting training. The Government's aim is to establish a network of about 100 councils throughout Great Britain over the next three to four years, and I expect the first councils to be in operation before the end of 1989.

The training and enterprise councils differ from the present training framework in two important respects. First, they will be executive bodies, not advisory. They will give the leadership of the national training system to employers. It is employers who are the customers for training and they are also the main providers of training. Secondly, the establishment of the councils will move the focus of planning and delivery of training to the local level. It is in the local labour market that training needs can be best assessed and practical steps taken to meet them.

To help and advise me during the transition to these new arrangemens, I am setting up a national training task force. The task force will have up to 12 members, drawn primarily from leading figures in industry and commerce. The chairman will be Mr. Brian Wolfson, the present chairman of the Training Commission.

The White Paper also describes other steps I propose to take to improve the effectiveness of our training arrangements. These include consulting the remaining industrial training boards about the steps they need to take to become independent non-statutory organisations and determining the future of the Skills Training Agency. The agency is currently loss-making and over-dependent on Government training contracts. It would be in a better position to win more employer business if it were to move into the private sector, and the Government are therefore taking advice on this.

The changes I have set out mark a radical change in our training arrangements. International competition is fierce and the old ways have not been successful. People are this country's key resource. Seven out of 10 of the work force in the year 2000 are already in the work force now and therefore will be unable to benefit from the changes taking place in education. What is needed is the fundamental reform of our training arrangements so that they are employer-led and based on the local labour market.

Over the past five years, we have had dramatic success in creating new jobs and reducing unemployment. For the 1990s, success in training is the best guarantee of jobs and continued growth.

Mr. Michael Meacher (Oldham, West): Is the Secretary of State aware that the Opposition fully accept that a major new training initiative is urgently needed, when the

[Mr. Michael Meacher]

CBI is now reporting that a huge and growing skills gap is limiting output in one third of companies and constraining investment in nearly half, and that more than two out of five companies expect it to worsen? Is he further aware that half of the total work force got no training last year and that one third has never had any? Yet he is now proposing that employers, who have shown little or no foresight or will in meeting their own training needs, for which they have the strongest private incentive, should be the very people to be put into the driving seat to meet the training shortfall for the nation as a whole. Is it not perverse that employers who have persistently refused to spend enough of their own money on training their own employees are now being put in undisputed control of £3 billion of public money to train others—rather like putting Barlow Clowes in charge of investment protection?

Is the Secretary of State aware that our most successful competitors are moving in the opposite direction by adopting a national training strategy, based on an overall skills audit to meet the needs of industry, by ensuring that employers invest adequately in training their own employees and by having Government investment in high quality skills training for the unemployed? This Government, in their fourth restructuring of adult training in nine months, are now passing the buck to a series of unrepresentative and unaccountable local quangos. How can the Secretary of State justify giving employers absolute control, when the Government, local authorities, trade unions and the voluntary sector have at least as much, if not more, commitment and expertise in achieving high training standards?

I shall now deal with funding. It is widely acknowledged that employment training is grossly under-funded. Will the White Paper add a single extra penny of new money to that budget? Given the parallel organisation, for several years, involving retaining ET while switching to the new training enterprise councils, will the Secretary of State not be cutting the level of training, unless he also increases funding? What provision is there in the White Paper to ensure that employers will be spending a penny more on training? Will not the removal of the training levy, through the abolition of the statutory powers of the industrial training boards, actually reduce employers' spending?

The proposals are based on the experience of the United States, but is the Secretary of State aware that, while he has lifted American ideas, he has omitted the legal safeguards that exist there against job substitution, the duplication of training provision and exploitative pay rates? That is one reason why the Opposition totally oppose the abolition of the wages councils.

These proposals come from a Government who largely created the skills gap by abolishing the grant levy system for training those in work, by chopping three quarters of the industrial training boards, by axing one third of the skill centres and by decimating apprenticeships. Is it not clear that the White Paper is motivated far more by ideological dogma that favours the privatisation of training than by a desire to build a new national consensus to confront and overcome the huge skills gap facing the nation? The Chancellor of the Exchequer has often spoken about a low-pay, low-skill, low-tech economy. The White Paper will help to deliver that objective.

Mr. Fowler: I cannot bear to take lectures from the hon. Gentleman on training. When he spoke about a national consensus, one remembers his own performance on employment training. He, the Labour party and the Trades Union Congress turned their backs not only on the unemployed, but on training. His own record on that was lamentable, and he is in no position to lecture anyone about training incentives.

Our aim is to achieve a well-trained, professional work force for the 1990s. In essence, we want more training of staff to be carried out by employers. The hon. Gentleman made international comparisons, but he should consider West Germany's programmes, which are based on the chambers of commerce. In this country, it is employers who understand the local needs of the labour market and the local needs for training. The training enterprise councils will be employer-led and they will involve local organisations. Why are they to be employer-led? The reason is that they are training for industry. Employers know what the skill needs are because they are the customers for training and the providers of training. Everything that I have been told by organisations such as the Confederation of British Industry and the chambers of commerce has led me to have confidence that employers will take the opportunity with both hands.

There will be no cut in resources. A new programme —the business growth through training programme—is proposed. It will unify 10 existing programmes and will have £55 million to help to encourage training for small firms.

The position of the wages councils has changed fundamentally since their inception in 1909. The system is out of date. There are, for example, still wages councils that look after coffin furniture workers, flax and hemp workers and ostrich and fancy feather workers. Those councils are still in existence. There is no evidence that the changes that we made in 1986 affecting young people had any impact on the position of young people, except that unemployment among the 16 to 19-year-olds has come down by no less than 62 per cent.

The Opposition have no credibility in their views on training and unemployment or on programmes to bring down unemployment. The White Paper will bring about more employment now and, above all, more employment in the 1990s.

Mr. Jim Lester (Broxtowe): I assure my right hon. Friend that I welcome the system of local delivery, for two principal reasons. First, it will minimise the number of free-loaders, who have been a problem in training for as long as I have been involved. Secondly, what is needed more than anything else is a period of continuity, so that those who are involved in training can convince local communities that training is an essential part of any company and essential for the future of this country. We need a period of continuity so that people can get on with the training.

Mr. Fowler: I accept what my hon. Friend, with all his experience, has said. The training and enterprise councils will be responsible for encouraging and promoting training. For the first time, we have brought together training for the employed and for the unemployed and training and development for small businesses. It is crucial to the proposals that training is carried out at local level,

as that is where progress will be made. I have no doubt that proposals will be put forward that will have the effect of transforming training in this country.

Mr. Ken Eastham (Manchester, Blackley): Now that the Secretary of State has admitted that we are facing a training crisis, will he also admit that the Government abolished three quarters of the industrial training boards and closed down skill centres, which were making profits? Is it not a fact that one of the most successful skills training organisations is the engineering industry training board? Will the Secretary of State ensure that it will have an assured budget which will provide some continuity because at present it does not know where it stands from one year to another? What steps will the Secretary of State take to ensure the quality and standards of training under self-regulation? Can he guarantee that we shall not have the bad standards of the past few years?

Mr. Fowler: The Training Agency will continue to monitor standards for the training of unemployed people. We shall also seek to guide and examine the training that is provided for employed people, so that there will be monitoring and checking arrangements.

The hon. Gentleman referred to the industrial training boards. There are now only seven training boards, which have progressively reduced their dependence on levies and exempted most companies. The clothing and allied products industry training board levies under half of the relevant companies and receives 90 per cent. of its costs from training services. We want to move all the boards in that direction, while keeping the good qualities of the training boards.

I must point out to the House that, at the moment, the Skills Training Agency is making a loss of about £20 million on a turnover of about £55 million. I put it to the hon. Gentleman—the Public Accounts Committee has already raised this point—that in the face of those figures the Government have no alternative but to seek a way of satisfying and finally reconciling that position.

Sir Peter Hordern (Horsham): Does my right hon. Friend accept that, for many of us, the sooner the wages councils are done away with the better? However, will my right hon. Friend tell the House whether the West German scheme, to which he has referred, produces a much greater number of people with vocational qualifications as opposed to vocational training? Does my right hon. Friend think that it is a good idea to consult his right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Education and Science to see whether there is cause for joint action in producing more people with vocational qualifications than is the case at present?

Mr. Fowler: My hon. Friend has made a strong point. Of course, my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Education and Science and I will work closely together on this. The basic case for seeking to take action on training is that seven out of every 10 people who will be in the labour force in the year 2000 are in the labour force now, so unless we act on training in employment now, those people will miss out on any improvements that take place in the education system.

It is right to consult on the future of the wages councils. They are full of anomalies and date back to 1909. Looking at the position today and comparing it with what it was in that period, one sees that today's circumstances would not lead anyone to set up the kind of wages council system that we have at the moment.

Mr. Charles Kennedy (Ross, Cromarty and Skye): Although the Secretary of State is correct to identify the need for greater local sensitivity in the organisation and delivery of such services, will he concede that the absence of any commitment on the part of the Government to increase real funding is bound to be an impediment to the progress that he wishes to see achieved?

In looking at local sensitivities and regional disparities throughout Britain in the context of the abolition of the wages councils, will the right hon. Gentleman bear in mind that in many parts of the country—my own is an example—there is genuine rural deprivation because of distinct local geographic and economic factors? Surely the Government have a duty to maintain a tolerable minimum income that can be met on the part of the potential work force?

Finally, on education, will the Secretary of State confirm that, despite his statement, as a country we are still lagging woefully behind our main industrial competitors in gearing our education system to the available and potential labour market?

Mr. Fowler: On the hon. Gentleman's last point, we have made a great number of strides in the past four or five years with, for example, the training and vocational education initiative and the new compact system, which has been an outstanding success and has taken off in a short amount of time.

The hon. Gentleman will be aware that wages councils govern only 11 per cent. of the work force and that the two thirds of the work force who are governed by wages councils are part-time workers in any event. Therefore, by definition, the other 90 per cent. of the work force are not covered by wages councils at the moment.

As far as the task of the training enterprise councils is concerned, I must make it clear that training in employment is first and foremost a task for the employers themselves. It is not a task that Government can carry out. We are not in a position to double-guess the requirements and needs of employers. Training is essentially a task for employers, and I am confident that they will take up that challenge.

Mr. John Bowis (Battersea): Is my right hon. Friend aware that the White Paper will be widely welcomed by those who believe that the next stage in improving the employment position is to ensure that more people acquire skills? Is he further aware that there will be a particular welcome for the greater involvement of employers in the scheme? Will he take note of the points that have been made about education, and does he agree that to date the further education sector has played an important part in working with employers, in creating jobs and in helping people to acquire skills? Therefore, in what way does my right hon. Friend see that sector playing a full part in the future?

Mr. Fowler: I believe that our further education system will continue to play a part in training and it is important that it should—certainly the offer is there as far as the Government and the Training Agency are concerned. In most local authorities, such involvement is taking place, and I hope that will continue.

[Mr. Fowler]

The basic point about the involvement of employers is that training must be relevant to jobs. It is the employers who provide the jobs, so training must be relevant to their needs. We are following the logic of that in the new training structure that we are setting up.

Mr. Eric S. Heffer (Liverpool, Walton): The Secretary of State must know that some of us who have had experience of training in engineering and other areas have been explaining to the Government for years that we were heading for a crisis unless we had proper training, carried out by the employers as well as by the Government, and with the involvement of trade unions. I am absolutely delighted that the Secretary of State has now come round to the view that some of us have been expressing for a long time.

How will the White Paper affect the position in the construction industry where there is the growth of lump labour and the decline of direct labour through the local authorities, which used to train people in the construction industry? What will this scheme do to ensure that we have proper training and apprentices in the construction industry? Will the construction industry training board be strengthened or diminished?

Mr. Fowler: I am sure that the hon. Gentleman will concede that training problems go back over many years. It is complete nonsense to say that training has suddenly become a problem in the past 10 years: I am sure that the hon. Gentleman will accept that.

As for industrial training boards, in general the most effective incentive for companies to train is an understanding of their own skills needs and not a centralised regulatory system, based on statutory powers. As I have said in the White Paper—the hon. Gentleman will have an opportunity of studying it—I recognise that particular issues affect the construction industry training board, and we shall be talking with the CITB about those.

Mr. Simon Coombs (Swindon): To what extent are the new TECs modelled on the private industry councils in the United States, which my right hon. Friend had the opportunity of studying earlier this year? What encouragement or inducements will be given to the chief executives of companies in local economies to join the new councils? Does he have an answer to the problem that faces constituents such as mine where there are relatively few chief executives of large employers in our towns, but large numbers of plant directors, at lower than chief executive level? Finally, if my right hon. Friend is encouraged and stimulated by the PIC example in the United States, does he intend to give TECs any interface or mechanism to link them with local education authorities at secondary level to encourage employers to have some input into what is taught in our schools?

Mr. Fowler: Obviously, there must be a relationship between the training enterprise councils and the education system. Indeed, there must be a relationship and direct links between training and education and between industry and education. I believe that those links are developing.

My hon. Friend asked me about the origins of this plan. It certainly contains elements of the United States experience and the West German experience, but above all it recognises that employers locally know the needs of their labour market and therefore the training needs to guide us.

My hon. Friend also asked me about the positions of chief executives and staff. One real advantage of the programme that we are putting forward is that we can get good people, top people, from local companies to come on to the boards of the training enterprise councils, but the work will be carried out by the professional staff who are now employed by the Training Agency, and who can be seconded to the training enterprise councils. I hope that in that way we can get the best of both worlds.

Mr. Frank Field (Birkenhead): As the Secretary of State has commended the West Germany scheme to the House, will he tell us when, under his proposals, average skill levels in this country will equal those of West Germany? He need not be too precise in his answer: the year will do.

Mr. Fowler: During the 1990s we shall be able to catch up with the West Germans. If the hon. Gentleman considers my White Paper, he will see that comparisons with West Germany and with Germany go back not just 20, 30 or 40 years, but well into the last century. It is a long-standing problem and I believe that the TEC is the best hope that we have to catch up not only with Germany, but with our other major competitors. If we do not do that, our prospects for the 1990s will not be as good as they otherwise would be.

Mr. James Paice (Cambridgeshire, South-East): As somebody who has worked closely with the Training Agency, will my right hon. Friend accept how pleased I am that its excellent staff will be part of the new proposal and under the guidance and control of those at the front end of the consumption of training? Will my right hon. Friend also accept that it is the skills shortage, in part caused by the fact that employers have not been in control of available training, which has led to the present problems faced by industry?

Mr. Fowler: In the past, we have failed to attract the involvement and enthusiasm of all employers in the way that we might. That is not to say that some extremely impressive training is not already taking place. The aim must be to bring up the standards of every company in this country to the standards of some of the best. I believe that some real progress has been made in the past four or five years, and I want even more progress based on that.

Mr. James Lamond (Oldham, Central and Royton): Why should we have any confidence in employers leading the way in training, when the lack of apprenticeships in the past few years has clearly demonstrated that they cannot see beyond the end of their noses? We not only need to train people for the jobs that are available now: we also need a long-term strategy for training in the future. Employers who are concerned only with the present profits that can be made will not pay that factor sufficient attention.

Mr. Fowler: I remind the hon. Gentleman that it is the employers who provide the jobs. Whatever his own ideological hang-up on this might be, training must be relevant to the jobs that the employers are providing. He asks what evidence there is of employers changing; I believe that it is there for him to see. One example is that of the compacts that have now been formed between

education and industrial companies. Thirty of such compacts are up and beginning to run after a few months. That is an incredible rate of progress. There is new enthusiasm among employers and we should use it.

Mr. Anthony Beaumont-Dark (Birmingham, Selly Oak): Does my right hon. Friend accept that this kind of programme is vital and will be warmly welcomed by manufacturing industry? Does he also accept that the problem does not lie so much with school leavers, because within five years they will be able to get any job for which they have been trained at school? Does my right hon. Friend agree that the great problem lies with the unions, which, last time, helped to kill off the apprenticeships that are the seed corn of all industry? Does my right hon. Friend believe that, this time, there is any greater hope that the unions will not just look upon people who are training as cheap labour and so scare them away, or make sure that they do not get the jobs that are vital to the country?

Mr. Fowler: My hon. Friend makes an important point. It is not just a matter of employers understanding the importance of training, but of the work force and the trade unions understanding its importance. I believe that the Trades Union Congress made a bad mistake regarding the employment training programme for unemployed people, and I believe that many members of the TUC recognise that. I hope that that mistake will not be repeated with training in employment.

Mr. Roy Beggs (Antrim, East): In the absence of any reference in the statement to Northern Ireland, is the Minister indirectly complimenting us on the excellence of our education system and the training facilities already in place? Will he please convey to those industrialists who are fearful of not having an adequately trained work force in the future that we in Northern Ireland have lived with low wages and high unemployment and that there is a great appetite for employment opportunities in the Province? Will he commend those industrialists to look to Northern Ireland as a possible location for some of the new investment that they may require in the future? I am confident that the excellence and skills of our work force and the good relations that have always existed between management and employees will be rewarding for those who take up the opportunity of investing in Northern Ireland.

Mr. Fowler: I am glad to endorse what the hon. Gentleman says about the importance of Northern Ireland and also about the importance of investing there. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland is sitting on the Front Bench and he will have heard what the hon. Gentleman said. The reason why Northern Ireland is not mentioned in the White Paper is that it does not apply to it, but the hon. Gentleman will be aware that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State is presently consulting on this issue.

Mr. David Madel (Bedfordshire, South-West): In relation to existing skills and the need for new skills in the construction industry, will the new arrangements allow firms whose activities are factory production orientated, which do not have any construction site activities and which therefore, get no training or advice from the CITB, to withdraw from it, providing that they pay the levy that they would have paid towards their own training activities?

Mr. Fowler: My hon. Friend will understand from my statement that we are seeking to move the statutory industrial training boards to an independent, non-statutory basis. The specific issue that my hon. Friend has raised is essentially a matter for the CITB and industry to consider under the new arrangements. Certainly, if my hon. Friend thinks that something is unfair, we shall be glad to look into it.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I must have regard to the business on the Order Paper and the fact that we have employment questions tomorrow. I shall allow questions to continue until 4.35 pm.

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones (Ynys Môn): Although I acknowledge that we are facing a skills shortage in the economy and although I accept that we must change the way in which we train our young people and the unemployed, does the Minister accept that, particularly in rural areas and constituencies such as mine, it will be very difficult for employers to find the time and the resources to take the lead in the type of enterprise that the right hon. Gentleman has in mind under the new TECs? Does he accept that, especially in rural areas, we need a far more co-ordinated approach and that the Welsh Development Agency and the Scottish Development Agency should also be involved and have a role to play? Does he also agree that schools, and especially careers teachers, need to be given more resources to provide advice on training? In the past few weeks in the press we have heard talk about the Enterprise Scotland initiative. Where does that fit in with the current programme?

Mr. Fowler: My right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland will make a statement shortly—it may be tomorrow—and will also issue a White Paper then about the position in Scotland.

Mr. Tony Baldry (Banbury): Does my right hon. Friend agree that, although machinery and technology may be the same the world over, what makes the competitive difference is the skills of the people using that machinery and technology? The skills of our people are our greatest asset; at the end of the day they are our only asset. Does my right hon. Friend agree that the White Paper will do much to help to develop the necessary skills? My right hon. Friend should be assured that we in north Oxfordshire and in the Cherwell valley want to be among the first of the TECs, building on what we have already achieved with Enterprise Cherwell, the local employer training network and other initiatives to ensure that, locally, we have the skills to take us into the next century.

Mr. Fowler: I am grateful for that offer. I am sure that there will be a number of areas around the country that will want to make bids soon as a result of the White Paper. Obviously we shall consider them all.

What my hon. Friend has said about training is absolutely right. The demographic influence must also be underlined, because, by 1995, there will be a million fewer under-25s in the labour force. That adds to the importance of training in employment as well as considering other items such as training unemployed people to acquire the resources, and the source of new recruits.

Mr. Bruce Grocott (The Wrekin): How can the Secretary of State come to the House and say that the

[Mr. Bruce Grocott]

greatest obstacle to employment is the shortage of skills, without any recognition that this Government have been in power for the past nine years and he has been a Minister in it for the past nine years? If there is a shortage of skills, the Government must take the prime responsibility for it.

If the right hon. Gentleman does not recognise that, will he accompany me—we both represent west midlands constituencies—to see the training schools of major engineering companies that have been shut in the west midlands in the past nine years? Does he acknowledge that two thirds of engineering apprenticeships in the west midlands have collapsed under this Government? Is not the abiding legacy of the past nine years that a whole generation of young people have left school with no opportunity for skills training? He has created a generation without hope.

Mr. Fowler: That is just political jargon and slogans. It is also shallow and superficial. Probably more progress has been made in training during the past five years than during the past 40 years. If the hon. Gentleman wants to go round the west midlands, he should look at the training at Rover, Jaguar and Lucas, get up to date on the current position in the west midlands and then come back to the House.

Mr. John Watts (Slough): In view of the need to make the maximum use of skills in the economy, especially in the Thames valley, where the problem of skills shortage is not new, does my right hon. Friend have specific proposals for the special training needs of disabled people and ethnic minorities, whose abilities are much under-used in the economy?

Mr. Fowler: We have sought within the training programme to make special provision for the disabled. We shall keep that under review, because I entirely agree with my hon. Friend that we must use their skills. The same applies to members of ethnic minorities. Recent research conducted in London shows that many of them have skills and can go into employment. I want more people from the ethnic minorities to go into employment, and opportunities for them to do so will arise during the next few years.

Mr. Allen McKay (Barnsley, West and Penistone): Do not the facts speak for themselves? Since 1979, industry has closed training schools, dismissed its training officers and got rid of indentured apprenticeships. I am talking about real training, not about the superficial training that the Government provide. Genuine training in crafts and genuine indentured apprenticeships have disappeared because of Government policies. The only way to get them back is to encourage employers to take them on again, but it cannot be done without money, statutory obligations and Government intervention. That is the way that we should go.

Mr. Fowler: The hon. Gentleman believes that statutory obligations and central control will cure the skills shortages, but he is speaking against a background of failures in the past. Since the 1960s, such policies have failed. We recognise that employers have the crucial responsibility for training in employment, and it is sensible to base that training at local level.

Mr. James Cran (Beverley): Does my right hon. Friend agree that the White paper emphasises, crucially, the contribution that training can make to closing the productivity gap between Britain and its major European and American competitors? Does he further agree that there is no reason to believe that employers will not rise to the challenge that he has set for them, given the contribution that they have already made to the youth training scheme?

Mr. Fowler: That is right, in relation not only to YTS but to employment training. In addition, productivity is improving substantially. The position has improved greatly during the past five years, and we now have a good opportunity permanently to improve our training arrangements.

Mr. Max Madden (Bradford, West): Does the Secretary of State recognise that many of my constituents are at a loss to understand why the Government plan to spend £7 million to £8 million on building a city technology college in Bradford, which few of my constituents want, at a time when Bradford college, which makes a positive contribution to skills training, is having its budget cut by £200,000 and must sack staff and cut classes? Will he investigate the matter urgently?

Does the right hon. Gentleman recognise that, in Bradford and west Yorkshire generally, employment training is regarded as a complete flop? What safeguards will there be against employers who are ready to reap the benefits of training for which other employers have paid but who are not prepared themselves to invest in proper training?

Mr. Fowler: The city technology college is a matter for my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Education and Science, but I believe that it will add to the skills in the country. It will certainly not detract from them.

Far from employment training being a flop, during the past 12 weeks it has got off to an extremely good start. Almost 100,000 people are being trained under the scheme, which is vastly in excess of what the Labour Government achieved. It is no good the hon. Gentleman saying that it is a flop. It is not, but he and his hon. Friend have put every obstacle in the way of training. The public will remember the Labour party's record on that.

Mr. Richard Holt (Langbaurgh): In relation to the remarks about training officers, will my right hon. Friend note that the number of training officers in the Institute of Personnel Management has grown to such an extent that they have developed their own section?

May I draw my right hon. Friend's attention to the furniture industry? One reason why there is an acute skills shortage in that industry today is that the trade unions did not allow us to take on as many apprentices or dilutees as we wanted to. They obstinately refused to allow numbers to be increased. I welcome the fact that the pre-entry closed shop will be abolished. Will my right hon. Friend examine the position of the London furniture school, which is under threat? It is the only centre of excellence in Europe for the repair and maintenance of musical instruments.

Mr. Fowler: I shall certainly look into that matter. I welcome what my hon. Friend said. As for the pre-entry

closed shop, the White Paper is concerned with barriers to employment, and needing a union card before one can get a job is such a barrier to employment.

Mr. Derek Fatchett (Leeds, Central): Did the Secretary of State see the comments reported today by the chairman of the Trustee Savings bank, who suggested that the acute skills shortage was a socially divisive time bomb? Will the White Paper, with its threat to industrial training boards, its lack of additional resources and its commitment to an organisation of training that was rejected in the Secretary of State's original White Paper on employment training, strengthen the fears about an acute shortage of training and skills? When will the Secretary of State face the fact that the Government's record has left the country short of skills and of the ability to compete, especially in the Common Market after 1992?

Mr. Fowler: The hon. Gentleman is wrong to say that skills shortages have appeared suddenly in the past 10 years. Any objective commentator would say that skills shortages in Britain go back over 50, 60 and 70 years. The devices used by the Labour Government have been proved not to work, and we are putting that right.

STATUTORY INSTRUMENTS, &c.

Mr. Speaker: With permission, I shall put together the two motions on statutory instruments.

Ordered,

That the Agriculture Improvement (Variation) (No. 2) Scheme 1988 (S.I., 1988, No. 1983) be referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments &c.

That the draft Merchant Shipping (Safety at Work Regulations) (Non-UK Ships) Regulations 1988 be referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments &c.—*[Mr. John M. Taylor.]*

Elected Authorities (Northern Ireland) Bill

Order for Second Reading read.

Mr. Speaker: I have selected the reasoned amendment in the name of the Leader of the Opposition.

4.40 pm

The Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (Mr. Tom King): I beg to move, That the Bill be now read a Second time.

Hon. Members often complain that too little Northern Ireland legislation comes forward in the form of a Bill for proper debate in the House. I do not think that such a complaint could be directed at the Queen's Speech because the House will have a full opportunity to debate and to consider in Committee many of the measures in it. Today we shall debate the Elected Authorities (Northern Ireland) Bill and tomorrow the House will have before it the Prevention of Terrorism (Temporary Provisions) Bill. Although the latter is a United Kingdom measure, it contains some important provisions relating to Northern Ireland.

Mr. Paddy Ashdown (Yeovil): I apologise to the Secretary of State for intervening so early in his speech. He will have seen the comments in today's newspapers from which it appears that the Government will want to derogate from the ruling of the Strasbourg court. That might arise in tomorrow's debate and it would be useful if the Secretary of State could tell us whether that will be included in the Bill that the Government intend to bring before the House tomorrow.

Mr. King: The hon. Gentleman had better wait and see. I shall leave it to my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary to speak about that. I do not want to anticipate anything that he might say. I note what the hon. Gentleman has said.

I was speaking about the Northern Ireland matters that the House will have a full opportunity to debate. In that context we shall also have a Bill on fair employment. This comes on the back of the criminal evidence order that the House approved at the end of the last Session. It was about the ban on direct broadcasting by certain organisations and was approved by the House after being presented by my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary. The police and criminal evidence order for Northern Ireland will give added rights of protection to those taken in for questioning. We have a fairly full range of measures and legislation coming before the House and they will be dealt with in their proper order in due course.

Before I deal in proper order with today's Bill, perhaps I could be permitted to put the legislation in its overall context because I am conscious that each measure always has its critics. Each item that is proposed is approved or rejected by one side or the other. It seems to be left to a few hon. Members to put them into context and to show how they form a general pattern and approach to the issues that we face in Northern Ireland. I should like to put the Bill in the context of our overall theme of fairness and justice for the people of Northern Ireland. We want to ensure that we have an effective response to the evil of terrorism and proper protection for the rights of the community as well as respect for the rights of individuals.

That which we seek is blunt and simple and perhaps it is fairly obvious, but it is worth repeating against the

[Mr. King]

background of some of the criticisms that we receive. What we seek for the people of Northern Ireland is the same as that which we seek for people throughout the United Kingdom. We seek better prospects for jobs and self respect for people. We seek better housing and better education for our children. We want to see proper health care and good amenities and we want to see better community relations, tolerance, peace and order and the cessation of violence in the Province.

Those are our overall objectives, but no single measure or item can go to the heart of solving the problems of Northern Ireland. On a broad front, we seek to advance the cause of good government and to improve the condition of people in Northern Ireland in all those areas. Obviously those objectives are shared by the overwhelming majority of the people who wish to see nothing more than the cessation of violence and a better and safer life for themselves and their families.

In the work carried out by me and by my colleagues in government, we pay great attention to such issues as economic development. Of course we take pride in the fall in unemployment and in the confidence of so many companies in Northern Ireland that have substantially increased their investment in the past year. That has improved employment prospects. We are pleased to see companies from overseas and shall seek to maintain, as the latest public expenditure statement shows and as my hon. Friend the Minister of State made clear, our determination to support industrial development and investment in the Province. We want more jobs, but at the same time we want to ensure that there is no discrimination in the distribution of those jobs and that opportunities are presented across communities without regard to religion or opinion.

There has been substantial investment in housing in recent years; we want to maintain that level of investment, which is much higher than in the rest of the United Kingdom. We want to see an increase in home ownership and the elimination of the worst housing conditions in some of the high-rise flats. I confirm our determination to see improvements in that respect.

I have considerable admiration for the standard of health care in the Province. Since I have been Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, I have gained considerable respect for the hospitals and the general practitioners in the Health Service there. The Province is well served by the Health Service and we wish to see that maintained. We also want to see high standards in education. It is an easy and proud claim that Northern Ireland has high standards in educational achievement, but we also know that it has a serious problem because of the number of people who fail to achieve any qualifications.

There is no room for complacency in education, and we are keen to see how education can play its part in dealing with conditions in the Province. I emphasise again the importance that we attach to the initiative by my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, the hon. Member for Peterborough (Dr. Mawhinney), of support for integrated education. That will prove to be an important contribution.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Harold Walker): Order. I know that, conventionally, debate on Second Reading is wide, but I remind the Secretary of State that he is going very wide of the provisions of the Bill.

Mr. King: I seek to explain the background to the Bill, Mr. Deputy Speaker, but I understand the point that you are making. It is important to tell the House about the measures that will be coming forward. As I said at the beginning of my speech——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. The right hon. Gentleman must realise that it is difficult for the Chair subsequently to contain the debate within the proper parameters when the Secretary of State ranges as wide as he is doing.

Mr. King: I apologise, and entirely accept your ruling, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I know that Northern Ireland Members are concerned that our opportunities for debate in the House on Northern Ireland measures are limited, and I sought to do the House the courtesy of outlining the context in which we are bringing forward the Bill. I entirely understand your remarks, and I will respect them.

Rev. Ian Paisley (Antrim, North): I trust that the Secretary of State has in mind—perhaps he is not able to deal with this because of the ruling of the Chair—the serious position in the shipyards.

Mr. King: I have all these problems in mind. They are all part of the framework. Anybody who knows Northern Ireland understands, in the politics of Northern Ireland, the game of pluses and minuses—who is up and who is down—and knows that these are important considerations. They are reflected in this legislation, as every hon. Member who represents a Northern Ireland constituency knows.

We seek in the measures that we are taking, and in particular those dealing with peace and order and the cessation of violence, to respond to people's interests and concerns on matters in which terrorism and support for violence pose challenges to democratic society. These concerns are relevant to the Bill. We have taken a number of steps in law and order to try to ensure that the work that the security forces do for the protection of the community is as effective as possible.

Mr. Seamus Mallon (Newry and Armagh): Is there not a contradiction in that, at a time when we are introducing week after week legislation dealing with the law in Northern Ireland, the Government will not, I believe, obey the diktats of the European Court in relation to the law with which we shall deal tomorrow? Does the right hon. Gentleman agree that petulant ladies make bad law?

Mr. King: I think that I am suffering from one or two late arrivals to the debate. I am not sure whether the hon. Gentleman was in his place when the hon. Member for Yeovil (Mr. Ashdown) raised that point and sought to get me to comment on it. I suggested that he should wait, and I suggest that the hon. Gentleman should wait, for tomorrow's debate when the subject can be properly addressed. I am conscious of my responsibilities. I recognise the connection between all these items, the perception of them, and the perception of the legislation before the House. It will be perceived not simply in isolation, but by many in relation to other matters that are

currently on the agenda. That is why I took the liberty, subject to correction, to put these matters in the widest context possible.

In law and order, we have sought to address the concerns about the position of the security forces, to ensure that the balance of justice with the firm pursuit of terrorism can be maintained, and that the security forces have the necessary facilities and are furnished with the right instruments to be able to discharge their responsibilities to the community. I have already referred to several measures in the last Session that addressed this problem. Others will be introduced with the legislation tomorrow. We believe that they provide protection for the community by providing the security forces with those proper instruments, but we also believe that they provide the proper respect for the rights of the individual, as I said earlier.

We have taken a number of steps to try to ensure that individual rights are properly protected, whether in measures that have already been discussed, the codes of conduct for the RUC, the codes for the Army and security forces, the guide to the exercise of the emergency powers or tackling the problems of delay of appeals so that people do not feel that justice is delayed and there is some inhibition on their right of appeal. Those steps are a measure of our determination to protect individual rights as well.

Against that background, the Bill seeks to address certain grievances and anomalies in local government. I begin with two anomalies. Clauses 1 and 2 deal with the franchise for district council elections in Northern Ireland and bring it broadly into line with that for Parliament. That change will sweep away earlier legislation widely perceived as discriminating against Nationalists in Northern Ireland. It will enfranchise for district council elections in Northern Ireland about 10,000 people, called "I" voters—that "I" stands for imperial Parliament voters—who are at present unable to vote in local council elections. They are people who, under the 1962 legislation for Northern Ireland, failed to meet the special nationality and residence qualifications laid down for district council elections. This legislation confines the right to vote to Commonwealth citizens who either were born in Northern Ireland or have resided in the United Kingdom for the whole of the seven years preceding the qualifying date for registration.

Mr. William Ross (Londonderry, East): The Secretary of State has said that every one of those 10,000 people who gains a vote is naturally a Nationalist. How does he prove that sweeping statement? We cannot allow it to go unchallenged. There is no evidence that that is so, and many Army wives and many who might vote Unionist are among those 10,000.

Mr. King: I said that it was "widely perceived" as discriminating against Nationalists. It is true that among those who will now be enfranchised are the wives of service men who find themselves unable to meet the qualification of having been in the United Kingdom for the whole of the seven years. If it is perceived as discriminating both against Nationalist and Unionist voters, and if therefore it will command the support of hon. Members on both sides of the House, I shall be delighted. That would be a happy outcome.

It is no secret in the history of this measure that it was perceived at the time as discriminating in that way. Citizens of the Irish Republic who are not also Commonwealth citizens, British citizens who do not meet the residence requirements and wives of service men are excluded from voting. This change will extend the franchise to them. This restriction has already been removed in parliamentary elections and for Assembly elections. The discrimination in respect of council elections has persisted for too long. I hope that I shall have the support of the House for the removal of this long-standing grievance.

Mr. Ian Gow (Eastbourne): Is my right hon. Friend able to confirm that, after the provisions of clause 1 have been become effective, the franchise for district elections in Northern Ireland will be identical to the franchise for district elections in Wales, Scotland and England?

Mr. King: I have a feeling that my hon. Friend has asked that question because there is a trick in it. I shall get that checked rather than reply off the cuff, and I shall ask my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary to answer. I say that in the kindest possible way because there may be some point of which I am not aware. I warn my hon. Friend that there are two other changes which I think will go much closer to achieving his objective. At the moment, in Northern Ireland, convicted prisoners can vote at district council, although not parliamentary elections. Certain patients compulsorily detained in mental institutions or otherwise unable to make a patient's declaration are also unable to vote. That involves about 850 people. The legislation will remove the right from them as they do not have the opportunity to vote elsewhere in the United Kingdom. Those are the key changes in the voting arrangements.

The second anomaly is covered by clause 9, which relates to the changes in the arrangements for disqualification. At present, for a person whose term of imprisonment or detention in the British Isles or the Republic of Ireland is for three months or more, disqualification applies while he is in prison for five years from the date of conviction. The proposal in clause 9 will change that to five years from the date of discharge.

It will of course be apparent that the effect of the present arrangement means that those who are convicted and receive a heavy sentence serve no disqualification if the five years has expired by the time they leave prison. However, people who serve a short sentence—perhaps of three months, which is the qualifying level—may emerge from prison and still have to serve another four years and nine months' disqualification. That is an anomaly, and the change proposed in the legislation is that the disqualification period shall apply from the date of discharge.

The most controversial part of the Bill concerns the declaration against terrorism. Clauses 3 and 5 provide for the declaration against terrorism to be made by candidates at, respectively, district council and Assembly elections in Northern Ireland. Clause 4 provides for a similar declaration to be made by candidates co-opted to fill casual vacancies on district councils. The terms of the declaration in each case are set out in schedule 2. Candidates will be required to declare that, if elected, they will not express support for or approval of proscribed

[Mr. King]

organisations or acts of terrorism—that is to say, violence for political ends—connected with the affairs of Northern Ireland.

Clause 6 defines the behaviour that will constitute a breach of the declaration. Clause 7 sets out the enforcement mechanism, which will be an application to the High Court for a determination that the declaration has been breached.

Mr. Eric S. Heffer (Liverpool, Walton): With regard to the precise definition of terrorism, the Secretary of State has referred to violence for political ends. The fact is that Governments have always believed in violence for political ends. There was terrorism in fighting Nazis in Germany. What is the precise definition of terrorism? Is it only violence against us? What are we really talking about?

Mr. King: The definition is spelt out as it is in the Bill to clarify the matter. It is violence against the person in that definition. As the hon. Gentleman understands, this is a vexed matter and that is why the rather strange definition is included, in somewhat less legalistic language, as "violence for political ends". In the end, that is a matter for a court to determine, as are the interpretations. That is my understanding of it.

Mr. William Ross *rose*——

Mr. Martin Flannery (Sheffield, Hillsborough) *rose*——

Mr. King: I want to finish this part of my speech.

Clause 7 also defines the persons enabled to apply for a determination of breach of declaration. In respect of a councillor, that includes the council itself, other members of the council or electors of the council. In respect of the Assembly members, they are other members of the Assembly or electors of the Assembly constituency concerned.

Clause 8 sets out the consequences of a determination by the High Court that a declaration has been breached. The councillor or Assembly member to whom the determination applies will be disqualified from both council and Assembly office for a period of five years from the date of the determination.

Mr. Flannery: Will the Secretary of State kindly explain a little more his opinion of people, whether or not they are terrorists, who profoundly believe that they are fighting for a cause and hold a belief—something like the French Resistance? Does he really believe that they will not sign something and that they will tell the truth if they profoundly believe in their cause? I think that he is dreaming. I do not think that it is on.

Mr. King: The most offensive sentence in the English language of recent times from a so-called political platform was the statement, if I can remember the words correctly, "Will anyone here object if, with the ballot paper in this hand and an Armalite in this hand, we take power in Ireland?" What that sentence says, and what the hon. Member for Sheffield, Hillsborough (Mr. Flannery) I am sure is not seeking to justify but is seeking to believe is inevitable, is that we can tolerate a situation in which people will exploit to the uttermost the freedoms and opportunities that a democratic society can provide while at the same time they reserve the right to kill, maim and intimidate those who argue against them.

Mr. Flannery: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. In his argument the right hon. Gentleman is seeking to say that I agree with the statement about an Armalite in one hand and a ballot paper in the other. Let me place it on the record that I am totally opposed to that. The Secretary of State must not say things like that. I was asking him to give us a detailed explanation of how he thinks that someone who believes in something profoundly or wrongly will tell the truth if that is against what he profoundly believes in. That is what I am asking the Secretary of State to do. That has nothing to do with what he imputes to me.

Mr. King: The House will have heard that I was most careful not to suggest that the hon. Gentleman was in any way seeking to support or condone violence. The problem that the hon. Gentleman was trying to state was that this is not an appropriate response to the problems of those who try to take full advantage of the democratic freedoms and yet at the same time defile the sacredness of democracy by their attempt to use violence and intimidation to get their way.

The hon. Member for Hillsborough made a specific point. He asked whether I seriously thought that those people will not just sign the declaration in any case. They may do it. That is all right, but they do that in the knowledge that, if they sign and then commit what may be demonstrated and can be established in the courts to be an offence against that declaration, they will face the consequences.

At the moment, they face no consequences whatsoever. I have complete sympathy with councillors in council chambers in Northern Ireland trying to discharge their responsibilities to their electorate in a democratic and honest way. I find it intolerable that they must listen to and endure that kind of unacceptable abuse. It is a total abuse of the democratic process. Would the hon. Gentleman just walk by on the other side? Would he say that we must have some respect for people's views which are not quite the same as our own, or would he stop and say, "I respect other people's democratic opinions expressed in a democratic way, but if they are carried to the extent of violence and intimidation, there has to be some protection, some right of access for democratic councillors to protect them against that situation"?

Mr. John Hume (Foyle): If I heard him aright, the right hon. Gentleman is saying that, if elected, councillors will not call for support for violent organisations, but they can call for as much support as they like, including the quotation that he has just given, during the election campaign. That means that if they are elected and call for the same support in the council chamber, if a member of the public, not the authority, takes a civil action and they lose their seat, they can fight the election again, use the same language again and get re-elected. Are not the Government handing them a weapon to disrupt local government?

Mr. King: I listened to a broadcast this morning in which the hon. Gentleman made a similar point about what happens during an election campaign. Whatever we try to do to deal with the evil of terrorism, there is no easy answer; there is no pat solution that is absolutely foolproof and perfect every time. The hon. Gentleman knows that I have an army of excellent conscientious officials who have warned everyone of the difficulties and the problems and

of what the anomalies might be. Should we sit here saying that everything is too difficult and do nothing? In an election, should we try to rule every single candidate, even the biggest nutter who will never get near saving his deposit, and inspect every word he says, or should we make it a requirement of candidature that a person should be a valid candidate? Those people have achieved the opportunity of a democratic election and the platform provided by that democratic election, and before election a candidate must at least know that he runs that risk. It is not a perfect solution or an automatic guarantee, but at least they have to face that risk.

I may not persuade the hon. Member for Foyle (Mr. Hume), but, although we do not believe every poll we see, it would appear that he has not persuaded the members of his party who, in the poll that I saw, overwhelmingly believe the measure to be a sensible and necessary precaution, and that people standing for democratic election in Northern Ireland should have no hesitation or inhibition about making that declaration.

Mr. Julian Brazier (Canterbury): My right hon. Friend has just spoken about every option having some difficulties. Will he join me in wondering whether, in a few minutes' time, we shall hear at last some constructive suggestion from the Opposition Front Bench on at least one option?

Mr. King: I should not like to raise my hon. Friend's hopes on that. I have seen the Labour party's comments in the statement issued at the time of the consultative paper, expressing reservations about it.

I believe that it is not sufficient for hon. Members simply to walk by and say that the situation has to be allowed and tolerated. The House will know that other, more substantial, approaches might have been taken, and I have no doubt that there will be those who argue for the proscription of all organisations that might be supportive of violence and terrorism. The Government have not taken that option. We have decided to put forward in the Bill what we feel is a response to the problems faced in the council chambers. We recognise that there is an unacceptable situation at the moment, and we are determined to provide some means whereby those who feel affronted have some chance to do something about it.

Mr. Tony Benn (Chesterfield) *rose*——

Mr. King: I shall give way to the right hon. Gentleman, but it will have to be the last time I give way, or I shall talk out the debate.

Mr. Benn: I am very grateful to the Secretary of State, but these are important questions that only he can clarify. If in the course of an election a candidate makes speeches which are not covered by the Bill, after he is elected an attack on the elected candidate is an attack on the electors who elected him. This is the problem to which the Secretary of State has not turned his mind. When we start interfering, either by a ban on broadcasting or through the provisions of the oath, we are interfering with those who elected the people concerned and not with the candidate. Will the Minister say something about that problem? He said that there is overwhelming support for the policy. If that is the case, such candidates will not be elected; if it is not, they will. That is the problem which arouses anxiety in the minds of many right hon. and hon. Members.

Mr. King: The right hon. Gentleman's last point is a bit muddled, because the support is for the fact that candidates should be required to sign such a declaration. There seems to be general agreement that most people will sign it. The criticism from one side is that of course they will sign it and then they will not follow it. They will have to address that matter, but they will know at the time that they will be at risk of being found in breach of the declaration, and that that could lead to a five-year disqualification.

Although it is not a perfect measure, and although there are many criticisms of, for instance, the ban on direct access to the media, they are not shared by Ministers in the Irish Republic, nor by Mr. Conor Cruise O'Brien, who does not go around apologising for the measure that he brought in. He believes that it is a justified and sensible measure. I believe that that will prove to be the case in Northern Ireland, and that the measure, albeit with the difficulties, problems and reservations that people have, will prove to be far more effective than people think.

In the society that exists in Northern Ireland, it is necessary to respond to the genuine and deeply held grievances arising out of the sufferings there. The measure is often talked about in connection with Sinn Fein exclusively, but I am talking about both extremes—those on the Loyalist side as well as those on the Republican side. Violence and support of a twin-track policy, whatever it may be, are equally repulsive and offensive from whichever side they come.

The right hon. Member for Chesterfield (Mr. Benn) chastised me, saying that I would need to address the problem. I shall listen to what he says he would do to address the problem. I have addressed it and have rejected some other measures. My hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State for Northern Ireland has spent more hours than he would probably care to reflect on discussing and consulting with a whole range of different people on what would be the right response. There is widespread recognition among many politically active people in Northern Ireland, and in the Churches, that a response is needed, and, while it is not perfect, they see this as a genuine atempt to reflect a concern that exists. I am very encouraged that that attitude and appreciation appear to be widely reflected among the people of Northern Ireland in both religious communities.

Mr. Peter Robinson (Belfast, East): Taking it one step further, and assuming that a member of Sinn Fein signs that declaration, one of the arguments put forward by those who asked the Government to do something about this matter was that there appeared to be a double standard: that the right hon. Gentleman and his ministerial colleagues were asking Unionist elected representatives and others to sit down in council chambers with Sinn Fein, while they themselves refused to meet Sinn Fein elected representatives. If a Sinn Fein member signs the declaration, will the Secretary of State meet him?

Mr. King: No, we have no such proposals. If Sinn Fein were to repudiate violence, we would have to consider that. There is a clear distinction between not advocating or supporting violence and failing to repudiate it. I am aware that that was one of the criticisms in the representations made to my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary.

The House will have an opportunity fully to debate this measure not only today but in Committee. The

[Mr. King]

Government believe that it is an appropriate response to circumstances that cause great offence and grievance. In no sense does it seek to exclude from elected office anyone who wishes to pursue the democratic path in the way in which all hon. Members expect—without violence, intimidation or murder as the aid and adjunct to a campaign. We offer the opportunity for all to stand. We merely require that, if elected, the candidate will observe the standards for which the House has stood for centuries. That is the basis on which we put forward the Bill, and I commend it to the House.

5.20 pm

Mr. Kevin McNamara (Kingston upon Hull, North): I beg to move, to leave out from "That" to the end of the Question and to add instead thereof:

"That this House, whilst welcoming the proposals to extend the franchise in Local Government elections in Northern Ireland, declines to give a Second Reading to a Bill which is unnecessary because incitement to violence and displays of support for terrorism are already criminal offences; which will increase sectarian conflict in Local Government; which will assist the cause of the supporters of violence; which will place the judiciary in an invidious position, and which does nothing to encourage confidence in the operation of Local Government in Northern Ireland or to heal the divisions in that society."

I shall not follow the introduction of the Secretary of State, not because I concede his argument but because we should consider the Bill and its penicious effects.

The Labour party welcomes the proposals to end the anomalies in the electoral register. Unfortunately, that is the only part of the Bill to which my party can give its support. The central issue is the declaration against violence, to which I shall devote my remarks.

The case against this legislation has been made so vigorously that I am surprised the Government have been foolish enough to introduce it:

"democracies have to be careful in seeking to defend their democracy by not adopting means which play into the hands of terrorists, and therefore, I think we should seek to derogate as little as possible from the normal standards of justice and government which we would normally apply . . . There are always people who will come forward and seek to persuade law enforcement agencies of governments that there are short cuts to solving terrorist problems; that there is no need to be moderate, civilised and restrained in our response. However briskly, forcefully and determinedly one might have to respond to particular situations, I do think those other qualities should not be forgotten, lest they simply increase the size of the sea within which the terrorist fish can swim . . . do not try to take short cuts with the law in order to produce short-term results that may cause longer-term problems. Do not neglect the task of tackling the real grievances which may provide the terrorist with some of his support in the community".

The Government apparently do not share that point of view. It was put forward most eloquently and effectively by the hon. Member who probably knows more about countering terrorism and who has served longer in Northern Ireland than anyone else—the hon. Member for Chelsea (Mr. Scott). All those words came from a Northern Ireland information service handout of a speech made by the hon. Gentleman in 1986. That was the background against which the Government started again after the last election, but they have cut themselves off from such a policy by a series of measures over the past six months. This measure is perhaps one of the most regrettable. It is a disappointment to all fair-minded men that the Government, reacting to the Prime Minister's pressures, have not listened to the words of wisdom of the hon. Member for Chelsea.

The Bill does not address itself to the problem of reducing the size of the sea in which the terrorist swims. It does not even place the sandbags in the way of the terrorist tide, nor does it even fence off the sea with barbed wire, which might catch the odd terrorist minnow. It simply strings a white tape along the edge of the water, which is insufficient to dry the swamps in which the paramilitaries feed.

The Labour party declines to give a Second Reading to the Bill for several reasons. It is misconceived and unnecessary, does nothing to eradicate violence, is futile, will strengthen the paramilitary case and it is apparent that it will have quite unintended consequences that the Government have equally obviously failed to consider.

The Secretary of State's case for the Bill rests on two assumptions—that the presence of Sinn Fein in local government is alone responsible for the disruption of local authority business, and that its presence is offensive to other councillors and the citizens of Northern Ireland. On the first point, the Secretary of State has misled himself. The greatest disruption in council chambers has been as a result of the Unionist campaign against the Anglo-Irish Agreement, not the presence of Sinn Fein. Some 20 of the 21 district councils made representations in favour of these proposals to the Under-Secretary. Of those 20 councils, 15 experienced some disruption as part of a protest campaign against the Anglo-Irish Agreement; that did not concern the presence of Sinn Fein.

Only six councils signed the declaration of fair employment embodied in the current fair employment legislation; 14 did not sign, yet it is mainly those siren voices—those local councils that were so upset at sitting down with Sinn Fein—who would so insult their fellow citizens that they would not sign fair employment declarations and took part in a campaign of disruption against the Anglo-Irish Agreement. The Secretary of State's first point falls on that count.

Mr. Brazier: As a Catholic, I am most concerned about fair employment in Northern Ireland, as is the right hon. Member. It is important to make progress, but the considerable progress made over the past few years has not led to a fall in terrorist violence. Something else must be done, and the House looks forward to hearing the right hon. Gentleman's views.

Mr. McNamara: I congratulate the hon. Gentleman on promoting me to the Privy Council; he must tell his right hon. Friend the Prime Minister about that. I am protesting not as a Catholic, but as a citizen. Fair employment is not a question of Catholics or Protestants, but of human rights.

I agree with the Minister that the presence of Sinn Fein gives rise to strong and understandable feelings of revulsion and outrage. As we know—the Prime Minister has often told us so, especially with regard to apartheid—such strong emotions are not a rational basis for policy decisions. The argument must be considered in greater detail. One must ask why Sinn Fein participation arouses such anger. It is because it supports a campaign of violence by the IRA. If we are serious about ending the anger, we

must be serious about ending the violence. The Bill simply suggests that the underlying problem will go away if it is concealed from view.

The Bill does nothing to hinder the IRA. It will do nothing to put those who employ violence behind bars. It will not cut off the flow of arms or lead to their seizure. It attempts to limit the expression of support for paramilitaries, but that is already a criminal offence, which is why we believe that the Bill is unnecessary. There are a battery of powers in the criminal law that deal with the expression of support for violence. Section 21 of the Northern Ireland (Emergency Provisions) Act 1978 and section 9 of the Northern Ireland (Emergency Provisions) Act 1987 make it an offence to invite or solicit support for proscribed organisations. Is that not what the declaration is supposed to be about?

Article 9 of the Public Order (Northern Ireland) Order 1987 makes it an offence to use threatening, abusive or insulting words or behaviour if it is likely that hatred or fear will be aroused. Is that not what the declaration is about? These powers are available to the authorities now, but we are asked to permit action to be taken against people for what they are, rather than for what they do. This involves a reversal of policies that have been followed since the phasing out of internment and the end of special category status in the mid-1970s.

The Bill is also futile. Oaths and declarations were abolished in 1973. The decision was taken with the support of the Government and Opposition of the day. Among the various reasons was one put forward by my right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Warley, West (Mr. Archer), who said:

"I take leave to doubt whether the Act ever achieved its purpose. An oath excludes, by its nature, only the scrupulous and honest . . .

Those who are prepared to take an oath in which they do not necessarily believe . . . will not be excluded by the requirement of the oath . . . this requirement operates chiefly as a rather purposeless irritant."—[*Official Report*, 17 April 1973; Vol. 855, c. 423.]

The argument was unanswerable at the time; it remains unanswerable now. As we have seen, Sinn Fein has already announced its intention to sign the declaration.

The Bill strengthens the position of the paramilitaries. The real beneficiaries of the Bill will be those whom it seeks to defeat. That has been an unfortunate trait of the Government's policy over the past six months. Sinn Fein will be able to portray itself as the only party that the Government feel is a serious threat to their ability to rule in Northern Ireland. This is a major moral and political boost to that party. One has only to look at the statements issued by Sinn Fein since the declaration was first mooted to see the ill-conceived satisfaction with which its leaders welcome the Bill. My party is not prepared to support a Bill that gives such comfort to the supporters of the paramilitaries.

Under the headline "Thatcher's Crackdown will Fail" in *Republican News* of 24 November, an article points out that the Bill is

"an admission that Britain cannot crush Sinn Fein support but will still try to stop the Nationalist people choosing who will represent them . . . Thatcher is introducing these latest laws precisely because of the political effectiveness of Sinn Fein . . . In her own pig-headed, jackboot way she is letting us know that we have been adopting the right tactics and strategy!"

That is how Sinn Fein sees it.

If one were tempted to dismiss this simply as idle rhetoric, one need only look at the effect of the original proposals put forward in the consultative document on voting behaviour. Shortly after the paper was published, Sinn Fein trounced its rivals in two Belfast city council by-elections, increasing its share of the first preference vote from 55 per cent. to 63·6 per cent. in one case—a seat that it was expected to win—and from 43 per cent. to 49·8 per cent. in the other—a seat that it was expected to lose to the SDLP. What clearer warning could have been given to the Government to think again? The Bill is a blow, not against the supporters of the paramilitaries but against constitutional Nationalists. It seems an insult to my hon. Friends in the SDLP, who have been fighting violence on the hustings in a democratic manner for the past 20 years, to say to them, "If you are to stand for election in local government, you must sign this declaration."

The Bill is particularly ironic at a time when my hon. Friend the Member for Foyle (Mr. Hume) and his party have pitilessly exposed the bankruptcy of Sinn Fein and its ideas and methods. For the Government to suggest that the Bill, which is so welcomed by those whom it is designed to combat, is a serious contribution to the fight against the paramilitaries defies all logic. Sinn Fein and the IRA have dared the Government to take such a step and the Government have been foolish enough to take the bait.

Why do the Bill's legitimate targets enjoy the Government's predicament so openly and thoroughly? They recognise, where the Government do not, the advantages that it offers them. Simply by forcing the Government to introduce a Bill directed at Sinn Fein, the paramilitaries have succeeded in obliging the authorities to place the elected members of their organisation on a pedestal and not in the dock. This is a morale booster for the convinced supporter of the IRA or for the experienced gunman, but, more seriously, it will undermine confidence in the authorities among those tens of thousands of people whose attitude towards the Republican movement wavers between sympathy and disgust.

What, these people will ask, do the Government have to hide? Why do they seek to change the electoral rules because they do not like the outcome? What is the point of voting? The old slogan, "If voting could change anything, they would make it illegal," will win converts to the Bill if we adopt it. I cannot think of any better way to damage the credibility of the democratic process. That will be the effect of using the electoral rather than the criminal law in the fight against the paramilitaries. The west Belfast by-election results must be a constant reminder to us all.

Sinn Fein will take comfort from another aspect of the measure. If a Sinn Fein member is disqualified, his party will receive a propaganda bonus. When the by-election takes place, Sinn Fein cannot lose, because there will be one of two results. In electoral districts where the councillor was elected at an early stage of the count, another member of his party is likely to be elected, probably with an increased majority, thereby thumbing the party's nose at the legislation. Where the disqualified councillor was elected at a more advanced stage of the count, the seat will probably be lost. I leave it to hon. Members to ponder which scenario would have the most damaging effect on the democratic process; the first, because the Bill was shown to be useless, or the second, because it gave a continuous argument that the rules had been changed and the goal posts moved.

[Mr. McNamara]

The Bill is also discriminatory. Its damaging effects are compounded by the fact that its target is essentially those who are misleadingly called "Republican" paramilitaries. As the list of proscribed organisations is discriminatory, there is a major inconsistency in the Government's position. Unlike the situation with the broadcasting restrictions, the UDA is not covered, so we have the ludicrous position where it will not be possible to support the UDA on television but all too possible to support it in the council chambers.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (Mr. Richard Needham): I am not sure whether the hon. Gentleman has read the new declaration. Specifically, under schedule 2 it states:

"I will not by word or deed express support for or approval of—

(a) any organisation"—

and so on—

"(b) acts of terrorism (that is to say, violence for political ends) connected with the affairs of Northern Ireland."

Surely the hon. Gentleman realises that we added paragraph (b) to ensure that the measure was even-handed and covered both sides.

Mr. McNamara: It is not as even-handed as the hon. Gentleman thinks.

I turn to the unintended consequences of the Bill. Most obviously, the Government seem to have forgotten the second of the two reasons why oaths and declarations were prohibited 15 years ago. That is all the more surprising when one considers that among those voting in favour of the abolition of the oaths one finds the names of three future Secretaries of State for Northern Ireland, including the present incumbent.

Mr. William Ross: The hon. Gentleman has been talking about by-elections as though they were going to be exactly the same as proportional representation elections. Has he studied the number of district electoral areas in Northern Ireland in which the IRA-Sinn Fein element had a majority of the Nationalist vote?

Mr. McNamara: The point of my examples was that the IRA did not have a majority of the Nationalist vote but won the by-election.

I turn to the sub-plot underlying this matter. For us in Great Britain, the requirement to sign a declaration eschewing the use of violence for political ends may appear to be the height of reason, but in the overheated atmosphere of Northern Ireland this takes on connotations which are not immediately visible to us in the House. The problem which we face is not whether the declaration is reasonable in itself, nor whether the wording is reasonable, but its very existence.

The existence of almost any declaration will create suspicion and unease in Northern Ireland. It smacks of the bad old days of Stormont and discrimination, where oaths and declarations were used to maintain the Nationalist population in a state of second-class citizenship. Whether we like it or not, this is the way in which the Bill will be perceived in Northern Ireland and was the reason why the Cameron commission was so strong in recommending ths abolition of oaths and declarations.

Even more important, there is a further unintended consequence; that is the way in which the Bill will intensify sectarianism in the council chambers. The Bill is an attempt to strike a blow against Sinn Fein, but it is not a well-directed sniper shot; rather, it is a careless blast of buckshot. It is already apparent that many district councils have descended into chaos following the signing of the Anglo-Irish Agreement. With this Bill, they will become even more of a sectarian bear pit because, in several councils, the behaviour of members, understandable though it might be, clearly shows that they have fallen into the trap set for them by Sinn Fein. They have allowed Sinn Fein to appear to be the injured party with their opponents cast as the real exponents of violence.

I can understand the emotions that inspire such behaviour, but, with this Bill, things will be even worse. Councillors will have even less incentive to attempt to counter the Sinn Fein case by reason, turning instead to the law. Local authorities will be paralysed, as there will be constant efforts to goad councillors into violating the declaration. There will be countless actions to disbar councillors and constant challenges to establish exactly what the declaration means.

That last point is of particular significance. What does the declaration mean? As it stands, there will be efforts to disbar Sinn Fein councillors, but its activists have, in the past, shown themselves sufficiently sophisticated to be able to circumvent the declaration. For instance, it does not take much imagination to predict Mark Antony style perorations, such as "I support the right of the South African people to enter into armed struggle to secure their freedom. I support the right of the Afghan people to enter into armed struggle to secure their freedom. I support the right of all freedom-loving people to fight to secure their freedom." Does that fall within or without the bar?

Those concerns are accentuated by the vagueness of the terms of the declaration.

Mr. Needham: The hon. Gentleman does not appear to be answering the point that I put to him. If he looks at clause 6(2), he will see that it states that

"For the purposes of subsection (1) above a person shall be taken to express support for, or approval of, any matter if his words or actions could reasonably be understood as expressing support for, or approval of, it."

Mr. McNamara: What does the Minister mean by that? If I say that I support all freedom-loving people in their fight, is the Minister saying that freedom does not exist in Northern Ireland? Are we saying that we shall get a person because he opposes apartheid? That is farcical and the Minister knows it.

Those concerns are accentuated by the vagueness of the terms of the declaration itself. According to clause 6(2), to which the Minister referred, the grounds for disqualification are the use of words or behaviour which "could reasonably be understood" to be violations of the declaration, but what does that mean? In effect, we are being asked to abdicate our responsibility to the courts and to offer a poisoned chalice to the courts. I am also concerned that extra-territorial effect of clause 6(3) constitutes a major departure in international law, which is likely to further frustrate Britain's international reputation because a person can now be "done", not for what he says in the British Isles, but for what he says in Timbuktu, Toronto or Washington.

Only last week, the European Court of Human Rights once again found against the Government in respect of the provisions of the Prevention of Terrorism Act 1974. That

will lead to yet another challenge. It is open to dispute whether a case under article 9 of the convention, which protects freedom of expression, would succeed, but a case under article 3 of the first protocol, which deals with free elections, would appear to stand a high degree of success. I do not wish to see this country dragged through the courts again.

To make matters worse, the matter of enforcement proposed by the Government is perhaps the worst aspect of the Bill. By placing the onus on councils, councillors and individual citizens to take action, it will intensify the conflict in local government, possibly also setting them up as targets. I see from *The Daily Telegraph* of 25 November that the Minister justifies this provision in terms of the need to protect the impartiality of the Law Officers. I wish that the Government had displayed a similar concern in the Stalker affair. We cannot protect that which is not perceived to exist in Northern Ireland.

It is a cowardly excuse because, if the evidence is there, action could and should be taken under the emergency powers legislation dealing with inciting anyone to support violence. However, the Government are saying no and are doing that deliberately because they know that the same standard of evidence is not required in a civil action as in a criminal action. That again shows the Bill to be the farce that it is. The Government have insufficient confidence in their own measures to take responsibility for its enforcement.

The court might well be cluttered up with applications against councillors of all persuasions. Many of those applications may be dismissed out of hand, but not all applications against Unionist councillors will be considered vexatious. Many councillors have taken part in paramilitary displays or have issued bloodthirsty calls to illegal and armed resistance against the decisions of this Parliament.

For example, in an interview shortly before the signing of the Anglo-Irish Agreement. Councillor Ivan Foster of Fermanagh council, former deputy leader of the Democratic Unionist party and commander of that party's paramilitary wing, the Third Force, warned that he and his supporters would resist the decisions of this Parliament. He said:

"I know how to use a gun. There's no use carrying a gun unless you know how to use it. There's no use carrying a gun if you don't intend to use it."

Why will the Government not take responsibility, under the provisions of this Bill, to seek to disbar a person who says such a thing?

Even more outrageous was the threat to Ulsterbus and its staff, issued in June 1985, by Councillor Sammy Wilson, a leading member of the DUP and recent lord mayor of Belfast. When Ulsterbus refused to provide transport to a demonstration in Castlewellan, which ended in violence, Mr. Wilson announced:

"It now seems that the Northern Ireland office has enlisted not only the RUC but the transport industry in its offensive against the Unionist population. Such a move can place Ulsterbus vehicles and drivers in an extremely vulnerable position."

However, no action was taken on that. Under the provisions of the Bill, will action be taken in future on something like that?

Mr. David Lightbown (Lord Commissioner to the Treasury): It is too vague.

Mr. McNamara: Members of the Transport and General Workers Union driving buses in Northern Ireland, know that it is a real threat to their security because they have seen what has happened to the buses.

The Ulster Resistance Movement is designed to intimidate this House. That movement is organised and dressed on paramilitary lines. Prominent members of this House were present at the foundation of that movement, including the leader and deputy leader of the Democratic Unionist party and the hon. Member for Belfast, North (Mr. Walker), and took part in various threatening marches around the Province. Within the last month, a large cache of arms was found in Armagh, accompanied by Ulster Resistance uniforms, including the red beret that the hon. Members for Belfast, East (Mr. Robinson) and for Antrim, North (Rev. Ian Paisley) were proud to wear.

Many of us in this House still remember the disgraceful scenes that took place on the Loyalist day of action in March 1986. Unionist councillors played an active role in attempts to instigate violence and to disrupt normal life in the Province.

The list of such activities is endless. I shall limit myself to one further example, that of the hon. Member for Belfast, East, who is also a member of Castlereagh council. The hon. Gentleman's prediliction for taking part in paramilitary displays is not as well known in this House as it is in Northern Ireland. He took part in a parade in Portadown, dressed in paramilitary style. In Enniskillen, he announced that the organisation—Ulster Resistance—had commenced paramilitary training. He did not confine his activities to the Province. His invasion of Clontibret in County Monaghan led to his conviction before the special criminal court.

Although I am sure that the House will agree that such episodes are to be deplored, that is not the primary purpose in bringing those facts to light; it is to bring to the attention of the House the fact that large sections of both communities have an ambiguous attitude towards the use of violence. What is more, in the context of this Bill, what the hon. Member for Belfast, East did would presumably prevent him standing for election as a member of his local council—of which he is at present a member—for five years, but it would not prevent him standing for election as a Member of this House or as a member of the European Parliament. Is that not hypocrisy? It is one rule for local government elections in Northern Ireland and another for this place and the European Parliament. That is why the Opposition are not prepared to accept the Bill.

There are two types of violence in Northern Ireland. First, there is the violence of those who seek to alter the constitutional status of Northern Ireland through force—the Republican paramilitaries. Secondly, there is the violence of the paramilitaries who seek, at best, to maintain the status quo or, at worst, to turn the clock back to the Northern Ireland of the pre-civil rights era—Protestant resistance. That is recognised by the authorities, but not by the Bill.

Under clause 6(a)(ii) it would be possible to make a speech in support of Loyalist organisations such as the UDA, the Third Force and Ulster Resistance, provided that person did not support specified acts of terrorism. It states that he would be in breach if he expressed approval of

"acts of terrorism (that is to say, violence for political ends) connected with Northern Ireland."

[Mr. McNamara]

Speeches can be made in general about any sort of violent organisation in Northern Ireland. It will be right and proper for divisional commanders to prepare, to march and to wear paramilitary uniform because their organisations are not proscribed and they cannot be connected to any specific act of terrorism. The Government surely cannot expect a court to say that if a person does not seek to defend a particular act of terrorism, that should be taken to be a connection with that act. That would be too much of a burden for the courts.

That same restriction does not apply to broadcasting because other organisations are not proscribed. A person can appear on television and openly support Protestant Resistance, Third Force or any other Nationalist offshoot that might pop up and is not proscribed—but not under this legislation. It does not add up.

I have sought to show that the Bill will affect politicians from both sides of the community and that it will lead to further sectarian divisions. If it does not, it will appear to be one-sided. We cannot tell what will happen because so much has been left to the discretion of the courts. Instead of dealing with the roots of violence and sectarianism, the Bill will further divide the communities as each side tries to equalise the score in the disqualification league table. The Secretary of State reminds me of Flan O'Brien's "determined chairmen who convert disorder into bedlam."

The Bill is an attempt by the Government to save the people of Northern Ireland from themselves. It may be deplorable that certain malevolent types emerge victorious from a secret ballot, but that is reality. The answer is to win the argument with their electorate, not to drive their supporters completely out of the political process. By requiring the judiciary to arbitrate between the conflicting factions, to decide who can serve on local authorities, and to define the limits of political debate in Northern Ireland, the Government are asking the state to substitute itself for the electorate. That will obviously damage public confidence in the judicial system.

The Bill does not require judges to decide specific cases on the basis of commonly held principles—it is an attempt to make them decide what those standards should be. That is a task for the elected representatives of the people and the people themselves. There are no short cuts. Not content with militarising the judicial process—as the Government have done under the Criminal Evidence (Northern Ireland) Order—they are now intent on politicising the judges as well. The beneficiaries of that can only be the paramilitaries. For that reason, the Opposition will vote against Second Reading.

5.54 pm

Mr. Peter Robinson (Belfast, East): Before I begin my remarks on the content of the Bill, I want to respond to some of the comments of the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, North (Mr. McNamara) who threw together some partial pieces of information, dangled them in front of the House and expected us to reach a conclusion on that brief information.

The hon. Gentleman described councillor Ivan Foster as a former deputy leader of the DUP, but Mr. Foster has never been the party's deputy leader and he is not a councillor. The hon. Gentleman said that Mr. Foster had said that he had a gun, that he knew how to use it and that no one should carry a gun unless he was prepared to use it. I, too, could make such remarks. Like Mr. Foster, I legally hold a weapon. If Mr. Foster were not prepared to use a gun, and if the authorities did not expect him to be able to use it, he should not have been given permission to hold one. If hon. Members knew where Mr. Foster lived, they would understand why he needs a weapon to protect his life and the lives of his family. There is nothing in the remarks of the former lord mayor of Belfast to which anyone could take offence, and there is nothing in them that needs to be answered.

The hon. Gentleman made wild remarks about me. He said that I appeared at Portadown in paramilitary uniform. That demonstrates his wild imagination. I was wearing a three-piece suit, on top of which I wore a normal blue overcoat. I was wearing a beret, and I shall tell the House why. The Chief Constable issued an edict that anyone who wore a beret would be considered to be in paramilitary uniform and subject to certain laws. I disagreed with that edict and said that boy scouts and girl guides would have to be careful about what they wore to their gatherings. The edict was absolute nonsense. I was merely thumbing my nose, as were others, at the Chief Constable.

The hon. Gentleman referred to the police recently uncovering arms in Northern Ireland and said, as is widely accepted in Northern Ireland, that the weapons belonged to the Ulster Resistance. The security forces have no information to substantiate that claim. The hon. Gentleman suggested that the weapons were found alongside Ulster Resistance uniforms. That is not true. The Ulster Resistance uniforms and berets were handed back to its members after being taken by the Royal Ulster Constabulary. They were not found with the guns that were displayed.

Mr. Mallon: In the interests of accuracy, would the hon. Gentleman like me to tell him the name of the person involved, whose house is exactly half a mile from where I live? I assure the hon. Gentleman that those uniforms were found with the guns at that house.

Rev. Ian Paisley: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker Is it in order for the House to discuss a matter that is before the courts? The person charged was a Mr. Spratt, whom I know very well. He was not charged with having guns or with being a member of the Ulster Resistance——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman appears to be committing the same offence as that about which he is complaining. If it is the case—and I am not aware of it—that ther person to whom reference has been made is the subject of charges laid before the court, it would be wrong for the House to discuss that because it would be sub judice.

Mr. Robinson: I hear your ruling, Mr. Deputy Speaker, but I assure the hon. Member for Newry and Armagh (Mr. Mallon) that if he listens carefully to the prosecution evidence when the case comes before the courts he will find that I am right and he is wrong.—*[Interruption.]* I will give way to the hon. Gentleman if he wishes.

A letter from the Minister dated 24 November shows the purpose behind the Bill. It shows that there are difficulties in local government as a result of the presence

in council chambers of elected representatives whose declared support for terrorist violence is incompatible with the democratic process. That is of great concern not only to elected representatives of the Unionist community but to other elected representatives and to other representatives of the community as a whole.

I should have thought that no one could have faulted the Government for taking account of those real concerns and attempting to do something about them. Many councillors in Northern Ireland have expressed their concern to the Secretary of State and others, and have asked the Secretary of State to bring forward a measure to deal with the matter. I should be the last person who could fault them for that. I have some strictures to apply, but they certainly do not relate to the basis and purpose of the legislation.

Again, for the sake of accuracy, I inform the Opposition Front Bench spokesman, the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, North, that before the Anglo-Irish Agreement was signed, as a result of the presence of Sinn Fein members there were boycotts and adjournments of local government. Such action started directly after the May elections and before the Anglo-Irish Agreement was signed. I say that just in case the hon. Gentleman is the least bit interested in accuracy, although his speech showed that he had no great concern for it.

In his letter to elected representatives forwarding a copy of the Bill, the Secretary of State properly showed the nature and importance of the measure. The problem of security and violence in Northern Ireland is well known to the House. More than 2,750 people have been butchered as a result of the terrorist campaign. Few families in Northern Ireland have not suffered as a consequence, if not directly by a member of their family being killed, certainly by a friend or close relative being butchered. That violence has transcended the religious and political divides in Northern Ireland. It is a matter of concern for everyone.

I must agree with the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, North—this measure will not address that problem, and it is unlikely that people will die as a result of the measure. However, I do not believe that the real purpose of the measure is to deal with security. If it is to do anything, it is to clean up the democratic process. If that is its purpose, it should be welcomed by the House.

There are some outstanding examples of the hypocrisy which pertains in democracy in Northern Ireland. For instance, in the constituency of the hon. Member for Foyle (Mr. Hume), in the council of Londonderry, a Sinn Fein member was returned who had previously been before the courts for being a part of the bombing team who blew up the council offices. Sinn Fein members who gloried in the death of district councillors are members of the self-same councils. No one can suggest that it is a pleasant task for people who believe in the democratic process to sit in council chambers with people who have taken that kind of action and expressed those views.

In many ways, the Secretary of State gave away the weakness of the measure when he responded to my earlier intervention about the double standard perceived by many Unionists—that the Secretary of State would encourage Unionists calmly and peacefully to take part in council debates with members of Sinn Fein, while he and his colleagues would hold them at bargepole length and ensure that they are not allowed into the Northern Ireland Office at Stormont castle.

In response to views that were expressed by Opposition Members from a sedentary position, the Secretary of State said that no repudiation of violence is included in the declaration. The truth is that the declaration which appears in the Minister's letter, the explanatory notes, the Secretary of State's remarks in the House and in the Bill itself, and which purports to be a declaration against terrorism, is not a declaration against terrorism. One does not need to declare oneself opposed to a proscribed organisation. That is not included in the delaration in the Bill. If it is a declaration against anything, it is a declaration against publicly announcing support for terrorism. If it were the former, I should be happier to give full and whole-hearted support to the measure. That is the weakness of the legislation—that it is not what it purports to be.

It is hypocritical for the Government to suggest to Unionist councillors that, even with this piece of legislation helping the situation to whatever extent it may, they should calmly and rationally debate local government issues with members of Sinn Fein while the Secretary of State and his Ministers refuse to do that self-same thing about self-same issues. I urge the Secretary of State to treat elected representatives in Northern Ireland as he would wish to be treated. If Sinn Fein members are unclean for Stormont castle, they should be considered unclean for council chambers in Northern Ireland.

The answer—the Government cannot dodge it—must be the proscription of the organisation concerned. If the Secretary of State would consider with me for a moment the effect that that would have on Northern Ireland, he would see that there would be many beneficial side-effects. For the first time, the people of Northern Ireland would see determination and resolve on the part of the Government to take any measure, no matter how unpopular it would be with some hon. Members. They would see that the Government are prepared to take the necessary action to make it clear to the community that there is no place in our council chambers for terrorists or supporters of terrorists.

Let us be clear about what Sinn Fein is. It is not simply a support organisation for the Provisional IRA. It is an integral part of the Provisional IRA. Its constitutional and organisational structure demonstrates that Sinn Fein councillors are directly under the control of local IRA commanders. That is clear evidence that Sinn Fein and the Provisional IRA are one and the same entity. If the Secretary of State does not want to take my word for that, he can look up the Baker report on terrorism, in which it was stated that that is the position. The report almost urges the proscription of that organisation.

I have some sympathy—certainly on an academic level—with the view of a Labour Secretary of State who said that, if we could encourage people away from violence and into the political process, we should do so. It was on that basis that de-proscription took place. That Secretary of State considered that, if Sinn Fein were allowed to grow as a political party, its representatives and councillors would move away from the spoils of violence towards the political process, thereby undermining the Provisional IRA and, obviously, reducing violence in Northern Ireland. Academically, many people could embrace that argument, but it has not happened. The direct opposite has happened. The political process has been used to bolster the Provisional IRA's terrorist campaign.

[Mr. Robinson]

The quotation that the present Secretary of State used in his remarks clearly shows that the Government see it as a step-by-step parallel process, pushing the political wing along with the military wing of the Provisional IRA—the ballot paper and the Armalite policy. It is totally inconsistent—indeed, it is absurd—to continue to allow people who are clearly identified with a terrorist organisation to parade in council chambers as though they were interested in the day-to-day welfare of their electorate. Instead of a strong Bill that would have given life to the Government's rhetoric, we have a limp, lukewarm, lifeless measure that is neither fish nor fowl. At its heart is the declaration which does not live up to its title. My colleagues will seek to amend it so that it becomes a declaration against terrorism and I trust that there will be some opportunity at a later stage to do that.

Clause 6(1)(b) shows the whole purpose behind the declaration against terrorism. The declaration, which should be a declaration against support for terrorism, will be breached if a person supports a proscribed organisation or terrorist act

> "(i) at a public meeting, or
> (ii) knowing, or in such circumstances that he can reasonably be expected to know, that the fact that he has made that expression of support or approval is likely to become known to the public."

That means that the Government do not object to a person expressing privately by word or deed his support for a terrorist organisation—that is consistent with membership of a local government authority in Northern Ireland. It is only when a person steps into the public arena and shows his support for that organisation that he runs foul of this legislation.

The hon. Member for Sheffield, Hillsborough (Mr. Flannery) said that some members of Sinn Fein may be prepared to sign this declaration. Of course they will be. There is no reason why they should not. Without being dishonest in the least, a gunman or bomber could sign that declaration. It does not ask him not to bomb or shoot again. It asks him only not to support that sort of activity publicly. Therefore, Sinn Fein members will find no difficulty in signing the declaration.

The declaration takes us only one step on and, like many hon. Members, I believe that Sinn Fein members will sign it. Sinn Fein members are elected to district councils and, careful and well trained though they may be in getting round legal niceties, with the passage of time one or another is likely to offend under this legislation and say something that will give rise to a court case.

Who will take the action? It will not be the Director of Public Prosecutions, because it is not to be considered a criminal matter. I should be interested to hear from the Minister where the support came from for dealing with this as a civil matter. I have not heard of any great pressure on the Government or the Minister to treat this as a civil matter. I do not necessarily object to it being dealt with either as a criminal or civil case—if the DPP declines to take a case, I am certainly in favour of civil recourse—but I cannot understand why the DPP should not have a role. If the DPP is not to be given a role, we had better be clear what we are asking local government representatives and local electors to do—we are asking them to sign their own death warrants.

The first case will be the test case. The first person to take a case against a Sinn Fein councillor had better keep his head down, because Sinn Fein will want to dissuade anyone else from following that path. That is not to say that there are not people with sufficient backbone to stand up to the PIRA and Sinn Fein and take that action, but why is it necessary for them to do so when there is not only the option of this being a criminal matter, but other options?

Mr. Edward Leigh (Gainsborough and Horncastle): Is that not why there is provision for an entire council to take action?

Mr. Robinson: It is likely that Sinn Fein representatives will be elected in predominantly Nationalist areas. That means that we shall be talking about councils such as Omagh, Strabane and perhaps Londonderry, where there is a Nationalist majority. It is unlikely that a council with a Nationalist majority will take any court action against a Sinn Fein member for remarks that he or she may make. Other councils will have great difficulty in taking such action. A Belfast council, for example, cannot take such action against a councillor from Omagh or Strabane who makes such a remark.

Mr. Leigh: Surely some representatives can take action. It need not be the entire council.

Mr. Robinson: Yes, but they fall back into the category of people who are putting their lives on the line. Many will be prepared to do that. I am not suggesting that because the Government have specified these categories no one will take such action—some will—but by specifying only these categories the Government are putting the lives of elected representatives and others in danger.

Both Unionist parties asked the Government to consider proscription and certainly to make this a criminal offence and therefore a matter which could be pursued by the DPP. If the Government are not prepared to do that, they must seriously consider setting up a body which can be regarded as a commission. In that way, people who have a complaint about the remarks of an elected representative can take it to that body, which will be sufficiently financed by the Government to provide the legal advice necessary to institute a prosecution and which will have the authority to take any further action in accordance with this legislation. It is far easier to ask people who live in safer areas of the Province to take this sort of stand than to leave it to those who are necessarily in the front line. I urge the Government to consider those aspects in Committee.

As a district council can bring an action against a council representative for his views, why did the Minister exclude the Assembly from taking such an action against an Assembly Member for his remarks? I should have thought that the same entitlement would have fallen on the Assembly. I know that the Assembly is not of immediate concern because it is not an immediate prospect, but I should like to have the Government's thinking on that.

Clause 6(4) makes it clear that an Assembly Member who makes such remarks in the Northern Ireland Assembly will not be protected by the privilege of that Assembly. Does that mean that an elected representative in this House would be protected by the privilege of this House? Are elected representatives from Northern Ireland who make such remarks in this House in a special category

in that they cannot be caught under this legislation? If I were the creature that the Front Bench Opposition spokesman thinks I am and wished to make a remark which would offend under this legislation, all that I would have to do is make the remark in this House—then nobody could do a thing about it because the privilege of this House would protect me.

My colleagues and I feel that while this legislation started out for the right purpose, it has been weakened considerably.

Mr. William Ross: Before the right hon. Gentleman leaves the question of who may bring a case, will he draw attention to the sheer cost of bringing such a case? Although the IRA and its mouthpiece, Sinn Fein, will always claim not to recognise British courts, we can be sure that they will recognise British courts for this. The first test case will probably end up in the other place and cost a huge sum. An individual bringing such a case may have means such as to place him outside the legal aid provisions and thus be unable to afford to do so. Will the hon. Gentleman ask the Minister who is liable to pay if a council loses the case? That will be fairly contentious because of the wording of the legislation. Moreover, the Government are continually trying to cut the money that councils can spend and the purposes on which they can spend it.

Mr. Robinson: The cost, as the hon. Member for Londonderry, East (Mr. Ross) suggested, could be considerable. The Secretary of State has said in the explanatory notes and in the Bill itself that legal aid will be available, but what percentage of councillors will be eligible for legal aid? Will a councillor who is entitled to bring an action under the Bill also be eligible for legal aid? The Secretary of State may say that a council can bring an action as a legitimate item of expenditure, but if such an action failed, the local government auditor might say at the end of the financial year that the council's action had been frivolous and that there should be a surcharge as a result. That would be a disincentive to many councillors who might otherwise consider bringing an action.

That is why I have suggested that, if the Government want to get to grips with the matter, there should be a body funded by the Government to bring such actions. It would be in a better financial position to do so, it could stand up better to IRA terrorism and it would be better equipped to obtain the necessary legal advice to pursue the case. The question of finance is important.

I suspect—although I have no firm proof of this—that the Government will resist the idea that the matter should be dealt with through criminal prosecution and that it will be left to civil action. The Government have ducked out and left others to carry on the front-line work. The Bill should be strengthened. In its present form, it will be ineffective and unlikely to have more than a marginal impact on local government. I am disappointed in the Bill, but I am prepared to ensure that amendments are tabled in Committee by myself and by other hon. Members from Northern Ireland and I hope that there will be a blood transfusion to give the Bill more life, vitality and strength.

6.23 pm

Mr. Clifford Forsythe (Antrim, South): I am delighted that this matter is being dealt with through a Bill and not, as is generally the case, by an order that applies to Northern Ireland. That is a relief.

To understand why the Bill is necessary, one should consider the motives of local government councillors before the 1985 local government elections. At that time, district and borough councillors felt that it was their public duty to serve the local community, even though that meant more kicks than ha'pence—that is, roughly translated, more criticism than salary. Although it was felt—and still is—that councillors had little power, there was generally a surplus of candidates who were anxious to use their expertise, such as business men, teachers, trade unionists and farmers. They wanted to make a contribution to the local administration.

I speak from personal experience, as I have met many local councillors. In May 1981, I was elected to the Newtownabbey borough council and, with 20 other councillors, I began to look after a limited number of responsibilities for the area in which I was born. As the House has heard before, those responsibilities were, basically, emptying bins, providing recreation facilities and burying the dead—not necessarily in that order.

We also had a consultative role in a number of other matters, but we quickly became aware that consultation was usually another word for confirming departmental decisions that the council had no power to change. Nevertheless, because of the good personal relationships between councillors, it was an enjoyable and instructive experience. In spite of our frustration about the absence of power, the council, as a corporate body, carried out its functions with good humour and togetherness, overcoming differing party views and generally reaching decisions which were for the good of the whole community.

That happy state of affairs lasted until 9 May 1985 when, because of my membership of the House, I gave up my council seat to concentrate on my parliamentary duties, thus making way for another candidate to gain valuable experience as a public representative. I took my decision with great regret because of the friendships that I had formed with councillors from all parties. I know that I should have had a similar experience in most local councils in Northern Ireland.

Little did I realise the anger, aggravation, disgust, heartache and high blood pressure that I was to be spared by that decision. In May 1985, seven months before the signing of the Anglo-Irish Agreement, Sinn Fein candidates stood in local authority elections for the first time since the present troubles began. Of its 59 elected councillors, no fewer than 11 had previously served prison sentences for terrorists crimes. That is hardly surprising when one remembers what the then director of Sinn Fein publicity said during its party conference in 1981—to which the Secretary of State has already referred. Danny Morrison, in addressing the cheering delegates, said:

> "Who here really believes that we can win the war through the ballot box? But will anyone here object if, with a ballot paper in this hand and an Armalite in this hand, we take power in Ireland?"

Can anyone be surprised that the arrival of such people in council chambers caused widespread revulsion and apprehension? The vast majority of councillors, regardless of political views, wholly reject violence.

[Mr. Clifford Forsythe]

There is no doubt that the running of the 26 district councils in Northern Ireland has been seriously put at risk by the presence of Sinn Fein in 16 of them. That has had a knock-on effect on the other councils. The Ulster Unionist party fully understands and sympathises with the many decent and moderate councillors who have despaired and who have seriously considered resignation because of the presence of Sinn Fein on the councils since May 1985.

But an even more serious situation has developed among the constitutional parties in Northern Ireland. There is a great risk that unless the Bill is effective enough to satisfy the demands of those decent and moderate citizens upon whom our democracy depends, they will not even consider running for office in the 1989 local government elections. That is an extremely dangerous situation that could have long-term effects for the United Kingdom as a whole, and for Northern Ireland in particular.

We are all well aware of how much local councils depend on attracting able people to run their affairs in a balanced and democratic way. We need young men and women to start their political careers in local government, perhaps eventually ending up in this House. Unfortunately, it is becoming more and more difficult to attract such people into public service while the shadow of the gun and the terrorist hangs over council chambers.

This problem could not continue to be ignored by the Government. When the Secretary of State issued his discussion paper on this matter in October 1987, we said that as a party

"we welcomed this indication that the Government now recognised the obscenity of sustaining a system whereby bona fide elected representatives were forced—by law—to share council chambers with those who would advocate violence in pursuit of political objectives."

We agreed with some of the suggestions in that paper but naturally disagreed with others. We agreed that while it is a fundamental right of democracy that people should be free to participate in elections, it is also reasonable to conclude that that freedom does not include the threat of or the use of violence against political opponents or "challenging democracy" by using the electoral process to undermine democratic institutions. It is a fundamental point that the principle of democracy should not be sacrificed on the altar of political expediency.

We also agreed that a serious threat to stable local government comes from Sinn Fein, the candidates of which are proud of their open support for the armed struggle. "Armed struggle" is a euphemism for terrorist crime, including the murders carried out by the Provisional IRA. I must point out that the term "stable local government" alludes to a principle—and does not suggest that Northern Ireland enjoys local government comparable to or in line with that of other areas of the United Kingdom.

It is also true that the presence in council chambers of Sinn Fein councillors who are fully committed to supporting a terrorist campaign gives rise to grave alarm among other councillors, especially when the Provisional IRA, which they openly support, has been responsible for the murder of public representatives—I shall name only three: Robert Bradford, Edgar Graham and Charles Armstrong, who was the chairman of Armagh council—and when those same Sinn Fein councillors have sought to justify those killings.

It must be obvious to everyone who wishes to see it that in such circumstances other council members take the view that information gleaned by such Sinn Fein activists in the course of their elective duties might become available to terrorist organisers. Is it not understandable then that some councils have attempted to solve these problems themselves by procedural devices to overcome such dangers? However, court challenges have rejected the legality of those devices. It becomes essential, therefore, that steps should be taken to give effect to the widely held view that those who condone or support terrorist violence should not be permitted to exploit democratic institutions.

I come now to the part of the Bill that attempts to address those problems and to the declaration which is to be signed by all candidates at local government elections. It seems clear from the wording of the declaration—I shall not weary the House by reading it in full—that a candidate can sign such a declaration and then run a campaign supporting the armed struggle, making it clear when speaking that he or she signed the declaration only to continue their attempts to destroy the very democratic institutions that the declaration is designed to protect. The declaration could also be signed by those with a long track record of violence, for the same reasons. The declaration must be capable of preventing unrepentant supporters of violence from entering council chambers.

The whole reason for the Bill is likely to be called into question if the present wording is not amended because otherwise there is a great danger that the legislation will be rendered completely ineffective by Sinn Fein candidates who, on being elected, blatantly carry on their support for violence, thus challenging other councillors to take them to court. Councillors from constitutional parties must not be put in such a position. The declaration must impose conditions from the date of signing and action must be taken against anyone breaching its terms.

The declaration must be redrafted in a way that will present real difficulties for supporters of terrorism, such as those in Sinn Fein. We must recognise that those who have condoned murder will not, as would honourable men, have any compunction about signing the present declaration. Therefore, it must be redrafted in a way that will thwart the aims and devalue the credibility of those who act as political advocates for terrorist organisations.

The fact that we do not accord those people any credibility must not blind us to the reality that there are those who do. It is for that reason that we suggest that the word "repudiate" be included in the declaration. To require Sinn Fein candidates to repudiate the Provisional IRA would present them with a serious credibility problem. It follows that each proscribed organisation will have to be specified by name in the declaration. Simply leaving it as it is will enable Sinn Fein to say that it considers that the Provisional IRA is not proscribed by any authority that it is willing to recognise.

We are obviously unhappy about clause 7, which lists those who would be entitled to bring a councillor to the High Court for a breach of the declaration. Surely it has been insult enough for the Northern Ireland Office to require councillors even to talk to Sinn Fein when Ministers in the Northern Ireland Office rightly refuse to do so, without now asking councillors to take on the role

of the Director of Public Prosecutions, thus leaving themselves open to the personal expense and danger that would be inseparable from such an act.

We feel strongly that any breach of the declaration must be deemed a crininal offence. There must be no equivocation whatsoever on the issue. The proposed legislation is neither for the convenience nor for the protection of an individual. It should not be portrayed as either a sop to Unionists, hurt by 20 long years of terrorism, nor as a weapon to be placed in the hands of Unionists.

The declaration is urgently required to protect and maintain those electoral processes upon which the democratic system of Government in the United Kingdom is founded. But it is the primary duty of Government to sustain those processes for the benefit of all the electorate. No self-respecting Government could contemplate any abdication of that responsibility. In this House we should say that if the Government make the law, the Government should enforce the law.

We believe that those who terrorise the community by extortion, kangaroo courts, the destruction of property, intimidation of workers and brutal cowardly murder should, along with those who openly support them, be ostracised by all who believe in the democratic process; otherwise society will be destroyed and we shall inevitably return to the law of the jungle.

Of course we would have wished for greater and more determined efforts to remove the blatant supporters of violence from the ranks of those who prefer the way of democracy. Although we accept the powers in the Bill, which even in its minor way seeks to redress the balance between democracy and terrorism and its supporters, we shall nevertheless seek to strengthen those powers during the passage of the Bill through the House and in Committee.

As a final example of the reasons why this Bill should be introduced, I shall quote an article which appeared in the Belfast *News Letter* this morning under the heading "Churches in SF boycott". It states:

"Churchmen in Castlederg and Newtownstewart have united against the presence of the Sinn Fein chairman of Strabane council at Christmas ceremonies this week.

Feelings have been running high since the IRA murder in Castlederg a fortnight ago of RUC Reservist Willie Monteith and there is solid opposition to the chairman Ivan Barr, who refused to condemn the atrocity and to be associated with a message of sympathy from the council to the dead policeman's family . . .

A letter from four clergymen in Castlederg has been sent to Strabane district council making it clear they will not share a platform with any person who espouses violence and condones murder.

The letter was signed by Rev Denis Anderson (Methodist), the Rev Stewart Jones (Presbyterian), the Rev Patrick Grant (Roman Catholic), and the Rev Walter Quill (Church of Ireland)."

Here I rest my case.

6.42 pm

Mr. Ian Gow (Eastbourne): I congratulate my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland on introducing this measure through the conventional Bill procedure. I am extremely glad that the Bill will be debated in Standing Committee, that it will then have its Report stage on the Floor of the House, followed by a Third Reading and that there will be an opportunity to amend the Bill further in another place.

When my right hon. Friend introduced the Bill today, he hinted that it might be the first of a new programme of giving those who represent Northern Ireland and those who represent other parts of the kingdom the same opportunity to debate and to amend proposed legislation for Northern Ireland as that given to us to amend legislation that affects Great Britain.

My right hon. Friend was kind enough to give way to a single intervention from me when I asked whether, as a result of this Bill, there would be the same qualifications for voting at district elections in Northern Ireland as there are for voting at district elections in England, Scotland and Wales. My right hon. Friend did not answer the question, but said that it was a trick question because it came from me.

Of course, it was a totally strightforward question and it was predictable that it would be asked by an hon. Member. If my right hon. Friend had not foreseen that it was likely to be asked, his officials should most certainly have advised him. I have never sought to trick my right hon. Friend and will never do so. In the three and a quarter years since he has been Secretary of State—he arrived in Northern Ireland on the same day that I arrived at the Treasury—I have had the most cordial relationship with my right hon. Friend. I hope that my hon. Friend the Member for Wiltshire, North (Mr. Needham) will respond in a straightforward way to my straightforward question when he replies to the debate.

It is nearly 10 years since the then shadow Cabinet came to decide on its policy towards Northern Ireland. There was a short debate in that Cabinet—characteristically short, of course, since there were other matters perceived to be of greater moment in the proposals of the incoming Government. In March 1979, the shadow Cabinet agreed to its policy in relation to local government in Northern Ireland, a policy which is now the subject of the Bill. The sentence in the manifesto was clear and unambiguous and you will remember it, Mr. Deputy Speaker. It reads:

"In the absence of devolved government, we will seek to establish one or more elected regional councils with a wide range of powers over local services."

Here we are, almost nine years on from May 1979, still in the absence of devolved government, but having abandoned and never having tried to implement precisely that policy. It was not suggested by me at the general election in May 1979, but had been suggested by Airey Neave and had been approved by the then shadow Cabinet.

Since we are debating Northern Ireland, since we are debating local government in Northern Ireland and since the title of the Bill is "Elected Authorities (Northern Ireland) Bill", it is timely to ask my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary why it is that, although there is still no devolved government in Northern Ireland, we have never made any attempt to implement the policies set out in 1979.

The hon. Member for Antrim, South (Mr. Forsythe), in a thoughtful and wise speech, which made a deep impression upon the House, referred to his experience as a member of one of the 26 district councils in Northern Ireland. He reminded the House of the difference between the powers conferred upon district councils in Northern Ireland and the powers conferred upon district councils in England, Scotland and Wales. We may wonder why the Bill does not address itself to that difference in powers to which the hon. Gentleman drew attention.

[Mr. Ian Gow]

There is another aspect to this matter. My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister is on record—she has said it in this House—as saying that Northern Ireland is as much a part of the United Kingdom as any part of the United Kingdom situate in Great Britain. That is not entirely so. Those who live in Gloucestershire and Somerset are able to vote for a county council. The constituents of the hon. Member for Antrim, South cannot vote for a county council. In Scotland, not a single person who qualifies to vote for a parliamentary election does not have the opportunity to vote for a regional council. Only in Northern Ireland are the Queen's subjects denied the right to vote for a county council.

Why do I say that that is relevant to the words of the manifesto? In 1979, we were seeking to set up a regional council or councils in Northern Ireland with widely devolved powers over local matters. The shadow Cabinet believed that that county or regional council should enjoy powers similar to those enjoyed in England, Scotland and Wales.

The Conservative research department—a body with which you will be familiar, Mr. Deputy Speaker—has published for the guidance of members a brief, copies of which can be obtained from the Whips' Office. On the last page of the brief appears an article written by my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State. As one would expect, it is an excellent article, not least because it assists me in the case that I am trying to put.

Writing on 25 November in *The Daily Telegraph*, of which Labour Members will be keen students, my hon. Friend said:

"The Government wants to see progress towards devolution . . . But no settlement can work without local government."

That was a strange choice of words. I need not justify the choice, for they are not my words. But what did my hon. Friend have in mind when he said that

"no settlement can work without local government"?

I know what I have in mind. If he has in mind what I have in mind, I agree with him. It is essential to the settlement of the problems in Northern Ireland that we should have a system of local government that commands the support of the people and that gives to the people of Northern Ireland a system of government similar to that enjoyed in Wiltshire, Gloucestershire and east Sussex.

Despite the fact that my hon. Friend was writing about the Bill in that article, the Bill does not address itself to that fundamental.

My hon. Friend went on to say in the article:

"Local government needs able young men and women."

I agree. Local government was able to attract the hon. Member for Antrim, South, who made a distinguished contribution to it. My right hon. Friend the Member for Lagan Valley (Mr. Molyneaux) was also a member of a district council. But what my hon. Friend should have said in his article, and what for some unaccountable reason he did not say, was that we shall not recruit able young men and women to local government in Northern Ireland until we give additional powers to the 26 district councils and until, as we promised to do in 1979, we set up a regional council or councils.

In my hon. Friend's constituency in Wiltshire there are parish councils. The powers of parish councils are not great. Even in north Wiltshire, the local giants do not serve on parish councils. People of massive ability are not queuing up to get on to parish councils——

Mr. Needham: I am not so sure about that.

Mr. Gow: My hon. Friend disagrees with me. Perhaps my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State is a member of his parish council—*[Interruption.]* I understand that my right hon. Friend's wife is a member of the parish council, and I pay tribute to her. Although it seems to have caused some hilarity, my point is not without importance. We shall attract more readily those people whom my hon. Friend described in his article if we give more power to elected people in Northern Ireland.

Another aspect of the article will have caught your eye, Mr. Deputy Speaker, as it did mine. My hon. Friend said:

"We consulted widely and then issued a discussion paper . . . Following representations we reconsidered."

My right hon. Friend the Member for Lagan Valley and all hon. Members who represent constituencies in Northern Ireland will note the contrast between that consultation, that reconsideration and the claim that 84 per cent. of the people of Northern Ireland were in favour of this relatively modest Bill with the total lack of consultation, reconsideration and testing of public opinion before the Anglo-Irish Agreement was signed on 15 November 1985. We would not be human if we did not notice that contrast.

I have mentioned one or two matters that should have been included in the Bill but are not. The Bill should have given modest additional powers to the 26 district councils, and it should have implemented the Conservative party's pledge of 3 May 1979.

Of course I shall vote in favour of the Second Reading of the Bill. I agree with its relatively modest proposals, including the one to give 10,000 people the right to vote for district councils, despite the derisory powers that they enjoy. I do not know how many of those 10,000, who have so far been deprived of that great right, will take up the power to vote, but they should have it. The proposal about signing a declaration before one can offer oneself as a candidate for a district council is modest, precisely for the reasons that were described so eloquently by the hon. Member for Antrim, South.

In his article, my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State said:

"We did consider whether enforcement should be by a criminal case, brought by the DPP, or a civil action initiated by the Attorney-General."

That which my right hon. Friend and hon. Friend considered and which both rejected should be reconsidered. It is wrong to say that a citizen should have to go through such a complicated procedure. Many people, not only in Northern Ireland but in my constituency, and even in Wiltshire, North, do not take matters daily to the High Court. It is not part of their normal experience or comprehension. *[Laughter.]* My hon. Friend the Member for Wyre Forest (Mr. Coombs) laughs, but I assure him that most people are unfamiliar with the High Court of Justice.

My hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State tells us in *The Daily Telegraph* that he has considered the matter carefully. It would have been better if my hon. Friend had decided that, where there seems to be a breach of the terms of an undertaking, that breach should be the subject of

criminal proceedings initiated not by the council, a councillor or an elector, but by the Director of Public Prosecutions.

Mercifully, we shall again be able to turn our minds to this matter, thanks to my right hon. Friend, who has used the proper procedure to bring in the Bill. We shall be able to examine the Billl at some length in Committee. We shall welcome the opportunity to test the arguments of my right hon. and hon. Friends against the very consideration that the Minister himself says was undertaken at an earlier stage within his Department.

Rev. Ian Paisley: Does the hon. Gentleman agree that, as the Government have power in this matter, it would be wise for them to ensure that Northern Ireland is properly represented on the Committee so that the voice of Northern Ireland people and their elected representatives can be heard? The matter should not be decided by a Committee on which the elected representatives of Northern Ireland and perhaps Northern Ireland parties will not have a voice.

Mr. Gow: I think that the hon. Gentleman knows that that is a matter for the Committee of Selection. Even my derisory influence in this place does not extend to influencing the selection of hon. Members who will consider the Bill. Are not two representatives of the all-powerful Whips' Office seated on the Treasury Bench? We have heard the Secretary of State's introduction and, unless we have voted him off, my hon. Friend the Member for Shipley (Sir M. Fox) is still on the Committee of Selection. I am sure that he is a keen student of our debates and will read the intervention of the hon. Member for Antrim, North (Rev. Ian Paisley).

I warmly approve of the Bill. I hope that it will reach the statute book shortly but not until it has received rigorous further examination. Some of us, whether or not we are on the Committee, will be keen to return to these important matters on Report. I hope that Ministers will reconsider their decision that initiation after a suspected breach of the undertaking should rest in hands other than those of the Attorney-General.

7.2 pm

Mr. Paddy Ashdown (Yeovil): I have listened to the speech by the hon. Member for Eastbourne (Mr. Gow). As usual, he speaks interestingly—although not always in terms with which I can agree—about Northern Ireland. I am glad to be able to agree with him on one matter, perhaps even on two—that at last we have an order being discussed on the Floor of the House.

Mr. Tom King: It is a Bill.

Mr. Ashdown: The Secretary of State is right to correct me. It is not an order, but a Bill. It is good to have discussion on the Floor of the House when so much has been done through orders in Committees upstairs or statutory instruments which from time to time we have had to pray against on a negative resolution.

The hon. Member for Eastbourne was also right in another sense in seeking to place this in a broader context—in his case, in the context of local government, on which he has strong views. The Secretary of State spent about 12 minutes sketching the broader context of the Bill and it is right to take a couple of minutes to read the Bill into where we are. In this sense I am glad to be able to agree with the sense of puzzlement expressed earlier by the hon. Member for Newry and Armagh (Mr. Mallon). This week we are bringing into the first process of legislation an instrument which will, we hope, assist the Government. In principle, I and my party will vote in favour of Second Reading, although I have some reservations which I shall enter later.

It is with some sadness that I reflect upon the fact that in seeking to provide the Government with an instrument that will assist in the defeat of terrorism, we do so against the background of the Prime Minister's bungling mismanagement of the extradition affair last week. That seriously damaged our capacity to fight terrorism. *[Interruption.]* Conservative Members choose to disregard unpleasant facts. What the Prime Minister did last week seriously undermined our capacity to achieve the co-operation with the Government of Ireland which is absolutely essential for the defeat of terrorism.

Mr. Gow: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Is it not a rule of the House that on Second Reading one may speak only about matters that are in the Bill or could reasonably be in the Bill? What the hon. Gentleman is discussing could not possibly be in the Bill, so is it in order?

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Sir Paul Dean): A Second Reading debate can go fairly wide. I remind the House that the hon. Member for Yeovil (Mr. Ashdown) has just started his speech.

Mr. Ashdown: I am grateful to you for your ruling, Mr. Deputy Speaker. It is ironic that the hon. Gentleman who raised that point of order ranged very widely in his own speech, as did the Secretary of State. I understand why the hon. Member for Eastbourne sought to interrupt. It is because these are uncomfortable words for him. The hon. Gentleman takes a close interest in these matters. I was in Dublin and Belfast last week. What the Prime Minister did was cheered to the echo by those in the IRA who would wish to see the Extradition Act in the South of Ireland not renewed, and it was cheered to the echo by the extremists in the North who would wish to see undermined our capacity to review the Anglo-Irish Agreement. It was also cheered to the echo by those who wish to see relations between the Irish Government and the British Government at their worst possible level because they know that that would damage the fight against terrorism.

I find it odd that this week we are asked to consider a basically good measure when last week the Prime Minister in her handling of these affairs unwittingly, but nevertheless seriously, damaged our capacity to fight the very extremists that the Bill seeks to target. As the Secretary of State fairly and rightly said, many items in the Bill do not attract any kind of excitement or opposition. One is bound to welcome the amendment of the franchise so that those who have been in Northern Ireland for three months can vote in elections. That is in line with the practice throughout the United Kingdom and I am sure that it is the right thing to do. It is also right to amend the disqualification period so that it runs from the end of a sentence rather than from the beginning.

While I am on the subject of sentences, I should say how much we welcome the Government's view that we should also review the whole question of remission for those in prison convicted for acts of terrorism. Until now they have received as of right a 50 per cent. remission whereas the ordinary common criminal in Britain—if there can be such a thing—has to earn remission of only up to

[Mr. Ashdown]

30 per cent. The public and those committed to fighting terrorism do not understand why that is the case, although there are good historical reasons for it. I am glad to see that the Government are sensibly reviewing that.

The central issue of the Bill is the requirement to make a declaration. I am sorry that the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, North (Mr. McNamara), who spoke for the Labour party, is no longer in his place. His speech was one of the thinnest and most bankrupt that I have heard in terms of the arguments used for opposing the declaration. The hon. Gentleman's arguments rested on three or four basic principles. Time after time he set up a straw man, knocked him down, and then patted himself on the back and said that that was a reason for not accepting the Government proposals.

First, the hon. Gentleman spoke about section 9 of the Northern Ireland (Emergency Provisions) Act 1978 and he said—I hope that I am not misquoting him in his absence—that the Bill was not necessary because all the provisions of that section were already in position and would do the job. In that case, I cannot see his objection to the Bill. If that is the substance of the Labour party's argument, what is wrong with the Bill? Of course, those who have studied the Bill know perfectly well that it does something extra. It takes the general aim in that section and targets it precisely in a way which, if it is right, can be helpful.

The hon. Gentleman's second argument was that the provisions were unworkable. He said that that was because people would make declarations and then simply break them. He is right at least to identify that as a potential problem in the Bill, because that is what has happened so frequently in Irish history. Organisations that were proscribed simply changed their names and reappeared. The hon. Gentleman must surely realise that the Bill has two parts, and that the second part gives sanctions to the courts so that if someone breaks the declaration, the courts can do something to put the matter right. The hon. Gentleman's argument did not stand up on that basis either.

Thirdly, the hon. Gentleman said that this would cause a whole string of by-elections, with the result that the voice of the IRA would come through. On that, he was exposed by an intervention by the hon. Member for Londonderry, East (Mr. Ross), who said that there are few wards or constituencies in Northern Ireland where the supporters of the IRA are in a majority. My view is that if the by-elections were called—it is a possibility—the likelihood is that they would be called on the specific issue of violence.

Mr. Tom King: And what was said.

Mr. Ashdown: Yes, and on what was said. That is a narrow issue, and while there may be some temptation on the part of those who espouse violence in Northern Ireland to go through the election process again because of the advantage of publicity, the outcome would not be as the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, North suggested. The likelihood is that there would be a defeat in most such cases.

I do not wish to concentrate too much on the speech of the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, North, but those who read it tomorrow will find that it betrays yet again what is becoming a depressing semblance of bias in the Labour party, which seems always to take the Nationalist case on Northern Ireland. That is depressing because any party seeking to achieve some success in Northern Ireland must be seen to be at least even-handed, but I did not find that.

Secondly, on reading that speech, anyone who takes an objective view of it will reach the conclusion that the speech was made by someone who wants his party to vote against the Bill. The whole speech was constructed to that end. The hon. Gentleman said that the Bill was ridiculous and unworkable, would make matters worse, would put things into the hands of the terrorists and be a propaganda victory. The hon. Member for Leicester, South (Mr. Marshall), who is now on the Labour Front Bench, will correct me if I am wrong, but I understand that Labour Members will not be voting against the Bill but will abstain. If that is so, the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, North should have made a different speech.

Mr. Heffer: The hon. Gentleman makes an interesting point, but he forgets that when the Liberal Government in the early part of the century and the Liberal party at the end of the last century argued for home rule, they were accused of supporting the Nationalist case. If he does not know that, he has not read his Liberal history. The Labour party's position is not all that different from that of the Liberal party in the past. Is the hon. Gentleman really supporting an oath being taken—[HON. MEMBERS: "Declaration."]—all right, a declaration, but it is basically an oath—before people can stand for election to any position? Where is his Liberalism in supporting that?

Mr. Ashdown: The cause of peace in Ireland is cursed by history and by people who continually look back instead of forward. It may be that the Liberal Government took that view at the turn of the century. I have great respect for the hon. Member for Liverpool, Walton (Mr. Heffer), but does he not realise—it is frequently the case that the Labour party does not—that there is now a different situation in Northern Ireland from that which pertained in the early part of the century?

Anybody seeking to achieve some success in bringing peace to Northern Ireland would want to take at least a balanced view in these matters. It may be that the Labour party does. The hon. Member for Walton seems to admit that it does not, but I am not sure that that view would be taken by the hon. Member for Leicester, South. We must wait and see. The public perception of Labour's attitude is that it is a Pavlovian reaction against the Government, whatever the situation, and in favour of the Nationalist cause.

I do not pretend that this legislation is perfect. There are flaws in it, but almost no legislation is perfect. It may be that it throws up some anomalies, but the question we must ask ourselves is not whether, as a single piece of legislation, it will defeat the IRA or the Ulster Volunteer Force—of course it will not—but whether it is a useful instrument in the hands of the Government for defeating terrorism and one that does not significantly damage civil liberties. My view is that it is a useful mechanism.

People may sign the declaration knowing that they are about to overturn it, but we must not underestimate the effect of propaganda—for example, the propaganda effect of Sinn Fein signing a declaration against violence. That would be advantageous. However, the sanctions placed in the hands of the court are sensible. After all, if a court in Britain can disqualify a person from holding office because

he is a bankrupt, it is not unreasonable to disqualify a person for giving support and succour to violence and acts of terrorism.

Mr. Hume: Who will bring the cases?

Mr. Ashdown: That is a fair question, and I shall come to it shortly.

We have some reservations about what the Government have chosen to do. As I said when I first heard the proposal, I feel that there are some problems that the Government should recognise in putting this process into operation the moment people are elected. If they sign the declaration, they can say anything they like and get free access to the airways during the election campaign, but the moment they are elected the sanctions come into operation. That opens up the possibility of exaggerating the effects of allowing people access to the airways during an election campaign for a position that they will not be allowed to hold afterwards.

The second question, which was rightly raised by the hon. Member for Foyle (Mr. Hume), is, who will bring in the court cases? Here I am somewhat in agreement with the hon. Member for Eastbourne. This provision will probably not deliver what the Government hope because the challenge will be brought by a citizen, a councillor or a full council. The Government are dodging the issue and not grasping the nettle. If this is their case, they should be prepared to take the matter up to challenge in the court. The matter should be put before the Director of Public Prosecutions or some other such person so that the Government carry this forward. I am afraid that many will fear for their lives if they bring such an action, and this may militate against the best effect that the Bill can achieve.

One or two technical concerns must be voiced at this stage. My first concern is about legal aid. Many people who might bring a case against a councillor would be deterred if the entire financial burden fell on them. What protection can be offered in that case, and what protection might be offered against the inevitable intimidation that would follow? The Alliance party of Northern Ireland has said that the Attorney-General should bring these cases, for the reasons that I have set out. We need to know why the Government have decided not to have the Attorney-General or some body to bring the case on their behalf rather than leaving it to the citizen.

No mention is made of political parties bringing cases. Has the Minister considered that if there is no financial aid a party might have resources when an individual would not? A party case would also protect individuals from intimidation. What will be used by way of evidence? It would be useful if the Minister—if not now, then later—could explain what a citizen living in Northern Ireland might have to bring before the High Court as evidence if he or she wished to bring a prosecution under the Bill.

Those points having been made, the general principle should be followed through. There are issues which might well be amended in Committee. However, I believe that in this instance the Government have hit on a reasonable instrument which may assist in the battle against terrorism and violence from both sides in Northern Ireland. On that basis, the proposals deserve the support in principle of my party tonight and they will get it.

7.20 pm

Mr. Edward Leigh (Gainsborough and Horncastle): I wish to say a few words because I want those in Northern Ireland who read our debates in *Hansard* to know that there are some mainland British Members of Parliament from another part of the United Kingdom who share the anger, frustration and shame of ordinary, decent, law-abiding people who want to serve in civic life and serve their communities who must sit side by side with men of violence. I want those people to be aware that on this side of the water we understand their feelings.

I have no illusion about the difficulties of making legislation such as this stick. Dealing with the IRA with an Act of Parliament is like controlling a mad dog with a paper chain. I have no illusions about the difficulties, but, as my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland said, should we pass down on the other side of the street? Should we just do nothing because of all the criticisms that have been levelled today at the Bill?

The hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, North (Mr. McNamara), the Opposition spokesman, could not suggest a better alternative. At one stage he was forced in this Chamber, which for centuries has stood for freedom under the law, to wave the rag of the IRA and Sinn Fein to buttress his argument. Of course Sinn Fein will not argue that the Bill will harm it. I thought that the hon. Member for Yeovil (Mr. Ashdown) made one of his best speeches so far in the Chamber, and I agree with him that much of the speech of the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, North was very weak.

Let us consider the argument that Sinn Fein would force by-elections. Of course it may force them, but, as the hon. Member for Yeovil said, it will do that on the narrow point of violence. How much support will Sinn Fein receive? I was told in Northern Ireland that it might have a sure chance only of winning the Lower Falls road ward. It would certainly not win many other wards on that basis.

There is an argument that the Attorney-General should take issue. I see little point in the Attorney-General losing what reputation he has as a man of the law rather than a man of the Government, as a man involved in the legal process rather than a man who is the instrument of political will, by pursuing one political party or another. That would be a dangerous innovation.

It is interesting that the very people who argue that the Attorney-General should become involved in the political process in this instance also suggest that it is wrong that the Attorney-General in southern Ireland should view the Patrick Ryan affair on purely legal instead of political grounds and argue that he should be taking a political decision. We all hope that he will take that extradition decision.

The Bill is a fair compromise. Of course we could consider more draconian measures such as proscription. However, we should be careful because, if we adopt more draconian measures, we will not be any more effective on the ground in Northern Ireland, but we will give the political oxygen that the IRA and Sinn Fein need in international opinion. We should be aware of that danger.

I took grave exception to the comment of the hon. Members for Yeovil and for Kingston upon Hull, North about my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister. My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister does not speak in the desiccated language of chanceries. She is not a professional diplomat. She speaks instinctively for what the British

[Mr. Edward Leigh]

people believe in. She speaks for their frustration at delays in extradition. However, nothing that my right hon. Friend has said should be construed as being in any way anti our many friends in the Republic. That point will be repeated, I am sure.

The overwhelming majority of decent people in the Republic, the overwhelming majority of members of the Dail, and certainly all members of the Government of the Republic are as committed as we are to dealing with terrorism. Their stakes in this matter are almost as high, if not higher, than ours. We might lose the Province, but they might lose their country if the IRA wins. It was sad that some of my hon. Friends last Thursday described the actions of the Irish Government as a double cross. They were no such thing. We should sympathise with their difficulties and encourage the decent people who are trying to expedite the process under the laws of the Republic.

In this debate we should avoid extremist language and accept that this Bill, like any Bill on these matters, has limitations. However, it is an essential first step, and as such it is welcome.

7.25 pm

Mr. Eddie McGrady (South Down): This Bill is a bitter-sweet pill for my constituents. It removes a long-standing grievance and injustice by intending to restore the franchise to more than 10,000 people who for many years have been unable to vote in local government elections in Northern Ireland. It took a long time for that reform to come about. That is a natural act of justice which should have been implemented many years ago, certainly at the commencement of direct rule in 1972-73. We are happy to accept that it will now be in place before the local government elections in May 1989.

The part of the Bill which we find bitter to swallow and with which we cannot agree is the part which will, if it is passed, enforce candidates at the next local government elections to make the declaration against terrorism. We oppose and disagree with the proposed legislation because it will have a contrary effect to that which the Government have given as the reason for its implementation.

When anyone from Northern Ireland, particularly a member of the SDLP, speaks about violence, it is always necessary to prefix one's remarks by stating that the SDLP is totally and implacably opposed to all forms of violence, be they actual, verbal or insinuated. Our history and, more important, our record of performance since our foundation in 1973 show that that statement is irrefutable.

The declaration of non-violence provided for in clauses 2 to 9 will have an immediate effect. It will cause increased tension within the council chambers. It will lead to a heightening of community tensions. It will also have a totally contrary effect to the Government's stated intention of in some way restricting the ability of the paramilitaries to propagate their evil ways by preventing them from participating in local government.

I have had 28 years' experience of local government in Northern Ireland, part of it spent under the old regime up to 1973 and some 15 years under the new regime. I have no doubt that both paramilitary groupings, Loyalist and Republican, will sign the declaration without any compunction whatsoever. We already have evidence that the Republican paramilitaries will sign such a declaration.

So much for the intended effect of preventing people who subscribe to acts of violence from participating in local government in Northern Ireland. It is ironic that the Government in the past encouraged the paramilitaries to participate in the democratic process by providing funds and assets. There has now been a complete turnaround which will simply give the paramilitaries a tremendous propaganda weapon which will be used in two ways.

First, for the rest of the world, it will be used as an illustration or an argument to support the case that they can promote their cause only by violence instead of using the democratic process. That argument and that propaganda will be listened to, particularly in North America and in certain parts of Europe.

Secondly—additionally or alternatively—they will take part in the local democratic process in spite of the declaration they have signed, and use their suspensions and their court cases, which possibly will go to the highest court in the land, and the election campaigns, as an on-going daily propaganda weapon which will give front-page headlines to the very cause to which we all are opposed—the use of violence for political purposes.

The proposals are all the more idiotic because they are totally unnecessary. As has already been said, under section 21 of the Northern Ireland (Emergency Provisions) Act 1978, section 9 of the 1987 Act and section 10 of the Prevention of Terrorism (Temporary Provisions) Act 1984, such support for proscribed organisations or any attempt to encourage support for such organisations, making any contribution to their funds, giving assistance in any way or arranging any meetings of a proscribed organisation are already criminal offences.

The Government must explain to the House why they have not used any of those provisions to produce the effect that they are trying to achieve under the proposed legislation. There is further legislation in article 9 of the Public Order (Northern Ireland) Act 1987, which was the successor to the Prevention of Incitement to Hatred Act, which makes it an offence for anyone to use words or behaviour that is likely to cause the furtherance of violence or even hatred or tension between the two communities. That provision has not been used.

The Northern Ireland legislative statute book is weighed down with legislation that can be used for the very purposes for which the Government are trying to argue that they need this legislation. Therefore, why has the proposed legislation containing the declaration been brought before the House? We do not have to look too far. It is an exercise in trying to pretend that a new package of anti-terrorist legislation is being promoted that will in some way lessen the impact of terrorism in Northern Ireland. Nothing is further from reality.

Clause 6, to which many hon. Members have referred, explains what is meant by a breach of the declaration of non-violence. The more one reads of the proposed legislation, the more one must despair of the consequences which will arise from its implementation. The Bill fails to make clear what standard of support or what measure will be applied to support or alleged support for a proscribed organisation is banned by the Bill. It appears that any word or deed in support of a proscribed organisation or an act of violence will be a breach of the terms of a councillor's declaration and hence is such an action. Here we enter a legal quagmire that will bog down the courts of

Northern Ireland and the higher courts of appeal in years to come, with the propaganda to which I have already referred attaching to it.

In the absence of any guidance in the Bill, judges will be given an impossible task because of the difficulty of interpretation. For example, clause 6(3)(a) describes a breach of the declaration, and uses the words:

"whether the expression of support or approval is made by spoken or written words, the display of any written matter or by other behaviour".

The expression, "other behaviour" is totally open-ended. What does it mean? As I said, I have been involved in local government for a considerable time and I can give some examples of what it might mean to people on the ground.

If a resolution condemning an act of violence comes before a council, and a councillor does not respond positively to that condemnation, is he or she thereby demonstrating support for the act of violence, although he or she has done absolutely nothing to demonstrate such an attitude? Or let us suppose, as often happens, that an incident has occurred in the local district and a request is made by the chair for a minute's silence in respect for someone who has been killed or has suffered a tragic loss, be they Loyalist or Republican. If a councillor remains seated, is that an act of support for an act of violence which led to a death or a murder? Those are practical problems which will arise in council chambers.

If a person attends a public meeting outside a council chamber at which a proscribed organisation or supporters of a proscribed organisation publicly declare their support for a policy of violence, is that an offence, and has that person to prove his attendance as being against the policy promulgated from the platform? If he remains silent, will his behaviour be interpreted as support for that violence?

What will happen if a public representative supports a notice or motion in a council chamber proposed by a member of a political party which supports violence? Hon. Members have constantly referred to members of Sinn Fein as the only supporters of violence in the council chambers, but I have sat in council chambers and in the Assembly of Northern Ireland with people from every party except my own and the small Alliance party among members who have supported and used violence in the furtherance of political objectives. The list of possibilities stretches into absurd infinity, yet we are being presented with the Bill as a vehicle for the prevention of terrorism within our council chambers.

It is clear that the Bill will set the extremists in the council chambers at each others' throats and the process of local democracy and respect for it will be sacrificed on the altar of the legislation. Furthermore, it will enable the councillors of a particular party, if they have a majority in a council chamber, to use ratepayers' money to pursue the minority parties on every word, date, action or omission which they determine is something to do with, or can be interpreted in some loose way as support for, a particular cause or group that supports violence.

Last week, the Minister presented a White paper which says that legislation will be introduced to prevent political parties from using ratepayers' money to pursue political objectives, yet the Bill will enable majority parties in council chambers to pursue minority parties for real or imagined acts in contravention of the declaration of non-violence. The House can take it from me that it will happen on a month-to-month basis. The Bill puts us on a long and slippery slope of legislation and confrontation in Northern Ireland. There is a total contradiction in Government attitudes as represented in the Bill and in last week's White Paper.

Clause 7, which, too, has been referred to by many hon. Members, enables a group or person to take legal action. As the hon. Member for Eastbourne (Mr. Gow) made clear, the Bill provides that a councillor or an elector can initiate on his own behalf and at his own expense a course of action or a prosecution under the Bill. That is what the Government say can happen. The Government argue that it is impossible to have jury trials in Northern Ireland because jurors would be subjected to intimidation and acts of violence. Will someone explain the contradiction in those attitudes? A person will be able to prosecute someone whom he believes to be a member of a paramilitary organisation but will not be able to take part in the collective decision of a jury.

Clause 6 (a)(ii), which deals with terrorism, refers to "violence for political ends connected with the affairs of Northern Ireland"—

not violence for political ends, only that connected with Northern Ireland. That is a strange phrase to find in a Bill dealing with terrorism.

What will happen if a person supports violence used by the Government for political ends? In the past, councillors have supported such action taken by the Government. Will Sinn Fein be able to take action against those councillors and local representatives? We are setting a pattern whereby extremists on both sides of the council chamber will take legal potshots at one another and bring local councils into disrepute.

I know of many councillors, by reputation, and personally, who have participated in the execution of violence for political purposes. I am talking of those not of a Sinn Fein persuasion but of a Unionist persuasion. They have manned barricades, turned people away from their work or intimidated them to prevent them from going to work because it did not suit their political objectives. All those people will merrily sign the declaration with what they consider to be a clear conscience.

Many people are sitting in council chambers tonight, in the Unionist tradition, who have been connected with—I do not want to go further because of the sub judice rule—the manufacture and storage of arms. They have connections with paramilitary organisations such as Ulster Resistance—that was refuted by the hon. Member for Belfast, East (Mr. Robinson)—and when arms were found that allegedly belonged to Ulster Resistance, the Democratic Unionist party issued a statement withdrawing its support for Ulster Resistance. If my memory serves me right, part of that statement said that it was involved to maintain a well-disciplined army of men. For what purpose is a well-disciplined army of men maintained, unless it is, at some stage, to initiate an act of violence in pursuance of a political objective?

If matters carry on as I think they will, not only will local government be brought into disrepute but there will be few councillors in Northern Ireland. There will be only SDLP members and a small number from the Alliance party to carry on local government business. I ask the Secretary of State to recognise, even at this late stage, the turmoil and stress that the Bill will cause in local government and to pull back from implementing the clauses that deal with the declaration on violence.

The hon. Member for Eastbourne referred to the need to transfer substantive powers to local government in

[Mr. Eddie McGrady]

Northern Ireland. I refer the hon. Gentleman to the judicial tribunal of the early 1970s, which found that, of the nine causes of civil disorder in Northern Ireland, seven arose from the maladministration and performance of local government in the execution of its duties.

For some reason, the hon. Member for Yeovil (Mr. Ashdown) introduced the issue of parole and said that the intended measures for Northern Ireland will give it parity with the rest of the United Kingdom. That is not true; there are no jury trials, so there is a different sentencing procedure. Once a third of the sentence has been served here, parole can be considered.

I ask the Secretary of State and the Under-Secretary to consider not the legal jargon but the practical consequences of what will happen in council chambers, the courts and the press in Northern Ireland in future. I ask them to consider with an open mind what has been said about the gross deficiencies of the Bill. I hope that even at this late stage they will draw back from setting this precedent.

7.46 pm

Mr. Anthony Coombs (Wyre Forest): I make it plain that I strongly support the principle of the Bill and will support it in the Lobby tonight, especially the part relating to the declaration on terrorism of those elected to office.

I found it appallingly disappointing, but perhaps not surprising, to hear the speech of the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, North (Mr. McNamara). At a time when terrorists have killed more than 80 people in Northern Ireland this year, when the majority of people want this measure—as the opinion poll on Ulster Television showed—and when local government in Northern Ireland must be buttressed and must gain the acceptability of people in Northern Ireland, the hon. Gentleman could not put forward one positive measure as an alternative to the Bill. I found that quite appalling.

The strongest arguments in favour of the Bill are those of principle. It was clear from a visit that a number of hon. Members paid to Northern Ireland last week that the majority of people there want a sensible, sensitive system of devolved government. I agree with my hon. Friend the Member for Eastbourne (Mr. Gow) that it must be the first objective of the British Government to bring that about. A devolved system of government will not receive general assent unless it is perceived as fair, objective and balanced and unless there is confidence in the existing system of local government.

The sectarian history in Northern Ireland is tense and goes back a long way. The hon. Member for Yeovil (Mr. Ashdown) gave the difference between the present and the past. Regarding Northern Ireland, Harold Nicolson said:

> "The Irish themselves have no sense of the past: for them the present began on October 17th 1171, when Henry II landed at Waterford."

There is cynicism among the Catholics, who rightly feel that they have been discriminated against over the years, and among the Protestants who, from the home rule crisis of 1886, when they removed themselves from the main stream of British politics, to the partition of 1920, when Austin Chamberlain hoped for a union in Ireland, with their suspicions, however wrong, of the Anglo-Irish Agreement, have been worried that they will be marginalised and nudged out of the United Kingdom. Whether that is right or wrong, it is the present feeling among Catholics and Protestants in Northern Ireland.

That cynicism about effective local government can only be exacerbated by what happened in the examples given by the hon. Member for Antrim, South (Mr. Forsythe). The chairman of Fermanagh district council, a Sinn Feiner, refused to condemn the events at Enniskillen. We hear of Gerry Dokerty, who was elected to the Londonderry council, despite having previously tried to blow up the Guildhall in London. On our visit, we met a gentleman in Newry who was aggrieved because he had to sit in a council chamber two places in front of a gentleman who he had a pretty good idea was involved in the assassination of his brother-in-law.

Against that background, it is not surprising that local government in Northern Ireland does not have the best reputation or that the best young people do not wish to support local democracy in practice by becoming members of local councils. If local democracy and effective administration are to gain the people's confidence, the need for the Bill, and especially the declaration, is imperative.

I have three worries about the legislation, the lesser of which concerns the declaration which begins:

> "I declare that, if elected, I will not by word or deed".

That provision does not cover candidates while they are taking part in elections. I understand the statement by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State that we cannot study every utterance of every candidate—although in England a police officer can arrest a person for contravening the provisions of the Race Relations Act 1976. Such people are by no means as public as candidates in a public election.

As constituted, the Bill may lead to a potential for mockery whereby terrorists fight a campaign on terrorist principles, having signed the declaration. They may say, "If I am elected, I shall not be able to say what I have been saying during the campaign." I have some sympathy with the argument of the hon. Member for Antrim, South that a stronger declaration would make repudiating terrorism and a list of proscribed organisations a condition of candidacy. The quality of debate and of those taking part in, and not merely those who win, elections is important and underpins democratic values.

My second concern is with the penalties that will attach to those who break their declarations. The Government's discussion paper talked about a serious threat to "legitimate political activity", a "severe challenge to democracy" and a "deep public concern". The proposed penalties for breaking the law, which try to deal with that deep public concern, are only civil, not criminal. The maximum period of disqualification from office is five years. Surely advocating terrorism is tantamount to behaviour which, under the Public Order (Northern Ireland) Order 1987, is likely to arouse hatred or fear in the general population and is a criminal offence leading to imprisonment.

Surely arousing sectarian fear and hatred and advocating terrorism are at least as bad as arousing racial hatred. A person who transgresses against the provisions of the Race Relations Act can be arrested by a policeman. That is a criminal matter which is tried in a Crown court and carries a penalty of up to two years' imprisonment. I cannot see the difference between inciting sectarian hatred and inciting racial hatred, especially in Northern Ireland.

I hope that the Government will ensure that transgression of the declaration is a serious criminal offence, not merely a civil one.

Thirdly, I am worried about methods of enforcement. I do not believe that civil action will be particularly appropriate or effective. It would be illogical if it were, given the way in which this has been recognised by the Government in the speech by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State and in the discussion paper. The conclusion to the consultation paper states:

"The Government accepts its responsibility to safeguard local democracy and to seek to prevent the deliberate destabilisation of political life in the Province by apologists for violence."

The Bill, which is meant to countermand that destabilisation applies merely to individuals attacking other citizens through a civil action.

Mr. Mallon: The hon. Gentleman is making an interesting speech, but there is one glaring omission. I probably have the unique record of being the only living person who has been disqualified from a Northern Ireland Assembly. My crime was not support of terrorism or anything like that but the fact that I had the audacity to sit in an Irish Parliament. I wonder whether the hon. Gentleman will bend his mind to this anomaly, which is a delightful irony. This Parliament is setting up an inter-parliamentary tier with the Parliament of the Republic of Ireland, but the statute book still provides that someone from the North of Ireland who sits in the Parliament of the Republic of Ireland should be disqualified from not only this House but any assembly in the North of Ireland.

Mr. Coombs: I hear what the hon. Gentleman says, but I want to continue my argument and I must hurry.

The Government's major argument—as adduced by my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State in the article in *The Daily Telegraph*—for not taking action on behalf of citizens for transgressions of the declaration, is that it would lead to difficulties with political argument and impartiality. Surely those difficulties are addressed already in Northern Ireland by the Government or their agencies, the Crown prosecution service or the Director of Public Prosecutions in approving extraditions and prosecutions for far more sensitive crimes.

If the Government are concerned about the intimidation of witnesses, how much more should they be concerned about the intimidation of witnesses if the initiators of civil actions have to prosecute without any Government backing? It is crucial that the Government give a lead. Because the Bill is so important and is wanted so strongly by the moderate majority in Northern Ireland, the Government must shoulder the responsibility of seeing the legislation through whenever the code is broken.

No doubt many hon. Members will accuse the Government of being overweening, malicious and offending against civil liberties. Those hon. Members should take comfort from the words of an American politician who knew something about civil strife in his country. Abraham Lincoln said:

"It has long been a grave question whether any government not too strong for the liberties of its people can be strong enough to maintain its liberties in great emergencies."

These are times in Northern Ireland, sadly, of great emergencies. I support the Bill, but I hope that the Government will see fit to strengthen it in Committee in the way that I have suggested.

7.59 pm

Mr. Tony Benn (Chesterfield): I believe that I am the first speaker called today who intends to vote against the Second Reading of the Bill after having voted for the reasoned amendment.

Mr. Mallon: No, the right hon. Gentleman is not.

Mr. Benn: Perhaps other hon. Members have said the same thing.

This is a dangerous little Bill, made no less offensive because of the fact that it will be wholly and completely ineffective, as has been pointed out by other hon. Members. I have no doubt that the Secretary of State was told to do something after the recent explosions, so he came up with the ban on Sinn Fein people appearing on broadcasts and this little Bill to get a person to take an oath before he stands as a candidate.

It is strange to me, however, that the people against whom the Secretary of State has directed his anger are those using the electoral process. If someone stands as a candidate, he is using the ballot box to advance his cause and, if elected, he is aiming to use the media to advance it too.

As the Secretary of State did, I want to go through the proposals that have been made in Parliament in my lifetime, which would bring peace to Ireland. Partition—failed; direct rule—failed; Stormont—failed; power-sharing—failed; internment without trail—failed; sending in troops—I was in the Cabinet which did that—failed; strip searching—failed; plastic bullets—failed; Diplock courts—failed; supergrass trials, the Prevention of Terrorism Act 1974, the Anglo-Irish Agreement and the shoot-to-kill policy—failed; and extradition is not doing very well.

Any other assembly in the world that was discussing the situation in Northern Ireland today would be going through that list, but only the British Parliament is able to gather together and congratulate the Minister, with qualification, on producing a Bill that imposes an oath. *[Interruption.]* An oath and a declaration are merely religious or secular words to describe the same thing.

I have been looking into the history of this matter, as I am a bit of a historian. I looked up the Act of the Scottish Parliament of 29 August 1681:

"for the security of the protestant Religion against Papists and Phanaticks; Together with the Oath to be taken by all Persons in Publick Trusts".

It is a marvellous Act of Parliament and requires people to denounce and renounce the Pope and all his works and includes in it a pledge not to

"take up Arms against the King"

or ever rise in arms against the King.

The principle of trying to deal with religion, or religious or political movements, by oath is absurd. There is a more recent parallel. President Botha said that Nelson Mandela could come out of prison if he gave a pledge comparable with the one that the Secretary of State asks us to impose by this legislation. Very much to Nelson Mandela's credit, he said that he would rather stay in prison that renounce his commitment to a free South Africa. I know that there

[Mr. Benn]

are differences, because the franchises and circumstances there are different, but the point that the House will not discuss is, what is terrorism?

Were those people who were fighting to get rid of the Russian troops from Afghanistan terrorists? Are members of the African National Congress in South Africa terrorists? Were members of the Maquis in France, who threw bombs into cafés where there were Germans terrorists? The reality is—the House had better face it—that violence has been used in the British empire. I have met numerous terrorists who ended up having tea with the Queen, having been imprisoned for the same sort of offence that the Secretary of State is now seeking to impose with his little Bill. Gandhi, who believed in non-violence, was put in gaol, as were Nehru and Makarios. They were all in gaol because they were members of nationalist movements.

All that I am saying to the Secretary of State—he knows it, whether he wants to hear it or not—is that we cannot beat national movements by these methods. We can try as hard as we like, but we cannot do it.

Mr. Tom King: Would the right hon. Gentleman care to discuss the speech that he is making with the hon. Member for Newry and Armagh (Mr. Mallon), who would be the first to denounce violence? Does he believe that any of the movements that he has mentioned, and which he believes to be nationalist, managed to achieve so derisory a vote as Sinn Fein achieved in the Republic of Ireland where it managed 1·8 per cent. of the vote? The right hon. Gentleman gave his own game away by admitting that there was a slight difference, that there is a universal franchise and the people are able to vote and that there is therefore no excuse for violence.

Mr. Benn: If there is derisory support for Sinn Fein, no one advocating violence would ever be elected. That is the absurdity of the Secretary of State's argument. He says that there is no support for violence, but when Sinn Fein members are elected and take a view of the national struggle which is theirs and not mine, he says, "We will take away your right to sit and to vote." It is exactly the same with the ban on broadcasting. My intervention touched the core of the matter. If we attack elected people, we are really attacking those who elected them. That is the principle upon which representative government depends. If the Secretary of State wishes to intervene again, I should listen to him for hours.

If we attack a Member who has been elected to this House and say that he cannot broadcast on the BBC, we are attacking his electors, because all of us here are nothing without those who sent us here. That is what representative democracy is about. The Secretary of State is not taking further measures against those engaged in the armed struggle—he is taking measures against those who have been elected by choosing the route of the ballot box.

Mr. Mallon: Somehow I have been drawn into this. Lest my silence indicate consent in either direction, I must say that I think both points are wrong. I do not think that there is any aura of invincibility or rightness about paramilitary or terrorist activity in Ireland or anywhere else; nor do I think that they will be defeated by this type of legislation. The only way in which terrorism and paramilitary activity in Ireland will be defeated is when people, in their own hearts and minds, decide that they will not give the terrorists support. That is the weakness in this measure, as it has been in the other measures that we have seen in the past three weeks.

Mr. Benn: I shall not quarrel with the hon. Gentleman, except to say that the immediate issue goes back a long way. In 1884, Sir William Harcourt, the then Home Secretary, refused to give London control of its own police because of "Irish outrages". My grandfather was elected in Tower Hamlets in 1892 as a home ruler, and Ritchie, the Tory Member he beat, said that if Ireland had home rule there would be chaos, anarchy and civil war.

The Secretary of State should not tell the House that this is a new move by dangerous Left-wing Members to try to encourage the bullet in Northern Ireland. Partition was a product of the bullet. The Black and Tans and the partition of Ireland were the imposition of partition by force and it ill befits a Government who favour partition to say, "Now we've cut you up by force, you must commit yourself to limit your aspirations to the structures that we set."

It has been noted that it is time that constructive things were said.

Mr. Stephen Day (Cheadle): Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Benn: I am coming to the end of my speech; I promised to be brief.

Of course the horrific loss of life in Ireland is of concern to everyone. I know no one who believes that that is the way forward for Ireland but, like any war—this is a war, and not crime in the ordinary sense as it is presented—it has to be brought to an end by negotiation. Although I am not an Irish Member, I wanted to speak in this debate because every attack that the Government make on civil liberties in Ireland encroaches on us. It begins in Ireland and then comes here. I have seen it with police action, with the Prevention of Terrorism Act, as with constituents of mine in Bristol.

The reputation of British justice abroad is about as low as it can be. *[Interruption.]* Of course it is. Why do Conservative Members think that the Belgian Government took the decision that they did? Why has the European Court of Human Rights at Strasbourg ruled against British decisions 21 times? Mr. Gorbachev will come to this country this week and may meet the families of the Birmingham six, just as the Prime Minister went to meet——

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Harold Walker): Order. The right hon. Gentleman is straying rather a long way from the Bill. I hope that he will return to it.

Mr. Benn: I shall leave Mr. Gorbachev out of local government in Northern Ireland, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and respect your great knowledge and authority in the Chair.

If the war in Ireland is to end, there must be a round table conference. The jurisdiction of Britain in Northern Ireland must end—not under threat of the bullet, but by a decision of the British Parliament. Every assistance must then be giving to try to bring the fractured communities together. I have a feeling that, because of the Anglo-Irish Agreement, some of the Protestants in the North would be happy to see the end of the British Government because they do not have much time for what the Government are

doing under the stealthy mechanisms of that agreement. More people come to that conclusion day by day as policy after policy fails.

Instead of an oath, a pledge or whatever else must be given before someone can represent his people in local government, it would be better if the Government had the sense to open the whole question to public discussion in a round table conference. For that reason I shall vote against the Bill being given a Second Reading and I advise as many of my hon. Friends as possible to do the same. Only in that way can we focus upon the real issue that we are debating.

8.11 pm

Mr. Simon Burns (Chelmsford): I trust that the right hon. Member for Chesterfield (Mr. Benn) will forgive me if I do not follow him but, sadly, I could not find anything in his outburst with which to agree.

I welcome the Bill. I heard what my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State said about possible anomalies, and the Bill may not be 100 per cent. the ideal measure, but that does not mean that we should stand back and do nothing. Decent people are disgusted by the fact that people can stand in local government elections in Northern Ireland even if they are convicted terrorists or support terrorism. It is offensive to every bone in their bodies that people who refuse to reject terrorism can take part in the elected offices of Northern Ireland.

Mr. Harry Barnes (Derbyshire, North-East): Is it not possible that decent people in Northern Ireland will refuse to sign the declaration because they do not believe in oaths or declarations? Are they not the very people that this Bill is supposed to encourage? They will cut themselves off from the political game.

Mr. Burns: I do not quite understand the hon. Gentleman's remarks. If he has read the Bill he must know that we are asking people to make not an oath, but a declaration. I remind him that before any hon. Member can take his seat in the House he must sign an oath of allegiance or affirm. I cannot accept the hon. Gentleman's argument.

For two long and tortuous decades, the people of Northern Ireland have suffered at the cowardly hands of the IRA, which has indiscriminately attacked not only the Army and the police but the elderly, women, children and innocent people wanting to go about their normal lives and business. The IRA cares nothing for the damage, misery and uncertainty that it has caused over the past 20 years. It has scant regard for the sanctity of life or for democracy itself. It has failed ever to win the intellectual argument of its case, so it has resorted to the use of the Armalite and the bomb to try to achieve its aims.

Since 1983, democracy in Northern Ireland has been affronted by the election of the hon. Member for Belfast, West (Mr. Adams). To add insult to injury, in 1985, 59 Sinn Fein members were elected to local government in Northern Ireland. It is a travesty of justice that convicted terrorists and apologists for violence should be allowed to participate in the democratic institutions of Northern Ireland, while the IRA continues its murderous campaign of bombings, without ever rejecting a policy that is so repugnant both to democracy and to decent people.

The IRA seeks to undermine the democratic fabric of society in Northern Ireland, which is why it is so imperative the people who seek local government office should make a declaration rejecting violence before they can take their seats in any council chamber in the Province.

Mr. Bob Cryer (Bradford, South): Is the hon. Gentleman sure of the consequences of such a declaration? Does it mean that those who do so are rejecting the Government's purchase and deployment of the Trident nuclear weapon——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. Let us keep to the Bill before the House.

Mr. Burns: I am grateful to you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, for not allowing me to be tempted down that irrelevant path—*[Interruption.]* I could easily answer the hon. Member for Bradford, South (Mr. Cryer) in the proper debate, but it is not the subject of this debate, on this measure, on this night.

I am pleased that the Bill will put a stop to individuals seeking election and taking seats in local government in Northern Ireland before they have signed a declaration against terrorism. That will be warmly welcomed not only by the vast majority of hon. Members, but throughout the country in Wales, Scotland, England and Northern Ireland itself. No longer will councillors have to sit in the same chamber with those who openly espouse the cause of violence, which is so deeply repugnant to them. This measure amply demonstrates the Government's commitment to block any loopholes and to stop the propagation of terrorist propaganda advancing a cause that should be struck down in every instance.

The proposal to amend the local government franchise will be welcomed, for the most part. It is quite extraordinary that British citizens—service men's wives and families over the age of 18 and others who have gone to live in Northern Ireland—cannot participate in local government democratic processes in the same way that someone from Northern Ireland coming to live, for example, in Chelmsford, can register and vote in our local elections. The correction of that anomaly is long overdue.

I find it rather odd that some of the 10,500 people who will be enfranchised will be citizens of the Irish Republic. Indeed, I have always found it odd that they can vote in British elections, whether in Liverpool, Glasgow or, indeed, Northern Ireland after the Bill is passed. The Republic of Ireland spent many bloody years trying to cut its ties with the United Kingdom of Britain and Northern Ireland. It is odd that citizens of the Irish Republic can come to this country and vote in our elections, but a French citizen who might come to live, for example, in Chelmsford could not—quite rightly—vote in either local or general elections, and nor could an American citizen or any citizen not of British nationality. Why, then, are we perpetuating that anomaly in the Bill?

Mr. Mallon: I am rather loth to believe that I am hearing what I am hearing. In effect, is the hon. Gentleman saying that people who live in this country, are domiciled in this country and fulfil the residential qualifications of the electoral legislation should not be allowed to vote because they originated from the Republic of Ireland? That seems to be exactly what the hon. Gentleman is saying. The only qualification for voting here or in the Republic of Ireland is that one is resident in the relevant country on the qualifying date. The hon. Gentleman's remarks smack of racism.

Mr. Burns: I am sorry if the hon. Gentleman thinks that, because my remarks were in no way meant to imply it. The hon. Gentleman is wrong. If one wants to vote in local or national elections in England, it is not a matter of residency; it is a matter of citizenship. One must be a British citizen to vote in British or Irish elections. The Irish are the only exceptions. That is the point I was making.

Mr. Mallon: The hon. Gentleman is completely wrong. The only qualification is that of residence on 15 September of the year involved. British people living in the Republic of Ireland are automatically included on the electoral register if they are resident on the same date. There is a clear distinction between the residential qualification and citizenship.

Mr. Burns: The hon. Gentleman is wrong on that point. If we exclude British and Irish people, any person who does not have British or Irish nationality cannot vote in British mainland local elections or general elections. It is sad that that Bill should extend that anomaly so that, when the Bill is on the statute book, citizens of the Republic of Ireland can vote in local government elections in Northern Ireland, just as they can vote in local government and general elections on mainland Britain, and they have done so for many years. That is wrong. It is only in recent years that the Republic of Ireland has changed its law so that British citizens can go to southern Ireland and vote in elections there. That anomaly has only just been rectified by the southern Irish Government.

I congratulate my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State on wisely seeking to enforce the main thrust of the Bill—the declaration—through civil procedures rather than through criminal procedures. It will avoid making martyrs of those who seek martyrdom for a cause, and it will effectively prevent terrorists or terrorist sympathisers having yet another platform on which to propagate their ugly and evil propaganda. It is another measure that ends a loophole that gave succour to terrorists and, once again, shows the Government's determination, with every possible measure in their armoury, to stamp out terrorism and terrorist sympathisers. I warmly applaud the Secretary of State for bringing such a measure before the House.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I understand that the Front Benches will seek to catch my eye at about 20 minutes past nine. That is 56 minutes from now. I see five hon. Members, all of whom have sat conscientiously throughout the debate, seeking to catch my eye. I hope that they will all have a chance to speak. We can achieve that by using a little simple arithmetic.

8.23 pm

Mr. Eric S. Heffer (Liverpool, Walton): Perhaps the hon. Member for Chelmsford (Mr. Burns) does not realise that, during the last war, thousands of Irish people came to this country, joined our forces, and fought alongside people such as myself, and did so in various parts of the world. I am aware of that. Therefore, I have never had an argument about Irish citizens living in this country and having the right to vote in our elections.

Mr. David Wilshire (Spelthorne): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Heffer: No.

The leader of the Liberal party—or whatever it is called nowadays; I cannot be sure—said that we who raise historical issues are living in the past. I have frequently heard that remark made also by some of my hon. Friends on the Opposition Front Bench. If we do not understand or seek to understand the past, we cannot possibly understand the present or have a view for the future. We cannot understand the discussion we are having tonight and will have tomorrow on Northern Irish matters unless we understand what has happened in Ireland.

Many hon. Members have good arguments. No one will deny that. There is a measure of justice on both sides of the House. But history proves one thing, and that is that we in this country dominated Ireland and subjected Ireland to our rule, and the six counties were then created. That is the basis of the trouble in Ireland. As long as the border remains, no matter what is done, what arguments are put, or what efforts are made, there will always be periods of trouble. The trouble will die down, and it will go away for a period, but it will come back again. That is the logic of the situation in Ireland. It does not make me happy; it makes me very unhappy.

I sit on Opposition Benches with, believe it or not, Northern Ireland Members who are Ulster Unionists. I find them pleasant people. We can get on well together —I like them—but they do not agree with me on every political point. I find people in front of me who are in the SDLP. I like them also, but it does not solve the political problem. It is not a matter of liking or disliking. We in this country must begin to think seriously—we have not done so until now—how we can solve the problem of Northern Ireland to the satisfaction of the peoples of the whole of Ireland.

The first woman elected to the House of Commons was a Sinn Feiner. Her name was Countess Markievicz. She did not come to the House, but she was elected. She could come here, but she probably would not have taken the oath. That is why she did not come. She would not accept what we accept.

The Bill is a strange document. Schedule 2, part I, refers to

"acts of terrorism (that is to say, violence for political ends) connected with the affairs of Northern Ireland."

Imagine that nobody has ever conducted any violence in relation to the problems of Northern Ireland. Do hon. Members know that, until the uprising in 1916, when the leaders were shot and killed, there had not been a great deal of sympathy? Afterwards, there was massive sympathy. At the next election, the Sinn Feiners won a majority and then declared their independence. What were they faced with then? A revolt from the Ulstermen of Northern Ireland, the Protestants who for their own reasons under Carson said, "We shall fight." There was violence for political ends on both sides. Therefore, let us be honest about this and not run away from the realities of what happened in Ireland.

I do not understand why we must have a declaration. If every hon. Member were told that they had to sign a declaration that we had at no time believed in violence to achieve political ends or else we could not stand for election to this House or local government, some of my hon. Friends would laugh. What about the Maquis and those sent to assist them bomb and terrorise the Germans when they were in occupation? Many innocent people,

French and others, who were not involved were killed. What were they? Terrorists? Hitler and company said that they were terrorists and had them put down as terrorists.

We have only to look at the House, for God's sake. We sit in a House which exists today with its democratic rights because the British people took up arms to ensure that Parliament was created. Hon. Members talk nonsense. The Tory party arose from the struggles from 1640 onwards, so let us not pretend that it has always repudiated violence for political ends. That is absolute utter nonsense.

We should not pass easily a Bill which introduces a declaration or what I would call, an oath. My hon. Friend the Member for Kingston upon Hull, North (Mr. McNamara) was absolutely right. What about the Dissenters? Where would they have stood? I am an Anglican so I would have been on the right side. My lot were the ones telling the Roman Catholics and Dissenters, "You do what we tell you or you will not get the rights you expect."

That is what happened. I would have been all right because my family has been Anglican for hundreds of years, but what about all those who were not? What about the Baptists, the Congregationalists, the Quakers and all those who were told that they must accept this or they would not get the rights they expected?

Mr. Wilshire *rose*——

Mr. Heffer: No, I shall not give way. You, Mr. Deputy Speaker, have made it clear that you want short speeches and I am not going to make a long speech. All right, then.

Mr. Wilshire: I am a Dissenter. Can the hon. Gentleman remind me when my Church, the Methodist Church, took up arms and fought a battle to demand the right to sit in the House?

Mr. Heffer: The hon. Gentleman had better start to learn something about history. The Methodists came later and broke away from the Anglican Church. They were not involved in the 1640 uprising because they did not exist at that time.

Mr. McNamara: The Methodists were caught by the Test and Corporation Acts.

Mr. Heffer: My hon. Friend is absolutely right.

We must get this into perspective. Hon. Members may have seen in *The Independent* today an interesting letter from a John A. Oliver who wrote:

"In the 1940s local fire brigades in Ulster and their full-time auxiliaries were being converted into a type of national fire service. As the firemen and women were thus becoming servants of the Crown they had to swear an oath of allegiance . . .

Only a handful objected (about six out of a thousand, as I recall). They had to be sacked and I was sorry to see them go.

Just as I was beginning to preen myself a little on getting through this delicate affair with fewer objectors than my seniors had expected, many men and women gently deflated me by openly saying (in the informal "crack" after the formal business which is one of the attractive aspects of public life in Ulster) that they had sworn the oath *with varying degrees of mental reservation.*"

Surely that puts the whole matter into perspective. Those standing for a council can happily swear the oath or accept the declaration. Many will not mean a word of it, so why do we have to have it?

The hon. Member for Yeovil (Mr. Ashdown) talked marvellously at his party's conference, attacking the Prime Minister for attacking our civil liberties, but when a Bill is introduced that attacks civil liberties in part of the United Kingdom, he and his so-called party run away. That is my objection to them. They say that they are not concerned and they believe in the Bill. They are politically dishonest and are not serious about civil liberties. If they were, they would join us and vote against the Bill.

My hon. Friend the Member for Kingston upon Hull, North was wrongly attacked. His case was a good one and because of that we believe that we should not only support the reasoned amendment but vote against the Bill. That is precisely what some of us intend to do tonight.

This Bill concerns our civil liberties. Once we allow civil liberties to be attacked in Northern Ireland, if only in a minor way, it will come over here. We have seen that already. I do not trust this Government. Sooner or later people who dissent politically will also be faced with a declaration.

Mr. Burns: Rubbish.

Mr. Heffer: We have had this rubbish before, but that is what happens under an authoritarian Government and this Government are authoritarian.

For that if for no other reason I ask my hon. Friends to vote against the Bill and to defend basic civil liberties.

8.37 pm

Mr. Stephen Day (Cheadle): One observation I have of this debate—I have missed only one speech—is the loss of the so-called bi-partisan approach which was valuable in our discussions on Northern Ireland. Where has it gone? Irrespective of our political difficulties, terrorism in a free society threatens everyone, whatever our political beliefs. We have a greater interest in unity of purpose against terrorism than in minor details, and it is certainly minor details to which the Opposition have objected today. It is far more important that we have a unity of purpose against terrorism. That unity prevailed under the Labour Government, who were supported by the then official Opposition.

Evidence of a breakdown in our bipartisan approach came from the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, North (Mr. McNamara), who said that we were driving people out of the political process. Where in the Bill are we doing that? No one is being proscribed or stopped from standing for election. That is absolute nonsense and a complete misinterpretation of the Bill. He said that Sinn Fein could take comfort from this measure. It will take far more comfort from some of the comments from the Opposition Benches than from anything in the Bill.

The right hon. Member for Chesterfield (Mr. Benn) called it a dangerous little Bill. I do not see him here now, but I cannot understand why he feels that the Bill is more dangerous than the people with whom it is designed to deal. Surely they are the greater threat to our democratic institutions.

The hon. Member for Liverpool, Walton (Mr. Heffer) said that we should define terrorism. It is quite clear to me what terrorism is. It is those who take up arms against their state although legitimate democratic means exist for them to express their views freely. He quoted examples such as the French Resistance. There were few human rights in France at the time when the Maquis took up arms

[Mr. Stephen Day]

against the German forces. How can the right hon. Gentleman equate that with the situation in Northern Ireland? Northern Ireland is a democratic state within the United Kingdom and people can express their views freely. The Bill is designed to ensure that those views can be expressed.

Why do Labour Members seem to imply this evening —I am sure it is not their intention—that they are seeking to paint the Government as the bad guys while making little reference to the real bad guys, the terrorists on either side of the political divide? That is the real issue and I am sorry that the Opposition have not been able to address it. I am sure that it was not their intention, but the viewpoint expressed by the Opposition might lead members of the IRA to surmise that the election of a Labour Government would assist them in their aim of uniting Ireland by force. We need a united front against terrorism in Northern Ireland and I appeal to the Opposition on that.

As for the signing of declarations, the Government have no intention of introducing such a measure in the rest of the United Kingdom but if I were asked to sign a declaration stating that I renounced terrorism and violence to promote my views, I should happily sign it. I cannot understand any member of a democratic institution having any difficulty about signing such a declaration. I hope that the Opposition's position on this will be explained by Opposition Members who have not yet spoken.

I know that other hon. Members want to speak in this debate, so I shall curtail my remarks with one final comment. The declaration is not a declaration against republicanism, which is an honourable political belief, provided that people do not seek to promote it through violence. The declaration is not against unionism or any other political position in Northern Ireland, but it is a limitation on fear, intimidation, violence and, even more importantly, on those who excuse violence. No democrat should ever, by implication or directly, seek to give succour or support to the terrorists and those who want to promote their views through violence.

8.44 pm

Mr. William Ross (Londonderry, East): Normally, I have to stand here and condemn the fact that Northern Ireland legislation is being put through by order. It is a rare pleasure to be able to stand here and say that I welcome the procedure, as I can this evening. The legislation is being introduced through a Bill that we can amend—or at least try to—and through which we can explore the Government's intentions and discuss whether the measures will be effective in achieving those intentions. It will be possible for us to educate Ministers about the reality of life in the council chambers of Northern Ireland.

The House will be told—the Minister should already know—that some of my friends and colleagues who are members of councils in Northern Ireland have noticed that Sinn Fein members take careful notes of what is said when people are critical of the murders committed by the IRA and the actions of Sinn Fein and they wonder whether those people are taking careful notes to help the welfare of the Unionist who has made his views clear.

Hon. Members will be told in Committee of the remarks that are sometimes made against Unionist council members by Sinn Fein members in quiet corners of car parks. The knowledge of the House will be greatly increased by this educational process. I hope that the Bill will be considered by a Committee of the whole House, so that all Northern Ireland Members can take part in the debate and the Northern Ireland voice will be well represented.

The hon. Member for Belfast, East (Mr. Robinson) pointed out that Sinn Fein acts under the direction of the IRA. The House must be aware that in established states, military forces act under the direction of politicians. The IRA, like all terrorist organisations, has turned that democratic position on its head because it directs what its political mouthpieces shall say and do. It is my long-held view that those political mouthpieces can be trusted only when they themselves are members of the IRA.

The Opposition have not mentioned their amendment very frequently this evening. The amendment says that it "declines to give a Second Reading".
We have been told earlier that the Opposition decline so much that they will not vote for the Bill. I wonder whether the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, North (Mr. McNamara) will follow his voice with his feet through the Lobby and what the consequences will be if he dares to do that.

The amendment also says that the Bill is unnecessary because of existing legislation to deal with incitement to violence. I assume that if the Bill were unnecessary, it would not have been introduced. The fact that it has been implies that the present legislation is not sufficient to deal with the situation. The amendment is therefore factually incorrect.

The amendment then says that the Bill will
"increase sectarian conflict in Local Government".
I should have thought that the main reason for sectarian conflict—which is really terrorist conflict——

Mr. Flannery: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Ross: No. We are short of time and I want two other hon. Members, who have waited all afternoon, to have their chance to speak.

Mr. Flannery: The hon. Gentleman has missed out part of the amendment which explains what it says.

Mr. Ross: No doubt that point can be explained later by the Opposition Front Bench spokesman.

The IRA mouthpieces make sectarian conflict deeper by their mere presence and attitude. The amendment also says that the Bill will
"place the judiciary in an invidious position".
Has anyone in the House forgotten the dead judges? Did they die because the IRA loved them? They became targets because they were applying the laws of the realm. That is the reality. Their position is as dangerous as it can be and the Bill will not make it worse. The amendment says that the Bill will not heal the divisions in Northern Irish society.

Mr. Terry Patchett (Barnsley, East): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Ross: No, because other hon. Members wish to speak.

The reality is that the divisions in this society are made deeper by the misery that is caused by the activities of the IRA and by the failure of their spokesmen to condemn the murder—pure and brutal murder—of many people in the province of Ulster. That has gone on for many years.

The right hon. Member for Chesterfield (Mr. Benn) told us that one cannot defeat nationalist movements by such means, but he did not tell the House how nationalist movements are to be defeated if we do not try to stamp out violence. Nationalist movements that have free access to the electoral process and the right freely to express their point of view should not then resort to violence.

Mr. Patchett *rose*——

Mr. Ross: No, I will not give way. I have already made that clear. The hon. Gentleman can have his say another time.

The reality is also that there is a British population in Northern Ireland and they have not been defeated by IRA violence in 20 years. Surely those people will not start being defeated by the IRA now or in the future.

The Bill is essentially a timid step in the right direction. When I was considering what I would say if I were lucky enough to be called this evening—which, of course, I have been—I thought back to the time when the D-day landings were being planned, when there was a lot of courage, resolution and long-term planning. The soldiers, sailors and airmen were the cutting edge of Government policy on that day and thereafter until the final victory was won in Europe. Theirs was not to reason why, but to accept that there was a general need to win the war and to dispose of the Nazi influence on the world.

However, here the Government are making local government councillors—who support the British connection—the cutting edge in the fight to get the IRA out of the council chambers. Frankly, on some occasions the Government will be inviting them to commit suicide. That is the reality and that is why the Government should take on the job themselves in the ways that have already been suggested.

We are here to reason why—that is the duty of Members of this House. However, we are also here to reason why the Government will not accept that duty, which I believe is one that they should gladly shoulder. We will go into this later in our proceedings on the Bill because it is something that we must thrash out and something on which we should make the Government change their mind.

My concern is how effective the Bill will be as presently constituted. Certain things in the Bill do little and there are certain things that should have been included in it because the IRA's present electoral success and terrorist experience did not just happen——

Mr. Patchett: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Ross: No, I am not giving way.

It grew over the years—and it grew as a result of the Government's policy. If we are to cut down the IRA's strength and its electoral support, we should try to undermine the IRA politically as well as defeating it militarily. No doubt military solutions will be discussed tomorrow but today we are dealing with the political solutions. If we are ever to start understanding what must be done against the IRA, we must understand that, for the IRA, political victory would be a united Ireland.

It is only when hope of a united Ireland recedes as a practical possibility that those who seek it will be prepared to consider their future in the United Kingdom and play a constructive part in a Northern Ireland that is securely within that structure. If we are to weaken the IRA politically, it is absolutely essential that we cut the number of votes that it receives and the number of seats that it wins. Seeing its hope of ultimate victory recede will undermine the IRA quite a bit. However, that will have to be followed by action rather than words on the part of the Government.

There is another measure that has not been mentioned in the Bill, but which should have been. One of the best ways of getting a minority elected is to use the proportional voting system. That helps all minorities, including vicious minorities who can use pressure. The major parties in this House know that; that is why it is not used in any elections in this part of the United Kingdom.

The hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, North drew attention to the by-election results in Belfast, West. The reality is that if there were a simple majority system in Northern Ireland, operated on a ward-by-ward basis, there would be few places in which Sinn Fein would have any real hope of getting elected. Until this House faces up to that and takes the steps which flow naturally from that knowledge, Sinn Fein will always get quite a lot of its people elected in hard-line areas. Those who deny that are simply displaying their ignorance of the voting patterns in Northern Ireland.

We must get rid of the system of proportional representation and the sooner the better. It will pay rich dividends in reducing the number of votes given to Sinn Fein and the number of Sinn Fein representatives who are elected. Nobody need tell me that Sinn Fein has only one elected Member here, because although that it is true I believe that he will eventually lose his seat if the SDLP pulls its socks up.

I welcome also the standing list being the same for all elections. I have been asking questions about that since as long ago as 1981, and possibly before. Absent voters should always be on the same list for all elections. There should be the same standing list for those who are permanently incapacitated and who cannot get out. I welcome that provision.

Many legislative changes are listed in the Bill. I wish that all the relevant legislation had been printed because that would have made the Bill more intelligible to all of us. We would not have had to search back—as we always do—through a dozen other Bills to find out exactly what is going on.

I am surprised to see that the Government have finally been forced to the point where they have to define what terrorism is. Time and time again I have sat in the House and heard hon. Members declaim against "mindless terrorist violence" and have winced every time that I have heard that. Quite honestly, there is no such thing as a "mindless" terrorist act. Sometimes terrorists do it wrong, but their actions are always planned and thought out. The terrorists always intend to have some advantage from it. Therefore, I am glad that the Government have now been converted to my point of view and believe that all terrorist acts have a political objective. Everyone in Northern Ireland will welcome that.

I have a serious objection to the extension of voting rights to foreigners. Quite a lot has been said about that this evening. The number does not matter to me. Some are Unionists—at least I hope that they are Unionists—because my rector and his wife will now get the vote and I hope that I can persuade the reverend gentleman and his good lady to cast their votes for me in the next election if

[Mr. Ross]

I am fortunate enough to be the candidate for Londonderry, East. Although not all who will gain by this measure are Nationalists, naturally some are.

My objection is to the principle of foreigners voting in this country. When we go to the United States we do not expect to be given the vote there. We would have to become citizens of that country first. That is what the hon. Member for Newry and Armagh (Mr. Mallon) did not understand. In most countries—in fact, in practically all —the right to vote and the right to elect a Government is tied to citizenship in that nation. That is a sound principle and one that we should accept right across the board.

I cannot understand why that principle has been consistently ignored in so far as voting rights are granted to Irish citizens in the United Kingdom generally. That is wrong. Many hundreds—perhaps millions—of citizens of the Irish Republic who are in this country vote here. Those people have deserted their nation in droves—tens of thousands have left the country over the years. That desertion reflects the lack of success of Irish republicanism in creating the viable entity of the island of Ireland.

Those people who have fled the Communist states of eastern Europe have been praised for getting out and have been held up as proof of a failed system of government in those nations. Irish Nationalists do not apply the same principle to the Republic—nor do supporters of the Republic—but it is valid. If it is valid for those who get out of East Germany and move to West Germany, it is valid for those who leave the Irish Republic, where there are no barriers, and come to the United Kingdom, where at least they can earn a decent living and send it back to their families. I am glad that the United Kingdom has done so well. I regret that the Irish Republic is not more successful because it must mean the end of many dreams for those who proclaimed that that nation would be heaven on earth.

I welcome these first timid steps, but I hope that they will go much further because more steps must be taken.

8.59 pm

Mr. David Wilshire (Spelthorne): I want to make it absolutely clear that I totally support the principles underlined in the Bill and I believe that that support is shared by the overwhelming majority of the British people. It is an utter disgrace that the Labour party lacks the guts to defend local democracy and to support the Government today.

It is blindingly obvious to me that all elected representatives in a democracy, whether in Ulster, elsewhere in the United Kingdom or anywhere in the world, must defend that democracy and must denounce terrorism; otherwise they, as leaders of their communities, are party to attempts to overthrow their society and to undermine the democracy that they have been elected to support.

If I had any doubts about that, they were swept away earlier when the right hon. Member for Chesterfield (Mr. Benn) spoke. I did not catch his words verbatim, but I believe that I heard him say that he knew of no one who believed in death and destruction as a way forward. The British people and I know of such people—the IRA—and I know nothing about them which supports the view of the right hon. Member for Chesterfield. Death and destruction appear to be the way in which the IRA seeks to move forward and change society. I have no hesitation in denouncing that approach to the future of our country and no one in the United Kingdom should have any such hesitation.

Many people have suggested that the Bill undermines democratic rights and that it seeks to restrict freedom of speech. That is absurd. The right to stand in elections in Ulster is not affected by the Bill. Even if it were, the principle of disqualification is already established in British law. It does not weaken democracy if one says that the insane cannot stand for election, nor does it weaken democracy if one says that a bankrupt should not be allowed to stand in an election.

The freedom to say or do what one likes is an essential of local government, but councillors are limited in what they can say or do. Councillors in the United Kingdom cannot libel one another, nor can they improperly spend public money, so the principle of limiting what councillors can say or do is already established. Sad though it is, the action being proposed today in principle is necessary and it has my support. I am pleased that the Government have said in the Bill that they believe that it is proper to require councillors to undertake to do or not to do certain things if elected. At some stage in the future, in another Bill, I hope that the Government will say it once again. I hope that they will also make it compulsory for councillors to undergo training and to agree to do so as a condition of election.

The Bill has my support in principle, but I am worried about some of its contents. First, the Bill limits itself to Ulster and by so doing makes Northern Ireland yet again more different from the rest of the United Kingdom. I am convinced that Ulster is an integral part of the United Kingdom and that the great majority of its citizens are as proud as I am to say that we are British. Every new law which singles out Northern Ireland makes it harder to achieve that unity of nations that is so important and to give Northern Ireland what it has every right to expect —the same system of local government as the rest of us enjoy.

Because I support the principles of the Bill, I urge the Government to consider extending it to the entire United Kingdom. Like my hon. Friend the Member for Cheadle (Mr. Day), I would have no hesitation in signing such a declaration, and no one anywhere in the country should be in the least bit worried about it.

My second worry has also been mentioned by my hon. Friend the Member for Chelmsford (Mr. Burns) and by the hon. Member for Londonderry, East (Mr. Ross). An error has been repeated in clause 1(1)(b)(ii) by continuing to allow some foreigners to vote in our elections. It does not just repeat a mistake—it goes further and allows more Irish citizens to vote, for among the 10,000 who have been mentioned must be a preponderance of Irish citizens. My hon. Friend the Member for Chelmsford thought that it was odd; I believe that it is absolutely wrong and should be stopped. I have always believed that it is wrong to give certain foreigners special privileges here. After all, in almost no other country are we given special privileges —nor should we expect them.

The events of the past few days have reinforced my belief. It is utter hypocrisy to refuse to hand over one of our most wanted terrorists while being only too willing to hop across the border and buy cheap petrol, claim our

welfare benefits, set up home here and demand the right to vote. It is as though the Dublin policy has become to take with one hand and to punch us in the teeth with the other.

My third point relates to something that the Bill does not say. Nowhere in the Bill is there an attempt to repeal that part of our legislation which says that if a councillor does not turn up for six months his seat should be declared vacant. I am delighted that that is not to be changed. It should apply in Westminster, too. The electors of Belfast, West have no voice here, and more than 70 per cent. of those electors did not vote for the terrorist who could be here if he wished——

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Harold Walker): Order. The hon. Gentleman must not make such references to that person, whether he is sitting here or not. The hon. Gentleman is also going beyond the bounds of the Bill. I hope that he will return to it.

Mr. Wilshire: My argument is that the Bill should extend to all elections in Northern Ireland and to the rest of the United Kingdom the provision that if councillors do not occupy their seats for six months their seats are declared vacant.

I welcome the fact that the Government have acted, and I am happy to support the principles of the Bill, but I regret that such action has been necessary in our democracy. I am convinced that the Bill does not go far enough in some respects, and that it tackles some issues in a less than ideal way. I pledge my support for the Government's efforts to end the tragedy in Northern Ireland, and I commend them for deciding to act on these principles. When the Bill goes to Committee, I hope that my right hon. and hon. Friends will produce amendments to meet the reservations that I have expressed today.

9.8 pm

Mr. George Galloway (Glasgow, Hillhead): We have heard today the authentic voice of the Tory party in England, in the speech of the hon. Member for Spelthorne (Mr. Wilshire) and in several others, towards the people of Ireland. Tomorrow the Irish media will reflect some of the bile that is clearly felt by some Conservative Members against the people of Ireland, and I have no doubt that they will weigh that in the balance when next considering the requests that the Government make of them from time to time.

Before coming to the main burden of my remarks, may I refer to the outrageous speech by the hon. Member for Yeovil (Mr. Ashdown), who I understand still considers himself to be a Liberal. He launched a shocking, gratuitous, illiberal attack on my hon. Friend the Member for Kingston upon Hull, North (Mr. McNamara) when he was not in his place. I presume that the hon. Gentleman did not give notice that he would do so. Not only did it fly in the face of everything that the Liberal party previously stood for on the Irish question, but I suspect that it went more to the need to make a pitch for the constituency of the right hon. Member for Plymouth, Devonport (Dr. Owen) than for any consideration of the questions that are before us. I oppose the measure, and I shall vote against it.

Mr. Ashdown: The hon. Gentleman will know that in the heat of debate one cannot always be certain that hon. Members mentioned will be present. The hon. Gentleman is very good on insults about my speech. Would he care to pick up any of the points made by his hon. Friend the Member for Kingston upon Hull, North (Mr. McNamara) and debate them as I did instead of confining himself to insults of the sort that he has been making?

Mr. Galloway: It appears that my remarks stung home. I can now understand why 60 Liberals found it necessary to found a new—or is it an old?—Liberal party at the weekend. The departures from Liberalism by the leader of the once Liberal party make the reason clear. I shall deal with some of the issues raised by the hon. Gentleman, although I have less time than he and I hope he will bear that in mind.

I intend to vote against Second Reading but not because I support terrorism, which is the indiscriminate use of violence against innocent people for political purposes. I certainly do not support terrorism. I make no bones about it: the time has come for Britain to go from Ireland. But that is not the reason for my intention to vote against Second Reading. The Bill strikes against the democratic theory and practice of our country and is yet another palliative being applied to the critical malaise which is a central problem in British life. Not only will the Bill not have the effect that its authors claim for it, but its application is part of a process that is diminishing all of us.

Like many hon. Members who have spoken, I am a little uneasy about oaths or declarations. There is something slightly medieval about them and their use in a modern democracy. It is utterly wrong in principle to require men and women to swear something that is not in their hearts. That is what we shall do if we press on with this measure. With the assistance of the excellent Library, I have been studying the 18th century struggle against the so-called 39 articles. That struggle was led by the great parliamentarian that I have quoted before in the House, Charles James Fox, a true Liberal in the finest traditions.

Those 39 articles were oaths required from dissenters from the established Church that they fully supported the established Church in all its works, liturgy and relationship to the state. They had to swear such oaths before they could be given jobs or permission to speak from pulpits or fulfil public duties in this country. Fox declared himself to be

"a friend to universal toleration".

He argued that insistence upon these oaths when the state knew full well that the dissenters had no alternative to signing them and did not believe a word of what they were swearing meant that those being diminished most were the Crown, on whom the oath was taken, and the state, which required men to swear that which they did not believe.

This measure is also wrong in theory because, as has been teased out in the debate, very few hon. Members could say that they have an unequivocal attitude to all violence in pursuit of political objectives. Only a true pacifist in the House—there are few, if any, of them—could say that he has an unequivocal attitude to that. As with hon. Members, if I had been around in the 1930s and old enough to do so, I would have gone to Spain to fight for political objectives, to defend the Spanish republic. I would have fought in the last war to help defeat Hitler's Fascism.

Many Conservative Members support the use of violence for political objectives. In Afghanistan they support the Mujaheddin. They support such violence in Angola by their support for UNITA, and they support it in Nicaragua by their unequivocal support for the Contras. A Contra leader was touted around the

[Mr. Galloway]

Conservative party conference a few months ago. It is hypocrisy to require oaths, imposed by the majority in this House on Northern Ireland, that are based on ideas that are commonplace about other countries and other times.

This proposal is wrong in democratic practice, for if we know that those taking the oath do not mean what they are saying, what does it profit us to make them say it? What is gained by making men and women lie before they can seek elected office? Does any hon. Member believe that the electoral fortunes of these councillors will be affected by this? Sinn Fein regularly polls between 85,000 and 110,000 votes in the six counties. How many of the voters are going to the polls blissfully unaware of the relationship between Sinn Fein and the IRA? It cannot be gainsaid that these councillors are elected in the first place because enough electors in Northern Ireland are voting for them and for no other reason.

We may not like the message that is thus delivered to us by those 100,000 citizens, but we shall gain nothing by trying to bar the door to the messenger by prescribing oaths designed to wish him away. We cannot sweep this critical Irish problem under the carpet of oaths, nor are we doing it justice by the succession of cosmetic stunts that have issued forth from the Government since the Prime Minister's edict in the summer.

That brings me to the last reason why I shall vote against Second Reading. The Bill is part of a process whose core is Britain's Irish problem, which is steadily diminishing civil liberties and the democratic process in this country as a whole. These proposals—the broadcasting ban that we discussed a few weeks ago, the abolition of the centuries old right to silence, the Prevention of Terrorism (Northern Ireland) Act, the burgeoning of the secret state, and the polishing of the secret state's machinery in Northern Ireland—are all in their own way leading us down the dismal route towards what we are becoming, the poor man's third-rate democracy in Europe.

Britain is paying a high price for its presence in Ireland through the lives of our young service men, many of them only teenagers, and through the treasure—billions of pounds of it—being expended from the Exchequer to maintain British rule. I believe that when history comes to be written it will be seen that perhaps the highest price that we have paid for maintaining our rule in Ireland is the extent to which our democracy has been steadily eroded.

9.17 pm

Mr. Jim Marshall (Leicester, South): I do not think that anyone can complain on this occasion that there has not been sufficient time for a full and comprehensive debate on Northern Ireland. It is often alleged that we debate Northern Ireland business at an inappropriate time of day and that insufficient time is allowed. The temper of the House today shows that if sufficient time is available we can discuss these highly charged and contentious issues in a manner more appropriate to this Parliament.

I appreciate that the Secretary of State tempted the bounds of order in his long opening speech. I shall try not to do the same myself. He gave us a broad-brush picture of the Government's approach to the problems of Northern Ireland and placed this legislation in the context of the overall Government approach to Northern Ireland. If I recall what he said properly, he referred to the need for fairness and justice, to the need for an effective response to terrorism and to the need to protect the rights of the community.

I think that I speak for all my parliamentary colleagues when I say that those are shared aspirations. They are not aspirations associated simply with one part of this House —they are shared by all right hon. and hon. Members no matter where in the House they sit—but the essence of the Labour party view and that of the SDLP is that the legislation does nothing to advance those aspirations. On the contrary, we believe that it fails to address the essential problems and in many ways will make those shared aspirations more difficult to fulfil. That is our basic charge against the Government.

No comments from the Opposition Front Bench are designed to offer succour to the advocates of terrorism or to the terrorists in the north of Ireland, but we must be absolutely clear when discussing issues in this House that we get the approach right. That approach must be designed to attack the root causes of the problems of terrorism and the reasons for the substantial electoral support for the supporters of violence. Unfortunately, this Bill and other hasty proposals introduced by the Government a few weeks ago have done nothing to address those essential points.

It is also not without significance that, with the exception of a few Government loyalists who obviously have an earnest desire to be members of the Committee and to ensure that the Government have a majority on it, there was a lukewarm response to the efficacy of the proposals. The hon. Member for Belfast, East (Mr. Robinson) described the legislation as a limp, lukewarm, lifeless measure. While I do not agree with his conclusion on the need to strengthen the legislation, the way that he describes the Bill is apt and many hon. Members share his view.

Not only is the Bill limp, lukewarm and lifeless, but as the hon. Member for Belfast, East said, it will be ineffective. People who have carried out acts of terrorism and those who support terrorism will not be put off signing the declaration by the necessity to lie. They will wilfully and willingly sign it and ignore any consequences that may arise. I have great sympathy with the Government's dubiety in leaving the initiative to initiate prosecutions to the individual rather than the state taking responsibility for initiating prosecutions. There is cant and hyprocrisy in that part of the Government's argument which seeks to explain why the responsibility should be the individual's and not the state's.

The hon. Member for Yeovil (Mr. Ashdown), the leader of the Social and Liberal Democrats—or whatever they call themselves at the moment—spent a great deal of time criticising my hon. Friend the Member for Kingston upon Hull, North (Mr. McNamara), but very little time outlining the reasons why his party, which was noted for standing out against such measures in the past, is giving the Government full-blooded support for this legislation. I found it difficult to take the hon. Member for Yeovil's allegations of bias in favour of one section of the community in Northern Ireland on the part of the parliamentary Labour party and in particular its principal spokesman, my hon. Friend the Member for Kingston upon Hull, North.

Labour party policy, the position of my hon. Friend the Member for Kingston upon Hull, North and my own position are quite clear. We do not seek to differentiate

between one section of the community and another in Northern Ireland. We seek to ensure an even-handed approach with no discrimination against any part of the community in Northern Ireland. The policies that we support and the policies that we advance are designed to ensure that all members in the North of Ireland are treated equally in social and economic terms. We are certainly not biased in favour of one particular sector of the community.

Mr. Ashdown: I hope that the hon. Gentleman will read my speech tomorrow, because I did not accuse the Labour party of bias. I said that the Labour party should have a care because many people are hearing the speeches of the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, North (Mr. McNamara) and others who I recognise have to put their own views and those of the Labour party.

Mr. Galloway: The hon. Member for Yeovil (Mr. Ashdown) did say that.

Mr. Ashdown: The hon. Gentleman, like others, can read the record tomorrow. I say that they should have a care because it now appears to many that it will be seen as biased, always in favour of the Nationalists. We frequently hear that the Labour party is opposed to the Government on this, but we do not hear what they are in favour of and that gives such an impression. The hon. Gentleman's views will certainly be read, and they are reassuring to me.

Mr. Marshall: If I misunderstood what the hon. Gentleman said, I apologise for the remarks that I made, but it is my clear recollection that he accused my hon. Friend the Member for Kingston upon Hull, North of bias in favour of the Nationalist community in the North of Ireland. I wrote it down at the time, although I may have misheard or misunderstood him. I wrote down, "Bias to the Nationalists in the North of Ireland."

The hon. Member for Londonderry, East (Mr. Ross) also displayed a lukewarm attitude towards the legislation. He used a different form of words, calling it "a timid step in the right direction." Knowing the hon. Gentleman, I dread to think what would be vigorous steps in the right direction. Nevertheless, he said that there was a need to defeat the supporters of violence—Sinn Fein, I presume —politically.

My understanding of defeating someone politically is that one enters into a debate, and if one lives in a democracy eventually the argument will be decided by the ballot box; but that is not what the hon. Gentleman suggested. He suggested that, as Sinn Fein was winning seats under the existing electoral system, one should alter the rules of the electoral game in order to defeat them politically—in other words, to defeat them not by democratic means but by gerrymandering.

I remind the hon. Gentleman that the pursuit of such policies and initiatives led to the roots of the present trouble in the north of Ireland. We all have a vested interest in ensuring that the root causes of the present troubles are removed so that the basis for the views of terrorists and supporters of terrorism are eliminated once and for all.

Mr. William Ross: I may be wrong, but it was always my view that gerrymandering meant that electoral boundaries were deliberately drawn so as to give an electoral advantage to one party as against another. If the hon. Member for Leicester, South (Mr. Marshall), the spokesman for the Labour party, is now saying that the first-past-the-post system is of itself in principle gerrymandering, may I take it that the Labour party is now totally committed to STV—the single transferable vote—in the United Kingdom elections?

Mr. Marshall: I was making no such allegations. Hon. Members will know that there are differing views in my own party about the kind of electoral system that should be pursued.

In a democracy, political change must come as a consequence of discussion and through the ballot box. It is in our interests to ensure that violence and its perpetrators do not succeed. We have a right to expect, and a duty to ensure, that those involved in violence for political ends are caught and sentenced with the fullest vigour of the criminal law. It is essential, however, that the perpetrators of violence are regarded as criminals. Many of them are pretty nasty individuals, but they are criminals nevertheless. The Government Chief Whip nods in agreement with that—I hope that he will nod with the same vigour when I make my next point. We must ensure that the action that we take does not bestow on terrorists and the groups who support them implicit recognition that their acts are different from those of any other criminals. If we fall into that trap, the consequences will be counter-productive, provide succour to the terrorists and enhance their claims to legitimacy in the eyes of some international opinion.

Unfortunately—I hope to have the Government Chief Whip's consent for this—the Government have fallen into that trap in recent months. Following the despicable acts of violence earlier this year, the Government, and especially the Prime Minister, decided that they had to be seen to be taking some action, no matter how ill conceived or badly put together it was. As a consequence of that hasty over-reaction, censorship of television broadcasting was introduced. The non-incriminating right of silence in a police station or a court has been removed, and we now have the third part of the trilogy—the declaration on violence.

Mr. Tom King: The hon. Gentleman says that the Bill is a hasty and ill-conceived reaction. It is the outcome of a consultation document that was published a year ago, but matters were under consideration well before that. The hon. Gentleman cannot associate the Bill with a reaction to the events of the past couple of months.

Mr. Marshall: The Secretary of State knows that I always regard him as a reasonable man, and I hesitate to cast doubt on his statement. It is not without significance that, after the Prime Minister became involved, the Bill was pushed to the top of the political agenda.

It is no wonder that terrorists and their supporters are jubilant. The introduction of censorship and the further curtailment of civil liberties is, in their eyes, vindication for their appalling actions. In propaganda terms, the Government hand them what they could never hope to obtain militarily—a scent and sense of victory.

I understand the feeling of revulsion that many ordinary, decent people in the North of Ireland and the remainder of the United Kingdom feel when they see the supporters of violence in positions of elected responsibility. We should never forget—this was the essential point made by my right hon. Friend the Member for Chesterfield (Mr. Benn)—that they were elected. Many ordinary, decent people living in the North of Ireland—the people

[Mr. Marshall]

for whom the legislation is supposed to be drawn—voted for them, not by coercion, because there is no coercion in the secrecy of the ballot booth, but willingly. No declaration or proscription will remove that electoral support. It can be undermined only by an acknowledgment of the Nationalist aspirations and a vigorous pursuit of polices designed to remove social and economic discrimination against the minority community.

I have recognised previously, and willingly recognise again, the Government's determination to pursue policies towards this end. I again emphasise that only in that way can the root causes of the present troubles be eliminated and the basis of the electoral support for the advocates of violence be removed. In this context, the declaration is an irrelevance. It is a sop which will not contribute one jot to the progress of peace or reconciliation. *[Interruption.]* I am always amazed that the silent members of the Government deem it necessary on occasions to be involved in idle chatter. Perhaps the silent servers of the House could be reminded of the need for silence.

I note with interest, as the hon. Member for Eastbourne (Mr. Gow) has done, that in an article on 25 November in *The Daily Telegraph* the Under-Secretary of State set out his views—and, I presume, the Government's—on the need for the Bill. I promise not to repeat the points and sentences uttered by the hon. Member for Eastbourne, but the Under-Secretary of State concluded his article by stating:

"We cannot tolerate the exploitation of elective office by those who proclaim their support for terrorism without giving law-abiding councillors the right to challenge that".

I believe that we would all say amen to that. One does not resolve the problem by having the declaration. It must be done through normal democratic methods—through discussion and, eventually, the ballot box. To repeat a point which I made, one does not remove the basis of support for the terrorists and their supporters by having the declaration.

In the same article, the Under-Secretary of State set out two reasons why the state will not initiate prosecutions. First—this is a gem—the hon. Gentleman argued that, if it were left to the DPP or the Attorney-General, it would call into question the political impartiality of the Law Officers. What does he think will happen to the political impartiality of the judges once they begin to consider these cases? Does he believe that both communities will accept that judges are impartial if they have to deal with these cases? That is nonsense. Inevitably, this will further damage the role of the courts in the eyes of both communities.

Secondly, the Minister's comment on the ability of witnesses to withstand intimidation was a cop-out. If that will apply if the state brings a prosecution, it will apply even more if a lone individual brings one. This again illustrates the cant and hypocrisy of the Government's position and implies tacit admission by the Government that the declaration will not work.

The Under-Secretary of State used expressions that seem to reveal surprise that his declaration was opposed. My final quotation from the Minister's statement is this:

"But surprisingly, it"—

that is, the declaration—

"has vociferous opponents, including the Labour Party and John Hume's SDLP".

I am sure that members of that party will be delighted to know that they belong to John Hume's SDLP. The next phrase should win a prize for someone:

"and much fashionable 'liberal' opinion".

That is one for the record books. My understanding is that the use of the word "fashionable" is supposed to indicate a majority view of the word "liberal" but in case that point is lost the word "liberal" is put in inverted commas, so the meaning is doubly pejorative. Perhaps it is some new kind of grammar invented by the Under-Secretary.

The idea that the Government have advanced any substantive arguments in support of the Bill is fallacious. The Government's argument for the Bill, like the Minister's grammar, is flawed. The Bill will not work, it will not advance peace and reconciliation in Northern Ireland; I urge the House to support the Opposition's reasoned amendment.

9.41 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (Mr. Richard Needham): May I begin in a not too partisan way by praising the speeches of many of my hon. Friends, particularly those of my hon. Friends the Members for Eastbourne (Mr. Gow), for Cheadle (Mr. Day), for Chelmsford (Mr. Burns), for Gainsborough and Horncastle (Mr. Leigh) and for Spelthorne (Mr. Wilshire), and that of the hon. Member for Yeovil (Mr. Ashdown).

My hon. Friend the Member for Eastbourne felt that he was perhaps a little hard done by by my right hon. Friend who was a little concerned about our hon. Friend asking him a trick question. I had suggested to my right hon. Friend that he should be careful in replying because, in a way, there is a trick as this measure introduces residence qualifications in Northern Ireland which require people to have lived there for three months before they are entitled to vote, in contrast with the position here, where they have to be present on the specified date. That is because Northern Ireland is the only part of the United Kingdom with a land barrier, so we do not want people nipping across from another jurisdiction.

I must say to my hon. Friends the Members for Chelmsford and for Spelthorne that, although I accept and understand their concerns about the problems of voting in the United Kingdom and the measures that we are introducing to bring the two parts of the United Kingdom into line, I hardly think that stopping Irish people voting in the United Kingdom would be a way of improving Anglo-Irish relations. It is important that we bring the jurisdictions together.

In this decade, three councillors and two council employees have been killed by terrorists and one councillor has been shot and injured. Of Sinn Fein's 58 councillors, 11 have been convicted of terrorist-type offences and a further three have faced or are facing charges. Six other councillors have also received convictions for scheduled offences.

Almost everyone accepts that there is a major problem caused by those in the district councils of Northern Ireland who openly support violence. Most, although not all, of those are members of Sinn Fein. As the right hon. Member for Islwyn (Mr. Kinnock) said:

"those who pursue the so-called joint strategy of the ballot and the bullet are guilty of both hypocrisy and complete incompatability with a democracy."—[*Official Report*, 10 November 1987; Vol. 122, c. 157.]

In this debate the hon. Member for Antrim, South (Mr. Forsythe) and others have stated the nature of the problem as they have found it in blunt terms, born of their experience in local government in Northern Ireland. The hon. Members for Newry and Armagh (Mr. Mallon) and for South Down (Mr. McGrady)—who are on the other side of the political divide—would, with their experience of district councils, concede that there is a problem. Indeed, the hon. Member for Newry and Armagh said so during a recent debate.

Most people in Northern Ireland and many outside it agree that the problem exists. Few, however, agree upon the steps that we should take to deal with it. Some—the hon. Member for Belfast, East (Mr. Robinson) is one—argue for proscription. Almost everyone, at some stage, argues for something to be proscribed. The hon. Member for Newry and Armagh has the UDA on his shopping list, but I do not know whether he intends to add Sinn Fein to it. The hon. Member for Antrim, North (Rev. Ian Paisley) and his colleagues have repeatedly called for the proscription of Sinn Fein, but they have specifically excluded Loyalist organisations.

Whether Sinn Fein or the UDA is proscribed, a declaration will still be necessary for those who stand under different guises. Indeed, they have often stood under all sorts of guises. Selective proscription of individual organisations would be a nonsensical approach to the problem. It could not be made retrospective and councillors could claim that they were no longer members of the proscribed party. They could stand at elections under different party names. Therefore, even if proscription were ever to come about, there would still be a need for a declaration.

The very fact that the Government are accused by some hon. Members of going too far and by others of not going far enough shows the difficulty in achieving a correct balance between what is practicable and achievable and what is not. The measure is designed to deal with those who advocate violence once they are elected, but no more than that. It does not ban candidates because it is at elections that views can be canvassed. I know that the hon. Member for Yeovil has some doubts about that. However abhorrent to hon. Members, we believe that it is legitimate that candidates standing on a platform of violence should have some way of putting their views forward. Once the election is over, councillors must then abide by the political rules of a plural democracy; they must abide by the club.

The greatest concern of many hon. Members is that enforcement should be either by criminal prosecution brought by the Director of Public Prosecutions or by civil action brought by the Attorney-General. Most electoral law is enforced by civil means, and rightly so. If the witnesses are to be the main constituent of a case and the accused's peers——

Mr. Benn: The Minister has made an important statement—that when elected one has to abide by the rules of the club. He interpreted that to mean that someone could advocate a policy and be elected on it, but that once elected he could not continue to support that policy. Is that the rule of the club that the hon. Gentleman thinks to be equivalent to representative democracy?

Mr. Needham: Once someone is elected, he cannot say that if he loses a vote he will shoot people on their way home. He cannot advocate violence for political ends. That is wholly unacceptable.

The second point about whether the DPP or the Attorney-General brings the action—the right hon. Member for Chesterfield (Mr. Benn) picked me up on this point, and he is quite right—is that criminal cases and civil cases require different standards of proof. Only last week, there was the case of a rape victim who was awarded substantial civil damages, even though there had been no criminal prosecution. That is an example of the test in a civil action, which is the balance of probabilities succeeding, whereas the test of beyond reasonable doubt would not. I make no apology for that being the basis of civil actions being brought in such cases.

Thirdly, the Government are not in the business of lending terrorist supporters gratuitous propaganda points, as some Opposition Members seem to suggest. Whether an action is civil or criminal, if it is brought by the Attorney-General, it will be seen to have been instigated by the British Government. Furthermore, and most important, the Attorney-General has no capacity to monitor expressions of support for proscribed organisations or terrorism in Northern Ireland, and he would have to depend entirely on information given to him by others. Therefore, in our judgment, it is others who bring the actions.

I know that the argument is that those wishing to bring such actions may be deterred by cost or intimidation. As to intimidation, as I said, witnesses, rather than promoters, are most likely to be intimidated. Promoters can seek safety in numbers, or, no doubt in some instances, councils will bring actions.

Mr. McNamara: The hon. Gentleman said that the Attorney-General is in no position to monitor certain matters. How is the RUC in a position to monitor, for example, incitement, the wearing of uniforms and all the other matters in the kernel of the Bill?

Mr. Needham: I shall refer to the hon. Gentleman's points later.

The key point is that the Attorney-General relies on the information given to him by those who will become witnesses in a case. Therefore, it is not unreasonable that they themselves should be the promoters of such cases. If the argument is that it will lead to intimidation—and that argument has been put forward—the intimidation of witnesses is the problem of Northern Ireland, not the intimidation of the promoters of a case.

To advocate that the declaration will fail because intimidation will make it impossible for witnesses to testify as applicants in cases is a counsel of total despair. I ask those who advance such an argument whether they have so little faith in the continuing operation of civil justice in Northern Ireland that they suppose that nobody will bring cases. As hon. Members from Northern Ireland know well, many actions have been brought in recent years, which show that such pessimism is ill-founded. I am sure that there are many brave and determined people in Northern Ireland who, if the advocates of violence breach their declarations, will bring such actions in future.

On costs, it is perfectly possible for applicants to claim legal aid against the usual criteria. Of course, if councils bring well-founded actions, it will be a charge on the rates.

[Mr. Needham]

The hon. Member for Yeovil asked me about parties and parties supporting councils. If parties support their councils in an action, that will no doubt be another way of getting around the cost problem.

Speaking at his annual conference last week, the hon. Member for Foyle (Mr. Hume) said of Sinn Fein and the IRA:

"They are more Irish than the rest of us, they believe. They are the pure master race of Irish. They are the keepers of the holy grail of the nation. That deep seated attitude, married to their method, has all the hallmarks of undiluted fascism.

They have also the other hallmarks of the fascist—the scapegoat—the Brits are to blame for everything even their own atrocities."

The hon. Member for Foyle is absolutely right—they are Fascists. I remind him, the right hon. Member for Chesterfield and the hon. Member for Liverpool, Walton (Mr. Heffer) of what happened when democracy failed to stand up to Fascists. The arguments that we heard today from the right hon. Member for Chesterfield and the hon. Member for Walton, who spoke about the 1640s or 1660s are no different in style from the arguments heard in the 1920s. But what were the arguments then? Bring Mussolini into the political process and he will change and become like us. Do not make martyrs of those who advocate violence. Treat them reasonably and they will behave reasonably. What happened? The leader of the Socialist party in Italy, Matteoti, was shot on the Parliament steps, in Rome. That was the way the Fascists behaved in Italy in the 1920s. If the hon. Gentleman is right about Fascism, these members should be treated as they are, as Fascists.

Mr. Heffer: Will the Minister give way?

Mr. Needham: I do not wish to give way. I have only a few minutes to reply to the debate.

The hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, North (Mr. McNamara) said that the Bill was a farce and would worsen the sectarian bear pit of local government politics. Moreover, he said that Sinn Fein would welcome the Bill, although my quotation from Mr. Morrison went on to criticise the SDLP, claiming that the suggestion that the declaration would help Sinn Fein was nonsense. As to the hon. Gentleman's pejorative comments about a sectarian bear pit in the councils of Northern Ireland, he ignores those councils which are trying to run local services in a non-sectarian, bi-partisan efficient way, such as Derry, Dungannon, Fermanagh, and North Down councils. None is being run in a sectarian way.

What would the hon. Gentleman do? In a recent article in *The Irish Times* he said that he wishes to be the last Secretary of State for Northern Ireland and wants to see a united Ireland by consent. Yet what does he propose to do about the violence in Northern Ireland council chambers? He claims that the declaration is

"ill-thought out, hastily put together, pernicious and downright dangerous."

No doubt that is why he is abstaining tonight. He also said of the declaration:

"Surely instead of arguing for the exclusion of Sinn Fein from the democratic process, the Government should be seeking to draw its members into electoral politics and away from the politics of the gun. As the reaction to the Enniskillen tragedy has shown, accountability to the electorate has already led to demands from within Sinn Fein that the worst excesses of the Provisional IRA be curbed."

That is absolute nonsense. There is no conceivable example that Sinn Fein has changed its spots in any way.

As the hon. Member for Belfast, West (Mr. Adams) said in a recent article in *Newsweek* when talking about Sinn Fein's relationship with the IRA:

"We come from the same family. We draw water from the same well. The IRA's rule is armed political action, ours is unarmed political action."

Yet the hon. Gentleman says that if we do anything we should rely on the criminal law. We are introducing this legislation because the criminal law does not do what we wish it to do. It does not stop people supporting the IRA. It does not meet the problems that we face in council chambers. Eighty-four per cent. of the people of Northern Ireland, including 20 per cent. of those claiming to support Sinn Fein, think that our proposals to introduce a declaration against violence are right.

Local government is the bedrock on which democracy depends. This measure, together with the series of proposals I announced last week to make local government more accountable, more efficient and more competitive, show that the Government will do what they can to create conditions in which councils can perform their duties in a non-sectarian, efficient and open way. As President Kennedy said in 1963:

"The rights of every man are diminished when the rights of one man are threatened."

This Bill deserves the support of the whole House.

Question put, That the amendment be made:—

The House divided: Ayes 195, Noes 291.

Division No. 7] **[10 pm**

AYES

Abbott, Ms Diane
Adams, Allen *(Paisley N)*
Allen, Graham
Anderson, Donald
Archer, Rt Hon Peter
Armstrong, Hilary
Ashton, Joe
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnes, Harry *(Derbyshire NE)*
Barron, Kevin
Battle, John
Beckett, Margaret
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bermingham, Gerald
Bidwell, Sydney
Blair, Tony
Blunkett, David
Boateng, Paul
Boyes, Roland
Bradley, Keith
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, Gordon *(D'mline E)*
Brown, Nicholas *(Newcastle E)*
Brown, Ron *(Edinburgh Leith)*
Buchan, Norman
Buckley, George J.
Caborn, Richard
Callaghan, Jim
Campbell, Ron *(Blyth Valley)*
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Canavan, Dennis
Clark, Dr David *(S Shields)*
Clarke, Tom *(Monklands W)*
Clay, Bob
Clelland, David
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Cohen, Harry
Cook, Frank *(Stockton N)*
Cook, Robin *(Livingston)*
Corbett, Robin
Corbyn, Jeremy
Cousins, Jim
Crowther, Stan
Cryer, Bob
Cummings, John
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Cunningham, Dr John
Darling, Alistair
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(Llanelli)*
Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham Hodge H'l)*
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Don
Dobson, Frank
Doran, Frank
Duffy, A. E. P.
Dunnachie, Jimmy
Eadie, Alexander
Evans, John *(St Helens N)*
Fatchett, Derek
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fields, Terry *(L'pool B G'n)*
Flannery, Martin
Flynn, Paul
Foot, Rt Hon Michael
Foster, Derek
Foulkes, George
Fraser, John
Fyfe, Maria
Galloway, George
Garrett, John *(Norwich South)*
George, Bruce
Gilbert, Rt Hon Dr John
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Golding, Mrs Llin
Gordon, Mildred
Graham, Thomas
Grant, Bernie *(Tottenham)*
Griffiths, Nigel *(Edinburgh S)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Grocott, Bruce
Hattersley, Rt Hon Roy

Healey, Rt Hon Denis
Heffer, Eric S.
Henderson, Doug
Hinchliffe, David
Hogg, N. *(C'nauld & Kilsyth)*
Holland, Stuart
Home Robertson, John
Hood, Jimmy
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Hoyle, Doug
Hughes, John *(Coventry NE)*
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport E)*
Hughes, Sean *(Knowsley S)*
Hume, John
Illsley, Eric
Ingram, Adam
Janner, Greville
John, Brynmor
Jones, Barry *(Alyn & Deeside)*
Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd S W)*
Kinnock, Rt Hon Neil
Lamond, James
Leadbitter, Ted
Lestor, Joan *(Eccles)*
Lewis, Terry
Livingstone, Ken
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Lofthouse, Geoffrey
Loyden, Eddie
McAllion, John
McAvoy, Thomas
Macdonald, Calum A.
McFall, John
McGrady, Eddie
McKay, Allen *(Barnsley West)*
McKelvey, William
McLeish, Henry
McNamara, Kevin
McTaggart, Bob
McWilliam, John
Madden, Max
Mahon, Mrs Alice
Mallon, Seamus
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Marshall, Jim *(Leicester S)*
Martin, Michael J. *(Springburn)*
Martlew, Eric
Maxton, John
Meacher, Michael
Meale, Alan
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Mitchell, Austin *(G't Grimsby)*
Moonie, Dr Lewis
Morgan, Rhodri
Morley, Elliott
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(W'shawe)*
Morris, Rt Hon J. *(Aberavon)*
Mowlam, Marjorie
Mullin, Chris
Murphy, Paul
Nellist, Dave
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Brien, William
O'Neill, Martin
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Patchett, Terry
Pendry, Tom
Pike, Peter L.
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Prescott, John
Quin, Ms Joyce
Radice, Giles
Randall, Stuart
Rees, Rt Hon Merlyn
Reid, Dr John
Richardson, Jo
Roberts, Allan *(Bootle)*
Robinson, Geoffrey
Rogers, Allan
Rooker, Jeff
Ross, Ernie *(Dundee W)*
Rowlands, Ted
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheerman, Barry
Sheldon, Rt Hon Robert
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Short, Clare
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton & F'bury)*
Snape, Peter
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Steinberg, Gerry
Stott, Roger
Strang, Gavin
Straw, Jack
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Thompson, Jack *(Wansbeck)*
Turner, Dennis
Wall, Pat
Walley, Joan
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wareing, Robert N.
Welsh, Michael *(Doncaster N)*
Williams, Rt Hon Alan
Williams, Alan W. *(Carm'then)*
Wilson, Brian
Winnick, David
Worthington, Tony
Wray, Jimmy

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Frank Haynes and
Mr. Ken Eastham.

NOES

Adley, Robert
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael
Allason, Rupert
Allon, David
Amess, David
Amos, Alan
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Ashby, David
Ashdown, Paddy
Atkins, Robert
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Barnes, Mrs Rosie *(Greenwich)*
Batiste, Spencer
Beaumont-Dark, Anthony
Beggs, Roy
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Bennett, Nicholas *(Pembroke)*
Benyon, W.
Bevan, David Gilroy
Blaker, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Body, Sir Richard
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Boscawen, Hon Robert
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Boyson, Rt Hon Dr Sir Rhodes
Braine, Rt Hon Sir Bernard
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brittan, Rt Hon Leon
Brooke, Rt Hon Peter
Brown, Michael *(Brigg & Cl't's)*
Bruce, Ian *(Dorset South)*
Bruce, Malcolm *(Gordon)*
Burt, Alistair
Butler, Chris
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Carlile, Alex *(Mont'g)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Cartwright, John
Chapman, Sydney
Clark, Hon Alan *(Plym'th S'n)*
Clark, Sir W. *(Croydon S)*
Clarke, Rt Hon K. *(Rushcliffe)*
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre F'rest)*
Cope, Rt Hon John
Cormack, Patrick
Curry, David
Davies, Q. *(Stamf'd & Spald'g)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Durant, Tony
Dykes, Hugh
Emery, Sir Peter
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatf'd)*
Evennett, David
Fairbairn, Sir Nicholas
Fallon, Michael
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Fishburn, John Dudley
Fookes, Miss Janet
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forsythe, Clifford *(Antrim S)*
Forth, Eric
Fowler, Rt Hon Norman
Fox, Sir Marcus
Freeman, Roger
French, Douglas
Fry, Peter
Gardiner, George
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Gill, Christopher
Glyn, Dr Alan
Goodlad, Alastair
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Gow, Ian
Gower, Sir Raymond
Grant, Sir Anthony *(CambsSW)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth N)*
Grist, Ian
Ground, Patrick
Grylls, Michael
Gummer, Rt Hon John Selwyn
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, John
Hargreaves, A. *(B'ham H'll Gr')*
Hargreaves, Ken *(Hyndburn)*
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, Christopher
Hayward, Robert
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Heddle, John
Heseltine, Rt Hon Michael
Hicks, Mrs Maureen *(Wolv' NE)*
Hicks, Robert *(Cornwall SE)*
Higgins, Rt Hon Terence L.
Hind, Kenneth
Hogg, Hon Douglas *(Gr'th'm)*
Holt, Richard
Hordern, Sir Peter
Howard, Michael
Howarth, G. *(Cannock & B'wd)*
Howe, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Howell, Rt Hon David *(G'dford)*
Howell, Ralph *(North Norfolk)*
Howells, Geraint
Hughes, Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, David *(Wirral W)*
Hunter, Andrew
Irvine, Michael
Irving, Charles
Jack, Michael
Jackson, Robert
Janman, Tim
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert B *(Herts W)*
Key, Robert
Kilfedder, James
King, Roger *(B'ham N'thfield)*
King, Rt Hon Tom *(Bridgwater)*
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Greg *(Derby North)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Edgbaston)*
Knowles, Michael
Knox, David
Lamont, Rt Hon Norman
Latham, Michael
Lawrence, Ivan
Lee, John *(Pendle)*
Leigh, Edward *(Gainsbor'gh)*
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lilley, Peter
Lord, Michael
Luce, Rt Hon Richard
Lyell, Sir Nicholas
McCrindle, Robert
Macfarlane, Sir Neil
MacKay, Andrew *(E Berkshire)*
Maclean, David
Maclennan, Robert
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, Sir Michael
McNair-Wilson, P. *(New Forest)*
Madel, David
Malins, Humfrey
Mans, Keith
Maples, John
Marland, Paul
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Marshall, Michael *(Arundel)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Mates, Michael
Maxwell-Hyslop, Robin
Mayhew, Rt Hon Sir Patrick
Meyer, Sir Anthony
Michie, Mrs Ray *(Arg'l & Bute)*
Miller, Sir Hal
Mills, Iain
Miscampbell, Norman
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Moate, Roger
Molyneaux, Rt Hon James
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Morrison, Sir Charles
Morrison, Rt Hon P *(Chester)*
Moss, Malcolm
Moynihan, Hon Colin
Neale, Gerrard
Needham, Richard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Michael
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Onslow, Rt Hon Cranley

Oppenheim, Phillip
Owen, Rt Hon Dr David
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Paisley, Rev Ian
Parkinson, Rt Hon Cecil
Patnick, Irvine
Patten, John *(Oxford W)*
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Raffan, Keith
Raison, Rt Hon Timothy
Redwood, John
Renton, Tim
Rhodes James, Robert
Riddick, Graham
Ridley, Rt Hon Nicholas
Ridsdale, Sir Julian
Robinson, Peter *(Belfast E)*
Roe, Mrs Marion
Ross, William *(Londonderry E)*
Rossi, Sir Hugh
Rost, Peter
Rowe, Andrew
Ryder, Richard
Sackville, Hon Tom
Sainsbury, Hon Tim
Sayeed, Jonathan
Scott, Nicholas
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Shephard, Mrs G. *(Norfolk SW)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shersby, Michael
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Speller, Tony
Spicer, Sir Jim *(Dorset W)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Squire, Robin
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Steel, Rt Hon David
Steen, Anthony
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis
Stewart, Andy *(Sherwood)*
Stewart, Ian *(Hertfordshire N)*
Stradling Thomas, Sir John
Sumberg, David
Summerson, Hugo
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
Taylor, Teddy *(S'end E)*
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thatcher, Rt Hon Margaret
Thompson, D. *(Calder Valley)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thorne, Neil
Thornton, Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Townsend, Cyril D. *(B'heath)*
Tracey, Richard
Tredinnick, David
Twinn, Dr Ian
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Waddington, Rt Hon David
Wakeham, Rt Hon John
Walden, George
Walker, Bill *(T'side North)*
Wallace, James
Waller, Gary
Ward, John
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Warren, Kenneth
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Wheeler, John
Whitney, Ray
Widdecombe, Ann
Wiggin, Jerry
Wilshire, David
Winterton, Mrs Ann
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Woodcock, Mike
Yeo, Tim
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. David Lightbown and
Mr. Alan Howarth.

Question accordingly negatived.

Main Question put forthwith, pursuant to Standing Order No. 60 (Amendment. on Second or Third Reading):——

The House divided: Ayes 274, Noes 41.

Division No. 8] **[10.14 pm**

AYES

Adley, Robert
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael
Allason, Rupert
Alton, David
Amess, David
Amos, Alan
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Ashby, David
Ashdown, Paddy
Atkins, Robert
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Barnes, Mrs Rosie *(Greenwich)*
Batiste, Spencer
Beaumont-Dark, Anthony
Beggs, Roy
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Bennett, Nicholas *(Pembroke)*
Benyon, W.
Bevan, David Gilroy
Bicker, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Body, Sir Richard
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Boscawen, Hon Robert
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Boyson, Rt Hon Dr Sir Rhodes
Braine, Rt Hon Sir Bernard
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brittan, Rt Hon Leon
Brooke, Rt Hon Peter
Brown, Michael *(Brigg & Cl'T's)*
Bruce, Malcolm *(Gordon)*
Burt, Alistair
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Carlile, Alex *(Mont'g)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Cartwright, John
Chapman, Sydney
Clark, Sir W. *(Croydon S)*
Clarke, Rt Hon K. *(Rushcliffe)*
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre F'rest)*
Cope, Rt Hon John
Cormack, Patrick
Curry, David
Davies, Q. *(Staml'd & Spald'g)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Durant, Tony
Dykes, Hugh
Emery, Sir Peter
Evennett, David
Fairbairn, Sir Nicholas
Fallon, Michael
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Fishburn, John Dudley
Fookes, Miss Janet
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forsythe, Clifford *(Antrim S)*
Forth, Eric
Fowler, Rt Hon Norman
Fox, Sir Marcus
Freeman, Roger
French, Douglas
Gardiner, George
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Gill, Christopher
Goodlad, Alastair
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Gow, Ian
Gower, Sir Raymond
Grant, Sir Anthony *(CambaSW)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth N)*
Grist, Ian
Ground, Patrick
Grylls, Michael
Gummer, Rt Hon John Selwyn
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, John
Hargreaves, A. *(B'ham H'll Gr')*
Hargreaves, Ken *(Hyndburn)*
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, Christopher
Hayward, Robert
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Heddle, John
Hicks, Robert *(Cornwall SE)*
Higgins, Rt Hon Terence L.
Hind, Kenneth
Hogg, Hon Douglas *(Gr'th'm)*
Holt, Richard
Hordern, Sir Peter
Howard, Michael
Howarth, G. *(Cannock & B'wd)*
Howe, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Howell, Rt Hon David *(G'dford)*
Howell, Ralph *(North Norfolk)*
Howells, Geraint
Hughes, Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, David *(Wirral W)*
Hunter, Andrew
Irvine, Michael
Irving, Charles
Jack, Michael
Jackson, Robert
Janman, Tim
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert B *(Herts W)*
Key, Robert
Kilfedder, James
King, Roger *(B'ham N'thfield)*
King, Rt Hon Tom *(Bridgwater)*
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Greg *(Derby North)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Edgbaston)*
Knowles, Michael
Knox, David
Lamont, Rt Hon Norman
Lang, Ian
Latham, Michael
Lawrence, Ivan
Lee, John *(Pendle)*
Leigh, Edward *(Gainsbor'gh)*
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lilley, Peter
Lord, Michael
Luce, Rt Hon Richard
Lyell, Sir Nicholas
McCrindle, Robert
Macfarlane, Sir Neil
MacKay, Andrew *(E Berkshire)*
Maclean, David
Maclennan, Robert
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, P. *(New Forest)*
Malins, Humfrey
Mans, Keith
Maples, John
Marland, Paul
Marshall, Michael *(Arundel)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Mates, Michael
Maxwell-Hyslop, Robin
Mayhew, Rt Hon Sir Patrick
Meyer, Sir Anthony
Michie, Mrs Ray *(Arg'l & Bute)*
Miller, Sir Hal
Mills, Iain
Miscampbell, Norman
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Moate, Roger
Molyneaux, Rt Hon James
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Morrison, Sir Charles
Morrison, Rt Hon P *(Chester)*
Moss, Malcolm
Moynihan, Hon Colin
Neale, Gerrard
Needham, Richard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Michael
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Onslow, Rt Hon Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Owen, Rt Hon Dr David
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Paisley, Rev Ian
Parkinson, Rt Hon Cecil
Patnick, Irvine
Patten, John *(Oxford W)*
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Raffan, Keith
Raison, Rt Hon Timothy

Redwood, John
Renton, Tim
Rhodes James, Robert
Riddick, Graham
Ridley, Rt Hon Nicholas
Ridsdale, Sir Julian
Robinson, Peter *(Belfast E)*
Roe, Mrs Marion
Ross, William *(Londonderry E)*
Rossi, Sir Hugh
Rost, Peter
Ryder, Richard
Sackville, Hon Tom
Sainsbury, Hon Tim
Sayeed, Jonathan
Scott, Nicholas
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Shephard, Mrs G. *(Norfolk SW)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shersby, Michael
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Speller, Tony
Spicer, Sir Jim *(Dorset W)*
Squire, Robin
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Steel, Rt Hon David
Steen, Anthony
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis
Stewart, Andy *(Sherwood)*
Stewart, Ian *(Hertfordshire N)*
Stradling Thomas, Sir John
Sumberg, David
Summerson, Hugo
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
Taylor, Teddy *(S'end E)*
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thatcher, Rt Hon Margaret
Thompson, D. *(Calder Valley)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thorne, Neil
Thornton, Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Townsend, Cyril D. *(B'heath)*
Tracey, Richard
Tredinnick, David
Twinn, Dr Ian
Waddington, Rt Hon David
Wakeham, Rt Hon John
Walden, George
Wallace, James
Waller, Gary
Ward, John
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Warren, Kenneth
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Wheeler, John
Whitney, Ray
Widdecombe, Ann
Wiggin, Jerry
Wilshire, David
Winterton, Mrs Ann
Wood, Timothy
Yeo, Tim
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. David Lightbown and
Mr. Alan Howarth.

NOES

Abbott, Ms Diane
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnes, Harry *(Derbyshire NE)*
Battle, John
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bermingham, Gerald
Boateng, Paul
Brown, Ron *(Edinburgh Leith)*
Buchan, Norman
Canavan, Dennis
Clay, Bob
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Cohen, Harry
Corbyn, Jeremy
Cryer, Bob
Duffy, A. E. P.
Fields, Terry *(L'pool B G'n)*
Flannery, Martin
Galloway, George
Gordon, Mildred
Grant, Bernie *(Tottenham)*
Heffer, Eric S.
Hughes, John *(Coventry NE)*
Hume, John
Lamond, James
Lewis, Terry
Livingstone, Ken
Loyden, Eddie
McAllion, John
Madden, Max
Mahon, Mrs Alice
Mallon, Seamus
Meale, Alan
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Nellist, Dave
Patchett, Terry
Pike, Peter L.
Sedgemore, Brian
Skinner, Dennis
Wall, Pat
Welsh, Michael *(Doncaster N)*
Wray, Jimmy

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Chris Mullin and
Mr. Eddie McGrady.

Question accordingly agreed to.

Bill read a Second time, and committed to a Standing Committee pursuant to Standing Order No. 61 (Committal of Bills).

Elected Authorities (Northern Ireland) Bill

[Money]

Queen's Recommendation having been signified—

Motion made, and Question proposed.

That for the purposes of any Act resulting from the Elected Authorities (Northern Ireland) Bill, it is expedient to authorise—

(1) the payment out of money provided by Parliament of—

(a) any increase attributable to the provisions of the Act in the sums so payable under any other enactment; and

(b) any expenses incurred under section 14A(4) or 14B of the Electoral Law Act (Northern Ireland) 1962; and

(2) the payment into the Consolidated Fund of any increase attributable to the provisions of the Act in the sums so payable under any other enactment.—*[Mr. Maclean.]*

10.26 pm

Mr. Bob Cryer (Bradford, South): We should not let money resolutions go through on the nod. In the case of this one, we have not yet received an explanation.

Mr. Brian Sedgemore (Hackney, South and Shoreditch): The Prime Minister is leaving.

Mr. Cryer: I can understand why the Prime Minister is departing. She is going to get hold of an egg as fast as she can to prove that a junior Minister is wrong yet again. However, at the moment we want to discuss this money resolution because, in the absence of any explanation, it would be worthwhile to speculate on the consequences of the legislation. *[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. Would hon. Members who are not staying to debate the money resolution kindly leave quietly?

Mr. Cryer: The money resolution provides for money to be payable as a consequence of the legislation. Therefore, we have to take a look at the legislation in general terms to see whether any increase in expenditure is likely.

For a start, there are under schedule 2 what I imagine to be trivial amounts relating to the printing and arrangements for the declaration against terrorism by potential candidates. I would not raise the matter if it were not for the consequences of that, which are shown in clause 6. It says:

"A person who has made a declaration required for the purposes of section 3, 4 or 5 of this Act acts in breach of the terms of the declaration if—

(a) he expresses support for or approval of—

(i) the activities of a proscribed organisation,".

That is fairly straightforward, but it continues by referring to "acts of terrorism". There is a definition:

"(that is to say, violence for political ends) connected with the affairs of Northern Ireland".

That is a very wide definition. I wonder whether the Minister had assessed the consequences of such a vast, unfettered definition.

For example, vendettas may be played out. People may go to the High Court with allegations about people breaching the declaration. They might claim that people supported acts of terrorism—violence for political ends—if, in Northern Ireland, which is part of the United Kingdom, they supported the police using violence against the miners. It is not beyond the bounds of possibility that someone would argue that.

[Mr. Cryer]

As I argued earlier, if people support the retention and development of nuclear weapons by the Conservative Government, that may be construed as an act of terrorism, that is, violence for political ends. That is precisely the definition, because the Government tell us that our nuclear weapons are deployed to save us from Communism. That political aim is entirely within the definition given in the Bill.

If people raise such issues, if councillors or public representatives make such statements, many people can trip off to the High Court to get a ruling that various public representatives have breached the declaration. To obtain the evidence, people will have to be present at the meetings. Will the police be asked to attend the meetings, either in uniform or plain clothes, to act as informers on what is said in a public meeting, as suitably defined?

What about giving evidence? Presumably public officials will have to attend the High Court to give evidence on the validity or otherwise of the claims that declarations have been breached. All in all, it is clearly an area of great dissension in a section of the United Kingdom that is split by dissension anyway. There are factions using every possible means against each other, and this legislation will give them the opportunity to extend that practice.

Therefore, it is inevitable that there will be an increase in the charges on public expenditure. The Minister may say that my fears will not be realised and that there will not be any significant increase in public expenditure. Indeed, that is the suggestion in the Bill. The explanatory and financial memorandum states:

"The Bill is not expected to result in any significant addition to public sector expenditure."

Will the Minister explain what that means? If someone goes to the DHSS and receives an extra £5 by illegal means, the Department does not ignore that and say that that is not a significant increase in expenditure; it prosecutes. It is important that the House knows what the Minister has in mind by the use of the word "significant". What is the definition? Is it £5,000, £10,000, £100,000 or £500,000?

The Under-Secretary of State for the Home Department has just come into the Chamber, most providentially. He knows how these debates start through our asking a Minister for an explanation, to which we are entitled. We discovered during the debate that the Minister asked for certain rights in the Bill which he could not finance. I do not want the Under-Secretary of State for Northern Ireland to be placed in the same position. The Government have been embarrassed by junior Ministers over the past few days. I do not want other junior Ministers to cause the Government yet further embarrassment—and I can see a Government Whip nodding sagely at my comments about the Under-Secretary of State for Health. Perhaps he anticipates a promotion opportunity. I suspect that in two or three months' time that opportunity may arise.

I am trying to encourage the Minister from the Northern Ireland Office to give the House an adequate explanation on these matters. As he knows, during a debate on a Bill there is never an explanation of the financial background. This debate presents the House with an opportunity that should not be missed for the Minister to give us the financial details, and I am sure that he is eager to do that.

10.34 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (Mr. Richard Needham): I am always eager to assist the hon. Member for Bradford, South (Mr. Cryer) in any way that I can. We all enjoyed his presence during the debate. Had he been here, he would have heard some of the questions on money being debated extensively and carefully.

As the hon. Gentleman is aware, litigation is expensive. During today's debate many hon. Members made the point that litigation is so expensive that they were not sure that applicants would be able to afford the costs of bringing such actions. While legal aid will be available against the usual criteria, those criteria will include a test of merit in the courts, so ill-founded cases will not attract legal aid. Secondly, the courts have an inherent jurisdiction to dismiss cases that are frivolous or vexatious or otherwise an abuse of the process of the court. In those circumstances, I am sure that the courts will have no hesitation in exercising that jurisdiction, so I do not believe that there will be a large amount of frivolous, vexatious or costly litigation.

As the hon. Member for Bradford, South so perceptively realises, there is a possible cost if applicants apply for legal aid. Those extra costs of any such actions cannot be calculated with any precision, but the Northern Ireland court service which supports the legal aid fund administered by the Law Society has sought provision of about £100,000 for the forthcoming financial year on a contingency basis. That, plus a very few minor expenses, is the only financial consequence of the Bill.

10.36 pm

Mr. Harry Barnes (Derbyshire, North-East): No price is too high for the extension of democracy. The people of Chile and, in Britain, the Chartists and the suffragettes realised that. Many of them paid with their lives for the extension of democracy. A money resolution for the extension of democracy would therefore have our whole-hearted support, but the Bill is concerned with manipulating and fixing democratic arrangements. Even if that could be justified, we should not be spending a great deal of money on it. At least we should manipulate on the cheap instead of paying extensive amounts of money for it.

What is needed to extend democracy in Northern Ireland is not the measure before us, but more rather than less democracy. There should be a Bill of Rights, which would be expensive because of the cases that would be brought in connection with it and the cases that would be used to overturn much of the Government's legislation. There should be a devolved assembly, which would also be expensive because of the massive problems that it would have to handle.

Furthermore, Northern Ireland needs economic advance more than anything else. On Second Reading, the Minister claimed that that was taking place, but I disagree with him fundamentally. The rosy picture that he painted does not exist in Northern Ireland. However, we should concern ourselves now with money and its connection with the democratic process. We have been discussing a genuine democratic dilemma. There has not been sufficient consideration by either side of the House—and certainly not by the Government—of the dilemma and the different factors that need to be considered in connection with it.

The problem with democracy is how far it can tolerate the intolerant. There is no doubt that Sinn Fein and other paramilitary groups operate in an intolerant fashion. Usually, democrats err on the side of tolerance to the intolerant. Those who have the best arguments and democratic principles should win in the democratic market place, but undoubtedly there are exceptions in Northern Ireland. The circumstances in Northern Ireland are almost such that we should not tolerate the intolerant, but are hon. Members in a position to decide? Are the Government in a position to tell Northern Ireland that they will no longer tolerate the intolerant?

We should apply very high standards of democracy when considering the Bill, but the Government are not doing so. By their bans, proscription and impediments on trade union activities and other action, they are attacking civil liberties, undertaking a fantastic amount of centralisation and manipulating the franchise with the poll tax. The Bill must be considered against that background. A Government operating in such a way cannot ask Parliament to be intolerant of those who are intolerant.

On Second Reading, mention was made of a declaration that must be signed. It was said that if Sinn Fein and other paramilitary organisations failed to sign it they would be banned. They would obviously take a pragmatic view of that. This is relevant to the money resolution because massive expense will be incurred in taking cases to court. Sinn Fein and other paramilitary groups will sign the declaration when they believe it is to their advantage to do so and then face the problems of being debarred and the civil actions when they arise. On some occasions, they will refuse to sign and will gain much political advantage from doing so.

Only people who act morally will be faced with the problem of whether to sign the declaration. They are worried about oaths and declarations and their civil liberties being attacked. They will refuse to sign the declaration, which is supposed to extend and develop democratic processes.

Clause 9 provides that people should be debarred from membership of local councils for five years in addition to facing any other action that may be taken. If people are debarred from local government, like the Clay Cross councillors, they have to pay a surcharge and serve their five-year disqualification after their bankruptcy has been discharged. Are we saying that the sentences imposed by the courts will not work and that people should serve a further five years disqualification, with all the various financial considerations that flow from that?

The Bill defines terrorism, but "terrorism" is a purely evaluative term. Sinn Fein and Protestant paramilitaries are terrorists and I condemn them. Others call them "freedom fighters" and praise them. We should not pass laws that include the term "terrorism". That commits us to saying not only that certain actions are contrary to the law but that those actions lead to our criticism of them. The law should be empirical and factual. In our debates we should use evaluative arguments either for or against those actions. On those grounds, I oppose the money resolution.

10.45 pm

Mr. Brian Sedgemore (Hackney, South and Shoreditch): I wonder whether the Minister can clear up a technical point. It is probably a silly technical point, but the English legal system has been known to be very silly and, no doubt, will be very silly in the future. I have looked at schedule 2 as a lawyer. It states:

"DECLARATION AGAINST TERRORISM

PART I

FORM FOR INCLUSION IN CONSENT TO NOMINATION

I declare that, if elected, I will not by word or deed express support for or approval of—

(a) any organisation that is for the time being a proscribed organisation specified in Schedule 2 to the Northern Ireland (Emergency Provisions) Act 1978; or

(b) acts of terrorism (that is to say, violence for political ends) connected with the affairs of Northern Ireland.

PART II

FORM FOR USE IN CASE OF DISTRICT COUNCILLOR CHOSEN TO FILL CASUAL VACANCY

I, *(name in full)*, of *(home address in full)* declare that, if I am chosen to be a councillor for the District of *(name of district)*, I will not by word or deed express support for or approval of—

(a) any organisation that is for the time being a proscribed organisation specified in Schedule 2 to the Northern Ireland (Emergency Provisions) Act 1978; or

(b) acts of terrorism (that is to say, violence for political ends) connected with the affairs of Northern Ireland."

How is "deed" defined? What are the implications for the expenditure of public funds?

A person may say that X has done a deed which expresses support for an

"organisation that is for the time being a proscribed organisation specified in Schedule 2 to the Northern Ireland (Emergency Provisions) Act 1978"

or that X supports

"acts of terrorism (that is to say, violence for political ends) connected with the affairs of Northern Ireland".

He may say, "My evidence that he has committed that deed is that he is a member of Sinn Fein." The court can, with no other evidence, deduce from the fact that X is a member of Sinn Fein that he supports an organisation that is proscribed as specified in schedule 2 or that he supports acts of terrorism. Does the deed require some act other than that X is a member of a political party of which we are all aware and about whose political views on terrorism the Government make certain claims? Have we predetermined that a whole class belonging to a whole political party has committed the deed which renders something a crime under an Act of Parliament? If we have done that and no other deed is involved, that would be a startling development by the Government which has not been dealt with during the debate.

10.48 pm

Mr. Needham: If the hon. Member for Hackney, South and Shoreditch (Mr. Sedgemore) had been here during the debate on the Bill, he would have heard that point discussed at length. It has nothing to do with the money resolution.

Question put and agreed to.

Resolved,

[Mr. Needham]

That for the purposes of any Act resulting from the Elected Authorities (Northern Ireland) Bill, it is expedient to authorise—

(1) the payment out of money provided by Parliament of—

(a) any increase attributable to the provisions of the Act in the sums so payable under any other enactment; and

(b) any expenses incurred under section 14A(4) or 14B of the Electoral Law Act (Northern Ireland) 1962; and

(2) the payment into the Consolidated Fund of any increase attributable to the provisions of the Act in the sums so payable under any other enactment.

European Community (Budget)

10.49 pm

The Paymaster General (Mr. Peter Brooke): I beg to move,

That this House takes note of European Community Documents Nos. 7271/88 and 7758/88 on the preliminary Draft Budget for 1989, 7908/88 on the Draft Budget for 1989, 8996/88 on Letter of Amendment No. 1 to the preliminary Draft Budget for 1989 and 9286/88 on the European Parliament's proposed Amendments and modifications to the Draft Budget for 1989.

The 1989 Community budget is the first to be subject to the new arrangements for budgetary discipline which have been put in place since the February European Council. This debate gives us a useful opportunity to consider how those arrangements are working.

Three aspects of the new arrangements are particularly relevant to the documents before us today: the ceilings on the growth of the Community's own resources; the control of agricultural and other expenditure; and improved budget management.

First, let me deal with own resources. Under the new own resources decision, which the United Kingdom has now formally ratified, annual sub-ceilings have been imposed for the first time on the overall level of the Community's resources. The ceiling for 1989 is 1·17 per cent. of Community gross national product. The sub-ceilings set an absolute upper limit on the growth of the Community's total expenditure, year by year.

As regards control of agricultural expenditure, the situation has been transformed over the last 12 months. In the context of today's debate, I draw particular attention to the financial guideline and to the new provisions for stock depreciation. The guideline limit relating to expenditure on agricultural market support is legally binding. The limit will grow each year at no more than 74 per cent. of the rate of growth of Community GNP, which is likely to mean a real increase of around 2 per cent. a year, compared with 10 per cent. a year between 1984 and 1987. Happily, expenditure in both 1988 and 1989 is set to grow even more slowly than this. I shall come back to this point later on. As regards stocks, provision has been made to ensure systematic depreciation in the year of purchase, and special funds have been earmarked to pay for the disposal of existing stocks. This should ensure that the overhanging expenditure commitments on intervention stocks are eliminated by 1992 at the latest.

The second aspect of the new budget discipline arrangements which I want to touch on is the inter-institutional agreement. Under this, the Council, the European Parliament and the Commission have bound themselves to respect a procedural and financial framework designed to implement the budgetary conclusions of the Brussels European Council. An integral part of the IIA is a financial perspective which establishes ceilings for each of the main categories of Community expenditure between 1988 and 1992.

The Council has undertaken to apply the IIA in accordance with paragraph 14 of the Brussels conclusions. This paragraph introduced a jargon-ridden but operationally important distinction between so-called "privileged" and "non-privileged" non-obligatory expenditure. Privileged expenditure includes the structural funds, the research and development framework programme and the integrated Mediterranean programmes. The growth of this category of expenditure between 1988 and 1992 has been pre-ordained by decisions taken at, or before, the Brussels Council. However, for the remainder of DNO—the non-privileged element—the Council has agreed to respect the maximum rate of increase calculated by the Commission at the start of each year's budget procedure within the framework of article 203(9) of the treaty. The calculated maximum rate for the 1989 budget is 5·8 per cent.

The final aspect of the new arrangements to which I should refer is improved budget management, including, in particular, the new regime to reinforce annuality, which is designed to make the carry-forward of appropriations from one year to the next the exception rather than the rule.

I apologise if the next section of my speech is something of a ball-by-ball commentary on the 1989 budget procedure, but I am sure the House would expect me to say something about each of the documents referred to in the motion.

Mr. Teddy Taylor (Southend, East): The Minister has referred to those exciting new provisions which will prevent overspending in the future and has made several recommendations. Does he recall that, when almost identical assurances were given in 1984, the EEC got round all those restrictions by calling for extra expenditure in advance, thus ensuring that we had a year which was basically one of 10 months? Will he give us a cast-iron assurance that advance payments will not be permitted as a means of getting round budgetary controls?

Mr. Brooke: My hon. Friend is vigilant and persistent in these matters. I would be hesitant to give him cast-iron assurances on anything and he would be the first to acknowledge that I would be rash to do so, given the history. However, the principles of annuality that we have built into the arrangements, in terms of the new regulations, should provide a better defence than we have historically had. My hon. Friend knows that the arrangements to which he refers were addressed to a particular problem, but did not lead to excess expenditure in the budget in question.

The commentary begins with the preliminary draft budget—PDB—which the Commission presented in June and which is dealt with in documents Nos. 7271/88 and 7758/88. There were two especially noteworthy aspects of the PDB. First, it included provision of almost 3·25 billion ecu for the depreciation of agricultural stocks, including 1·4 billion ecu in respect of existing stocks. Secondly, the PDB proposed an increase in DNO as a whole of around 20 per cent. in terms of commitment appropriations. Much of that, of course, was for the preordained expansion of the structural funds to which I referred earlier. The figure for non-privilaged DNO alone was some 12 per cent., more than double the calculated maximum rate of 5·8 per cent.

Overall, the PDB was about 450 million ecu within the ceiling in the financial perspective. The Commission noted, with some justification, that its proposals marked a start in the process of restoring a balance between agricultural and non-agricultural expenditure.

The Budget Council considered the PDB in July. The main issue was the level of non-privileged DNO. That was procedurally important, because of the rules laid down in paragraph 14 of the Brussels conclusions. The Council

[Mr. Brooke]

decided by a large majority to stick rigidly to the letter of the Brussels conclusions and to confine the growth of non-privileged DNO in the draft budget to half the calculated maximum rate—that is, to 2·9 per cent. That involved cutting the Commission's proposals by 365 mecu in commitments and 356 mecu in payments.

At the July Council, I urged the Commission to keep the prospective level of agricultural expenditure in 1989 under close review, especially in the light of the American drought. I asked it to submit an amending letter to the 1989 budget, if necessary.

The amending letter was eventually tabled in October —document No. 8996/88. Its overall effect, compared with the PDB, was to reduce by almost 3·5 billion ecu the own resources which member states would have to contribute to the Community in 1989. That reduction, amounting to more than 7 per cent. of the PDB, is largely the product of two things—first, a cut of almost 1·4 billion ecu in the provision for agricultural market support in 1989 and, secondly, an expected revenue surplus of more than 2 billion ecu in respect of the 1988 Budget.

The reduction is largely fortuitous. Part of it reflects higher world prices caused by the American drought and a further part reflects higher than expected revenue from Customs duties, which in turn reflects faster than expected economic growth. It is extremely encouraging that a reduction in next year's agricultural appropriations has already been made. The principle has been established that surplus provision needs to be stripped out of the budget as soon as it is identified. No less encouraging is the fact that the amending letter provides for an increase of 50 mecu —to a total of more the 1,780 mecu—in the United Kingdom's Fontainebleau abatement for 1988. That is the first occasion on which the abatement has been increased during the course of the budget year to which it relates. Finally, on the amending letter, it is worth noting that the 1988 surplus stems, in part, from unused appropriations that have been cancelled as a result of the new budget management regime.

The Parliament gave its first reading to the draft budget in October. It voted to take on board the reduced agricultural provision in the amending letter by means of a broadly corresponding modification to the draft budget. The details of that modification, and of the Parliament's other proposed changes, are given in document No. 9286/88. Most of the other changes were in respect of non-privileged DNO. In summary, the Parliament voted to restore most of the reductions in that type of expenditure that the Council had made in July. That was, however, no more than the Parliament was entitled to do under the treaty and it did not involve any breach of the ceilings for individual categories of expenditure in the IIA.

I come now to the final overs of the ball-by-ball commentary, which were bowled, so to speak, at the second Budget Council on 22 November. The Council's task was somewhat complicated as it involved giving a First Reading to the amending letter at the same time as giving a Second Reading to the draft budget and considering the Parliament's amendments and modifications. Despite that, the revised draft budget that the Council established was coherent and disciplined.

Very briefly, the Council did two things. First, it agreed all the main elements of the amending letter. In the process, it rejected the Parliament's modification to agricultural provision, because it had become technically redundant. Secondly, the Council rejected around two thirds of the Parliament's amendments to non-privileged DNO, thereby bringing the growth of such expenditure back within the calculated maximum rate of 5·8 per cent. So, just as it did at its First Reading, the Council followed the letter of the procedure agreed in February.

Therefore, we have a draft budget for 1989 in which commitments are around 2·3 billion ecu below the overall ceiling in the financial perspective; in which provision for agricultural market support is around 1·8 billion ecu below the guideline limit; and in which the own resources call-up rate is 1·02 per cent. of GNP, compared with the annual sub-ceiling for 1989 of 1·17 per cent.

In line with the shuttlecock diplomacy which characterises the budget procedure, the action now shifts to Strasbourg, where the Parliament will have its Second Reading debate in the week beginning 12 December. The Parliament can be expected to amend the provision for DNO in the draft budget to some degree, but the amount which it can add within the relevant ceilings in the financial perspective is relatively small.

For its part, the Council has agreed the basis on which it will enter into a formal process of co-decision with the Parliament, under article 203(9) of the treaty, in order to agree the overall growth of DNO for the 1988 budget. That overall growth will substantially exceed the calculated maximum rate as an inevitable consequence of the increase in structural fund appropriations agreed at the Brussels Council.

It is gratifying to note that the new procedures and parameters that were put in place after the Brussels Council have had a benign and moderating influence on both the level of the 1989 budget and the atmosphere in which negotiations have been conducted thus far. The Council has respected in an exemplary way the Brussels conclusions on budgetary discipline.

11.1 pm

Mr. Stuart Holland (Vauxhall): Opposition Members are grateful to the Paymaster General for taking us ball by ball, as he said, through the commentary. He did not actually say anything about how well we are playing in the matter of the EEC budget, other than on the rebate. There are certain issues arising from the budget which Opposition Members would like to address and a number of specific questions which we would like to put to him. For example, it is already very clear, as he has said, that one of the reasons why the budget is in better shape this year is the overall situation of the world food market, and especially the rise in food prices because of the drought in the United States.

There is an underlying issue on which we would like to know the Government's view and also what the Government have been doing in the preparation for the budget and what position they took. For example, granted that the Government, and not least the Prime Minister, are especially concerned about public expenditure, what is the Minister's view of the current meetings between the United States and the European Economic Community in negotiations in the framework of GATT for the reduction of food subsidies?

As has been recognised many times by hon. Members on both sides of the House, we still have a very high price

food support system in the European Community. The fact that we now have stabilisers with only 74 per cent. growth of GNP being reflected in a diminished share—let us trust that it is indeed finally a diminished share—of agricultural spending and total spending none the less leaves us in a situation where, on average, about two thirds to three quarters of the total Community budget over the last decade has been allocated to agricultural subsidies.

What is the Minister's view on the fact that the OECD, for example, estimates that overall, on a global basis, about $220 billion or £118 billion, a year is being spent by developed countries in subsidising agriculture? What representations have Her Majesty's Government made in the framework of the GATT session, through the European Community or directly in response to the United States proposals as, for example, reported by Bailey Morris in today's edition of *The Times*, for a major reduction of protection in agricultural products? That is the sort of move for which the Government deserve the support from both sides, unlike the simple trimming of expenditure, which continues to swamp the Community budget.

I do not wish to detain the House at length on this, but it also relates to the availability of expenditure for the structural funds and especially the regional fund. The recent doubling of the regional fund looks dramatic, but as the regional fund amounts to a minor fraction of 1 per cent. of Community GDP and only about 10 per cent. of that results in net transfers between member states, other than the special category of the integrated Mediterranean programmes, we are not talking about a major shift from agricultural to regional spending.

In that respect, if *Le Monde* today was accurate in reporting the Prime Minister at the Rhodes summit as saying that the structural funds are already more than the Marshall plan, she should retract that. It is arrant nonsense. The Marshall plan was equivalent to a transfer of between 3 and 4 per cent. of United States' GDP to Europe each year for four years from 1948. The whole Community budget is not scheduled to exceed 1·4 per cent. of GDP. Therefore, the whole Community budget is only one third of the contribution made under the Marshall plan to Western Europe after the war and the structural funds are only a minor fraction of 1 per cent. of Community GDP.

The Paymaster General may not be able to respond directly, but perhaps as the allegation that the structural funds amount to more than the Marshall plan is circulating in Whitehall, he is familiar with the statement and the Prime Minister intended to say that. If so, I hope that he will recognise that it is an unfounded and wholly misleading statement. It gives the impression that the structural and regional funds are far greater than they are.

Document 7908/88 budget 16 provides interesting figures on agricultural levies. Page 17 estimates revenue under the draft budget. Agricultural levies for the 1989 draft are estimated at 1·33 billion ecu—I shall not trouble with the succeeding range of decimal points—and sugar-isoglucose levies are estimated at 1·35 billion ecu. Granted that levies on sugar militate against the exports from some lesser developed countries, not least Caribbean countries, why do the Government tolerate that? Why are we not pushing for a reduction of those levies and allowing for a higher volume of imports of sugar from developing countries?

We appreciate that not everyone is making super-normal profits from beet sugar in the Community and that many small and medium-sized farmers' average income may not be in excess of the average industrial wage in this country and may be considerably less than that of their own country. We are not saying that marginal farmers' incomes should be wiped out by no Community agricultural policy whatever, but sugar is a special case.

We should be glad to know whether in the preparation of the draft budget the Government have been fighting to ensure that there is a reduction of those levies.

If one puts the 1·33 million ecu from the agricultural levies or the 1·35 million ecu on sugar-isoglucose levies against page 76 of the same document, which refers to an absolutely parsimonious 2 million ecu in food aid, one sees that that is out line—despite the considerable degree of self-congratulation with which, with unaccustomed modesty, the Paymaster General entered into his exposition.

Some hon. Members might be prepared to say that food aid should not be a priority of the Community and that there should be food development programmes. Depending on the relative balance and scale of food aid programmes, one could well agree with hon. Members making such a point, were any on their feet to do so. However, I do not encourage them to rise to their feet, although it might at least interrupt the monologue from this Dispatch Box.

Expenditure on IFAD—the International Fund for Agricultural Development—is precisely related to developing food production in the less-developed countries. If I recollect the figures, during the last major famine in Ethiopia, IFAD could gain a year's production of grain on a farm in the highlands of Ethiopia for something like a tenth of the cost of one week's drop of food aid to the area, so why on page 81 of the budget is there no commitment for 1989 whatsoever under IFAD? Why have those commitments not been made? The United Kingdom's contribution to IFAD is low. Why can we not get the Community to make that kind of commitment to IFAD, which would mean that, with its cost-effective programmes in agricultural development, it could assist the developing countries?

Again in the context of developing countries, page 73 contains a series of statements of co-operation with developing and non-member countries. Page 75 reiterates —Opposition Members are well aware of this—that the European development fund is not included in the budget. Therefore, chapters 90 and 91 on the European development fund and co-operation with the African, Caribbean and Pacific states and on co-operation with the overseas countries and territories associated with the Community have been deleted from the budget. Perhaps the Minister will give us his view on why that is the case. We appreciate that that has been the convention for some time, but why can the House not scrutinise those budgets within the framework of the overall budget of the Community? What, in practice and in terms of the specific allocations are the subtitles of the allocations in the Community budget, and why can those not be published in the budget? I refer, for example, to page 73, item 93, headed,

"Co-operation with Latin American and Asian developing countries".

[Mr. Stuart Holland]

Lumping Latin America and Asia together in that category gives an almost meaningless figure. Why can we not have a breakdown and why are the Government not pushing for a breakdown of such figures?

Perhaps the Minister will be a little more forthcoming on some of the items in the Community's draft general budget and in the document with the amendments and proposed modifications from the European Parliament. I shall still refer to the pages of the documents as that is simpler than giving multi-digit references for each item. I refer to page 1, which the Paymaster General did not mention, which calls for the Parliament to promote the interests of women. What was the Government's attitude to that in the preparation of the draft budget?

On page 5 there is a programme to promote information for local and regionally elected representatives on Community activities in preparation for 1992. I happen to know that that is taken seriously by national Governments in the rest of Europe. What is the Government's attitude to that?

On page 178-9 of the European Parliament document there is an item on the harmonisation and amelioration of working conditions in the Community. What representations did the Government make on that, other than the purely negative comment that they are not interested in a social dimension to Europe? What of the European Parliament's proposals for disabled people set out on page 180? What about page 195 and the proposals for the protection of the environment? We would certainly like answers from the Government to those questions.

What is the Government's attitude to the proposal on page 398 to combat world hunger? Why has the European Community pledged only 5·6 milion ecu to combat hunger in the developing countries?

I can see one reason for a report in *Le Monde* today about the harmonisation of taxes on savings and the different responses that we are getting from the Prime Minister and the EC. According to *Le Monde*, the Prime Minister said that we should be concentrating on those areas where consensus already exists. In that respect it seems that the Prime Minister does not believe that the harmonisation of tax on savings is a priority.

There are several reasons for saying that there should not be a harmonisation of taxes where they do not necessarily impede capital flow within the Community. The capital flow which really counts within the Community and which is overwhelmingly important is that which relates to the Eurodollar and Eurobond markets where such fiscal barriers hardly impede the functioning of markets which, overall, handle trillions of dollars on a global scale each year. Therefore, we would not consider that the harmonisation of taxation on capital flows was a priority. Far more important is whether or not the Community will have an industrial strategy.

At the end of the century, will there be sectors within the EC that will have regenerated themselves and are capable of facing the competitive challenge from Japan or will many of such sectors—for example the electronic consumer goods industry—simply have disappeared? That is the real challenge on savings—the translation of savings into investment in a competitive, offensive, go-getting, long—term industrial strategy. The Community budget has not addressed the need for such a strategy, despite the proposals in the Esprit programme for the translation of technical progress into innovation in individual countries. There is no attitude towards a joint, common industrial policy in the Community.

Such a policy does not imply federalism—it does not have to be formally confederal. It could be an effective, pragmatic joint approach to industrial strategy. We suspect—we would be glad to hear the Minister's views on this—that the Government are not pushing for such a strategy and that they will leave 1992 to market forces. We have already stressed that if it is left to market forces, the big business will benefit and the small business will go to the wall. We shall be glad to know whether the Government accept that that is the likely outcome of 1992, and whether the Government pressed for the question of Europe's industrial competitiveness to be addressed in the whole approach to and debate on these budget issues in the Council of Ministers.

11.19 pm

Mr. Teddy Taylor (Southend, East): These debates are pointless, because we have masses of paper, our views do not count one bit and whatever we say and however we vote it will not make the slightest difference. Nevertheless, it is reassuring to come along to these debates every year and to hear a Treasury Minister express the view that, happily, matters have been resolved, spending is under control and we can look forward to the future with more confidence than we did last year. Bearing in mind that the last time we debated this we discovered that our net contribution for 1987-88, which was originally £500 million, had been stepped up gradually to a record £1,698 million, I hope that the Minister is right. It would be helpful if we could start the debate with the Minister's opening bid in terms of what he thinks that the net contribution will be in 1989.

Why can we not have in the budget separate amounts for the levies on goods which are being imposed by the Council of Ministers and the Commission? The Minister will be aware that it is a blinkered form of protectionism. The Common Market is imposing levies on many imported goods, up to a rate of 33 per cent. Those levies bring in large amounts of money which go direct to the EC.

The Minister said that we have a new spirit of careful, cautious consideration of spending, so there will be no money wasted and no silly spending. Have the Government agreed to the proposal to spend more than 1 million ecu celebrating the French revolution? That is at page 66 of the budget. From all that I have heard about the French revolution, I believe that it was a thoroughly nasty business during which things were done of which the Government would not approve in any respect. My constituents in Southend would like to know whether the Government supported the proposal to spend all the money celebrating the French revolution. How will that benefit the Community and my constituents?

Did the Government agree to the massive increase in expenditure proposed as a grant to the European Movement? We know that the Government give a great deal of money to the European Movement, but this is said to be extra money necessary to encourage a higher percentage poll in the so-called European elections to the so-called European Parliament. I have never known an occasion when a Government have spent money on a

device to encourage more people to vote in elections. High polls or low polls can often be advantageous to one party or another. Sometimes Members from strange parties are returned in by-elections on the basis of low polls. Those things happen from time to time. Did the Government say that our taxpayers' money should go to the European Movement for the sole purpose of encouraging more people to vote in these silly Euro-elections, which everyone knows have no effect? If the European Parliament disappeared tomorrow, no one would notice.

Thirdly, did the Minister vote for the donation of a substantial sum to support rehabilitation centres for torture victims? Which torture victims did he have in mind, and what will the money be used for? Do the Government support a substantial increase in the amount of money going to something called the European Migrants Forum? That has the specific job of trying to deal with the increase of Fascism and racism in Europe. I am not sure whether the Government have had a clear indication of how Fascism is rising in Europe, but I should be grateful if my hon. Friend the Minister could say whether he thinks that the Common Market is the best body to deal with this and whether our taxpayers' funds should be used in this way.

Mr. Brian Wilson (Cunninghame, North): Despite all the profligacy of the EEC and the millions of pounds spent on storing and destroying food, the item on which the hon. Gentleman chooses to pour scorn is the tiny amount of money to be used to fight racism in Europe—racism which is, in part at least, a product of the EEC and the drawing of migrant labour into EEC countries.

Mr. Taylor: I am astonished at the hon. Gentleman. Surely he recognises the blatant scandal of the terrible misery and degradation that we are heaping on the Third world by the traditional policy, which is raised time and again, of spending £200 million per week on dumping and destroying food. We all know that that is in the budget and that the people who are starving and who are hit most of all are people in the Third world. They are not getting a decent price for their food products, so they cannot buy machinery or pay their debts. That comes up time and again and every time the Government say that the amount will be reduced it increases. It is sad to think of Bob Geldof sweating his guts out to raise £100 million for the world's poor, only to find that the same amount was being spent by the Common Market every three days on dumping or destroying food. I accept what the hon. Member for Cunninghame, North (Mr. Wilson) says about that—it is an almighty scandal, but nothing is being done about it and nothing can be done about it.

Mr. Jim Sillars (Glasgow, Govan): Is the hon. Gentleman serious in what he says?

Hon. Members: Never.

Mr. Sillars: Does the hon. Gentleman not understand that in the Mediterranean area, for example, there is a long history of the transfer of people from north Africa to places such as Marseilles, and there has been a considerable problem of racism to the point that people have been murdered for no other reason than that they come from the Arab race? Is he not also aware that over the next 20 years there will be an enormous shortage of labour in every European Community country? That shortage will be made good only by bringing in people from places such as Turkey, Morocco and Tunisia. If we do not tackle racism now, on an all-Community level, it will not be tackled and will become a major problem. Would it not be better for the hon. Gentleman to address major problems such as that rather than nit-picking his way through as he is doing?

Mr. Taylor: I find the hon. Gentleman's intervention staggering. Of course there are major problems in the EEC —I have mentioned some of them—but if the hon. Gentleman's experience of the Common Market is such that he regards it as the appropriate body to deal with the problems that he has outlined, he is living in a dream world. Does he not accept that the Common Market is a most profligate, wasteful and useless organisation? Of the things that it has tried to tackle, the common agricultural policy is a perfect example. If we give money to that organisation to deal with a problem, we are wasting our money. If the hon. Gentleman has any doubt, he should read the budget statement—especially page 60—to see how we are to fight Fascism and racism. I hope that my hon. Friend the Member for Harrow, East (Mr. Dykes) will also read this. It says that we are to

"improve the coordination and distribution of administrative measures".

That is how we are to deal with Fascism and racism. I do not know what that means, but my hon. Friend is an enthusiast and will know exactly what it means.

Mr. Hugh Dykes (Harrow, East): My hon. Friend says that the EC is a profligate, wasteful, useless organisation. When does he want to leave the European Community and why does he not say so? Would it not be better if he said so honestly and straightforwardly?

Mr. Taylor: My hon. Friend is trying to make me prolong my speech, but I shall not do so because this is a short debate. He knows that there is no way in which we can leave the Common Market, that we are in it and can do nothing about that. The only country ever to leave the Common Market is Greenland and it got out only because every member state passed a Bill allowing it out. There is no way in which we can legally withdraw from the Common Market. I am trying to stop the scandalous waste of public money that my hon. Friend knows is going on day in, day out, and I wish that he would do the same.

Does my hon. Friend the Minister think it appropriate for the British taxpayer to pay for the teaching of German to 200,000 people who have come from Russia and Poland to the West German Republic? I do not know whether this is actually happening, or why, but is it an appropriate use for EEC cash?

I hope that hon. Members will appreciate that the Community is far from spending money carefully and wisely. Our Ministers, who have many problems in dealing with the expense of our health and social services, and in paying for our pensions, will be outraged when they see the amount of money in this budget being poured into dumping food and celebrating the French revolution.

11.30 pm

Mr. Alex Carlile (Montgomery): When he opened the debate, the Paymaster General, with his characteristic modesty, said that he was simply giving a ball-by-ball commentary. In this limited over match, he was batting as well; in due course, he will be bowling at the end of the match.

[Mr. Alex Carlile]

The cricketing analogy highlights what I agree with the hon. Member for Southend, East (Mr. Taylor) is the futility of these debates. We are trying to debate 3 in—or should I say 7 cm—of paper in an hour and half. These debates do nothing to increase the country's understanding of the European Community, though of course they provide opportunities for the virtuosity that we have heard from the Labour Front Bench spokesman, the hon. Member for Vauxhall (Mr. Holland), and from the hon. Member for Southend, East. If he were to admit that he wants us out of Europe, it would spoil his fun; there would be nothing left for him to talk about.

It would be far better if, unlike the hon. Member for Southend, East, we did something to increase the credibility of the European Parliament. The budget should be and is debated in detail in the European Parliament; but that can happen effectively only in a European Parliament that is truly accountable and that commands the respect of the nation. I applaud the payment of grants to the European Movement if those grants are to be used to achieve some greater understanding among the public at large of the role and purpose of the European Parliament, a Parliament that, in the budget that we are debating, has played a more important and greater role than in past years.

I broadly welcome the budget for four reasons. First, it provides considerable impetus towards the completion of the internal market by 1992. Secondly, it provides for greater economic and, dare I say it, social cohesion between member states. The hon. Member for Southend, East, if he will forgive me for saying this, is a little older than me, and therefore has a longer memory than I. One of the greatest ends that can be served in a European community is social cohesion, and the removal of the divisions that were such a detriment to Europe in the earlier years of this century.

Thirdly, this budget speeds up the production of a common policy on research and development. If European manufacturing industry is to be successful in the decades to come—and the work done by the Commission has shown that European manufacturing industry, and particularly ours, should do extremely well after 1992—we must have a policy of research and development so that we can compete in real economic terms with the Japanese and the United States and other parts of the world where economic development is happening quickly.

Fourthly, I welcome the budget because it is at least a start in tackling the enormous problems of environmental policy that we must tackle if we are not to face natural disaster, affecting the whole world, but to a great extent caused by our manufacturing activities in the manufacturing countries in the European Community. It seems that the budget begins at least to tackle all these issues and is to be welcomed for that reason.

The key to the acceptability and utility of the Community within member states is the way in which the structural funds are applied. I represent a Welsh constituency, and I and others in Wales can see both the success and the failure of the funds. Successes have been produced in south Wales, and the Wrexham area of north Wales, by the spending of European regional development fund moneys on the building of factories and the creation of new industries and infrastructure, alongside the work of the Welsh Development Agency. The funds can be and have been applied to regenerate areas which were on their economic last legs.

In my constituency and the surrounding area there is a declining agriculture industry. It has not had the benefit of significant support from the structural funds. I accept, however, that the common agricultural policy has been the lifeblood of the industry for many years. The Government, in considering the way in which the funds are used in future, and their size, in the development of new industries must not lose sight of the decline of old industries. To put the issue in a more homely way, if there are not sheep on the hills in mid Wales, there will not be anyone living at the bottom of the hills. If that happens, our communities will decline and we shall again face depopulation and the wholesale takeover of rural communities by those who wish to move in from elsewhere. The de-Cymricisation of rural Wales could be the direct result of a reduction of CAP funds. The farmers and everyone else in mid Wales understand that the CAP has been too expensive, but the Government must ensure that the targeting of its funds is not so narrow that agricultural areas in my constituency, for example, are unable to survive.

At the Rhodes summit, the Prime Minister's criticism of the Belgian Government was justified. There was blatant political interference by the Belgian Cabinet in the due legal process of the Belgian courts. I hope that that would not happen in the United Kingdom. However, the perhaps over-strident criticism that has been directed at Mr. Martens, especially on the occasion of the European summit, has tended to distract attention from the real issues. It seems that the major decision of those who attended the summit was to defer some of the most important real decisions that have to be made for 1992, whether on border controls or harmonisation of taxes. I understand fully the Prime Minister's concern about the way in which the Ryan affair was handled, especially in Belgium, but I hope that that will not be used as an excuse for reducing the effectiveness of the Community, including the way in which its budget is applied.

11.39 pm

Mr. David Curry (Skipton and Ripon): It would be a shame if the debate were to pass without someone giving two cheers for the budget, which marks a number of firsts. It is the first budget to be based upon the new financial arrangements which were agreed by the Heads of Government at the February summit, including the fourth resource. There are 3·5 billion ecu of fourth resource in the budget. Secondly, it bears the imprint of the agriculture guidelines. The preliminary budget proposed only a ·7 per cent. increase in farm spending, and that will be substantially underspent in 1989, as it has been in 1988. It also reflects the increase in the structural funds following the Brussels decision.

The structural funds should be judged much more on the efficiency with which they are spending money and less on the sheer volumes that are being devoted to them. There is a tendency to judge them purely in terms of quantity. The great problem with the structural funds over the years has been the inefficiency of the spend in terms of the targeting. The relationship between the Commission and the national organisations which have been applying for funds has meant that a large amount of money has fallen

out in the process. If the new regulation tightens the procedure and ensures that that money is targeted effectively, it will do quite a considerable service.

The budget has been drawn up in the light of the institutional agreement, that rather ungainly offspring of the three institutions between the Parliament, the Commission and the Council. It is worth noting that, touch wood, until now the budget has passed without that habitual frontier warfare which characterises relations between the Parliament and the Council. I hope that the Parliament, having remained in its margin until now, will see the budget home and dry in a little over a week's time.

When we talk about the effective spend, we are talking about 1 per cent. of GNP rather than 1·15 per cent. in the preliminary budget. What characterises this budget, and what to some extent characterised the 1988 budget, is the emergence of the new cash mountain in Brussels. The savings in the 1989 budget will be realised thanks to what has happened in 1988 and the shortfall in the 1988 harvest. The harvest in 1988 will be exported in the spring of 1989.

That reduced call on own resources is due, as my right hon. Friend the Paymaster General has said, largely to FEOGA savings which depend upon the world price and the American harvest, but not simply the American harvest. Many other major countries have had a poor harvest, including the Soviet Union. We must all regard Mr. Gorbachev's plans to reform Soviet agriculture with the greatest alarm. The day he succeeds in producing two good crops in succession, we are all down the drain in terms of financing agriculture.

The reduced call on own resources is also due to the boost in receipts which has transferred unspent appropriations. It is also due to a number of cancellations in the structural funds and the increased buoyancy of the customs revenues. However, it would be unfair to ignore some of the real improvements due to the depreciation of stock, the cuts in farm prices consequent to the operation of stabilisers and to a series of zero-price increases in farm prices. It is also due to the disposal of stocks, although no one would deny that that has been achieved at immensely heavy costs to the taxpayer.

However, much of the saving is fortuitous and it would be equally wrong to overlook the fortuitousness of what has happened. The FEOGA figure has been reduced by about 1·37 billion ecu. Had we been talking in July, we might have been considering a saving of some 2·5 billion to 3 billion ecu. That was because of the dollar factor. At its peak, the dollar was trading at about 0·9 ecu and now, after only a few weeks of decline, it is trading at 0·83 ecu. Almost all those factors are outside the control of the European Community. Farm spending in terms of the amount that it costs the taxpayer is very largely outside the control of the Finance Ministers or even the Heads of State of the Community.

The budgetary discipline rules insist that the Commission must take the average ecu dollar rate over the first three months of the preceding year. That dollar rate, which is a notional rate for the 1989 budget, was 0·81 ecu to the dollar. In other words, we are now within a fraction of getting back to the notional rate. That shows the extent to which we are at the mercy of exchange rate fluctuations that are not directly under our control. That saving of 1·37 billion ecu, which at one stage looked to be remarkably over-modest, may now be too modest only to the tune of 150 million or 200 million ecu.

Therefore, it is right that we should bring great caution to bear on the budget. It is particularly important that we do not allow to happen what happened in 1984 and blow the agricultural savings in farm price increases. It is important that the farm price review, which the new Commissioner for Agriculture will bring forward early next year, should continue the policy of rigorousness in relation to the general level of farm price increases. We must not forget that new pressures are around the corner because the United States has increased its plantings substantially this year in response to its own drought, and in a couple of years there will be a substantially increased American grain harvest on the world market.

As my right hon. Friend the Paymaster General said, one particularly positive feature of the budget is the four-year stock depreciation programme of 1·4 billion ecu a year agreed by Heads of Government. By the end of 1989 that will have seen the total depreciation of existing stocks. Therefore, looming on the horizon is a saving in the two subsequent years of that money which has been provided already. The practice of depreciation on entry is crucial for getting some honesty and sanity into the budget.

There has been a very real increase in structural funds because it reflects the decisions taken in Brussels. The problem remains that we are looking at an underspend in the regional fund of between 150 million and 400 million ecu and an underspend of 320 million ecu in the social fund. That is because of cutting the funds in a linear way if they are oversubscribed. Therefore, those who ask for the funds tend to ask for too much in order not to be cut back and are then unable to spend the money that is allocated to them. That is the sort of technical problem that lies in the interface between the Commission and the national institutions which are managing these issues. The new funds should assist in that.

The budget deserves a careful welcome, and should be the first of what I hope will be a new breed of much more rigorously managed budgets. My hon. Friend the Member for Southend, East (Mr. Taylor) described the debate as a completely wasted occasion, which would have no influence on anybody. He then described the European Parliament as a completely wasted institution. If this House is useless in so far as it is debating the Community budget and if the European Parliament is useless in so far as it is debating the European Community budget, who is accountable on behalf of the people for whom the decisions are taken? The denigration of both institutions will not get my hon. Friend very far, and he would be better advised to concentrate his energies on devising how the two institutions can share the burden of accountability so that, in the name of the electorate that we both claim to represent, we can be seen to be doing our job.

11.47 pm

Sir Richard Body (Holland with Boston): My hon. Friend the Member for Skipton and Ripon (Mr. Curry) is being a little less than fair. We have had debate after debate, year after year, on these budgets. I have attended most of them, and we have made a number of constructive suggestions. We have made various criticisms, some of them substantial and some of them more trivial, but important contributions have been made from both sides of the House about the budgets of the past. Looking back, one must recall that they have had very little effect. I would

[Sir Richard Body]

say that they have had virtually no effect, so the criticism made by my hon. Friend the Member for Southend, East (Mr. Taylor) is right.

The hon. and learned Member for Montgomery (Mr. Carlile) was the only hon. Member to refer to that part of the budget which deals with environmental matters. That is a fresh page to turn, but he went a little too far in suggesting that it would enable us to deal with all the environmental issues in Europe. In my judgment, what is wrong with the European Community is that it is too small, and so long as it is constituted in its present form it will remain too small to deal with any of the major environmental issues which will afflict the continent of Europe in the 1990s. That is why some of us who are critical of the constitution of the European Community wish for something far wider and looser which will enable all countries in Europe to take part in decisions in which their interests are affected.

One example that affects my constituents very considerably is the North sea. The European Community discussed cleaning up the North sea, but it is powerless to do so because only half the countries causing the pollution or affected by it are members of the Community. Until we have an organisation that will embrace all the countries which border the North sea or contribute to the pollution of the North sea we shall not be able to cope with that problem.

Mr. Holland: I have one minor point. The hon. and learned Member for Montgomery (Mr. Carlile) was not the only Member to refer to the environment. The hon. Gentleman will agree that there is already an institution which concerns the whole of Europe—the Regional Economic Commission for Europe. Even if he does not think that that institution is ideal for addressing environmental issues, it includes all the eastern and western European countries. Should not such an institution play a role in environmental issues?

Sir Richard Body: The hon. Gentleman knows my views. We have stood shoulder to shoulder on a previous occasion on this subject. The Council of Europe can do much, but the European Community as at present constituted sadly cannot.

I congratulate my right hon. Friend the Paymaster General on the way in which he has grasped the complexities of the budget, but I am less sanguine than he about agricultural expenditure. When we speak of surpluses and their disposal, we think mainly of grain, dairy products and sometimes sugar, but in future the largest surpluses may be from southern Europe—olives, citrus fruit, tobacco, paddy rice and wine. An attempt may have been made to curb those surpluses, but anyone who has visited those parts and spoken to farmers who are poised to expand production considerably can have no faith in a policing system for arrangements to curb production. I ask my right hon. Friend to consider this problem carefully and to comment on it when he replies.

How can we curb production in southern Europe, which does not have marketing boards or producer co-operatives as well organised as those in northern Europe? It will be almost impossible to monitor the production of commodities in southern Europe. Producers are acquiring the technical skills to expand production and I see no prospect of curbing agricultural expenditure there.

My hon. Friend the Member for Southend, East referred to the little item of expenditure on the European Movement. I have heard my right hon. Friend the Paymaster General say that he is opposed to federalism. So am I, but often one receives invitations to speak at universities, chambers of commerce and elsewhere about federal Europe. On every occasion when I have done so, my opponent in the debate has been paid by the European Movement. My hon. Friend the Member for Harrow, East (Mr. Dykes) has opposed me on some occasions, but obviously he was not paid by the European Movement. However, it is a small point of principle. The sort of Europe about which my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister spoke in Bruges is not being promoted by the European Movement at present. Will my right hon. Friend the Minister say how this little item of expenditure crept into the budget? Why did we allow it to be slipped in? Surely it cannot be the Government's view that we should progress towards a federal Europe. Perhaps my right hon. Friend will ensure that such expenditure is not repeated in the next budget.

11.54 pm

Mr. Hugh Dykes (Harrow, East): The motion, in the form of a "take note", is a departure from recent motions taking note and expressing an opinion, and that is appropriate. As hon. Members have said, elaboration of the budget has taken place within a disciplined framework. That is welcomed by the member states, including this country. It has taken place also in a much calmer atmosphere—perhaps the one produces the other. In recent years, the budget was the product of highly charged and extremely emotional interchanges between representatives of member states and institutions, especially the European Parliament. That is not so in this case.

My hon. Friend the Member for Skipton and Ripon (Mr. Curry) gave an expert analysis of the European budget. We remember his work in the European Parliament as budget rapporteur at least once and as an important agricultural spokesman for the European Democratic Group. He acquired a knowledge of his subject that is second to none, and I agree with all his points.

An increasingly fascinating subject is the accumulation of the financial surplus in the Community, emanating mainly from agriculture. Between now and 1992 is a short period in which to go through this painful, but welcome, process. I have some sympathy for my hon. Friend the Member for Southend, East (Mr. Taylor) because, when this is achieved, he will not have so much to grumble about. I am sure, however, that with his characteristic ingenuity and creativity he will find a raft of new points to which to object. We could do the same with the United Kingdom domestic Budget. We could look at sub-headings and sub-sub-headings and find nitpicking examples of mysterious territories on which the national Government propose to expend money. We could say, "What a terrible thing—we do not approve of that."

Mr. Wilson: This is just a minor point. Does the hon. Gentleman agree that the fact that the Government are spending £1 million on propaganda to promote the poll

tax is at least as offensive as the European Movement spending a few bob on promoting voting in European elections?

Mr. Dykes: It is tempting to go down that path, but I shall not. A classic technique in debates if one wants to indulge in nitpicking is to produce a few funny examples like that. People who want to think in that limited way say, "Yes, isn't that awful and ghastly?" To do that is to go away from the main points.

Because of the acceptance of the control mechanisms suggested and exerted by central Government and others and in recent years the change in emphasis on budgetary matters, there is a much better atmosphere, although the functioning if the new constitutional arrangements and the Single European Act is not involved in these measures. The European Parliament always had an enhanced power over the elaboration of the various stages of the budget and particular responsibilities for non-compulsory expenditure. The two come together in a constitutional political nexus and give the European Parliament a much stronger role. I am sure that my right hon. Friend the Paymaster General would be the first to admit that the European Parliament has played a constructive role. That is particularly true of members of the United Kingdom delegation, including some members of the Labour delegation.

I object to the excessive use by my hon. Friend the Member for Southend, East of dismissive adjectives such as "useless", "wasteful", "extravagant", and so on. He is a dignified politician, but he demeans his dignity by using overdramatised words to describe a complicated process of co-operation——

Mr. Wilson: Steady.

Mr. Dykes: Perhaps I was going too far, but I think that hon. Members know what I mean. The process of working out the European Community budget is complicated. The amount is small compared with European GDP and European central Government public expenditure. Some of the money is included in local authority budgets and some is not—it depends on the country. I think that I am right in my understanding of the point made by my hon. Friend the Member for Southend, East. I agree that short debates are insufficient, especially on the budget. The hon. Member for Newham, South (Mr. Spearing), who is Chairman of the Select Committee on European Legislation, and I have had many discussions on this matter. We could return to the old idea of European Supply days, with full days of European debate.

The President of the Commission, Mr. Delors, despite some controversial remarks which he apparently made recently and which were taken out of context, said that the West German Parliament and the British House of Commons and House of Lords carry out considerable scrutiny of the budget. Very few other member states do so, apart from an annual debate such as takes place in the National Assembly in Paris.

I approach the matter from a different vantage point from that of my hon. Friend the Member for Southend, East, and other hon. Members who are not so enthusiastic about our membership of the Community; sadly there is still a small but, I hope, diminishing number of them. Both they and I are right, for different reasons, in wanting to see a more substantial debate. There should be a full day's debate on the European Community budget. My hon. Friend the Member for Southend, East will no doubt part company with me when I say that I should like to see that coupled with our developing personal, collective and individual relationships with Members of the European Parliament of all parties, both through party committees and House of Commons arrangements.

Then there should be the normative, logical and regular liaison with Members of the European Parliament on that subject which undergoes its most elaborate process in the European Parliament and has the greatest amount of time devoted to it there. I cannot think of any other subject which is debated at such length. The process is divided into three stages and is preceded by a much more elaborate stage in the appropriate committee. If we could do that, we would be equipped to interrogate the Executive in a much more effective way about the European budget. My hon. Friend the Member for Southend, East would probably reject that idea because he does not want the European Parliament to have that role with its associated liaison, access and facilities. When, for example, will we have fax machines for Members of Parliament as well as for visiting Members of the European Parliament? What a reckless expenditure it would be to spend all that money on a fax machine.

Mr. Holland: The hon. Gentleman has touched on a sensitive issue. A number of Opposition Members find it amazing, when we are members of the European Community, that we can telephone anywhere in this country at public expense for the public purpose but we cannot telephone the European Community or send any material there. We have to pay our own postage to the European Community. That is a substantive matter. As an Opposition opposing a Government with massive resources, we are not easily able—except at our own expense—to ring our counterparts in other national Parliaments or in the European Assembly to discuss their views on the budget. The Government should face the fact that that should be funded and that Members should have those facilities.

Mr. Dykes: Is the hon. Gentleman really willing to give up the masochistic and agonising torture of going through the switchboard and asking Doris to get a number in Brussels? She asks, "Where's Brussels? Is this a private call or is it official? Can I have that in writing please?" It is perhaps rather rash of the hon. Gentleman to suggest that we should give up those time-honoured customs.

I agree with what the hon. Gentleman says. Some people in the Labour party are beginning to talk about proportional representation, and more enthusiastically about Europe. That is an interesting new development. The all-party Europe group, which was formed in July, includes two Labour Front-Bench spokesmen and had a third until her portfolio responsibility was recently removed by the right hon. Member for Islwyn (Mr. Kinnock).

Many hon. Members will agree with what I have said. The hon. Member for Vauxhall (Mr. Holland) and I can phone Edinburgh easily, but although that experience is pleasurable I regret that I rarely need to phone Edinburgh or Glasgow in the course of my political duties. I hope that the hon. Member for Glasgow, Govan (Mr. Sillars) will forgive me for saying that, although as he also speaks on European affairs he, too, will need to phone Brussels. Unlike some members of the British Civil Service, officials

[Mr. Dykes]

in Brussels, including British officials, are much more approachable and amenable and are often delighted to receive calls from politicians of all the member states, in whatever language it may be. Perhaps my right hon. Friend the Paymaster General will respond to that point by saying that he will ensure that either European or national funds will be provided for that purpose, liaising with the House of Commons Commission. That would be a wonderful achievement.

I pay tribute to my right hon. Friend the Paymaster General for having steered us between the Scylla and Charybdis of this budget process. We are now in calmer seas. There is now support for the Government's policy of controlling those matters more effectively, but I should like to see Parliament have a greater say in that control.

12.5 am

Mr. John Redwood (Wokingham): I welcome the slightly enlarged abatement that has been negotiated and also the signs that, in the current year, the budget is below its quite generous ceiling.

I want to raise the question of the opportunity that many hon. Members feel now exists once again to tackle the problem of agriculture. All hon. Members who have spoken have agreed that the most acute problem is agricultural expenditure. While we all welcome the ceiling and the stabilisers, there are reasons—because of Mediterranean products and the possible harvests in two or three years for northern products—why the Government should urge other member nations to return to the drawing board on some aspects of the farm support system.

We have a system that is expensive both to the taxpayer and to the consumer, to say nothing of its impact on Third world countries. The way to cut through that is well known. It is to rediscover the old mechanism of market prices, which has a great impact on balancing supply and demand and which is rightly the centrepiece of industrial strategy in the Community, where many good decisions are taken to strengthen competition and to allow market forces, free of play, to open markets to greater competition between companies and countries both within and outside the Community. If only some of those fine words from the treaty of Rome could be built into the agricultural system in Europe, it would save money and leave more resources in the budget for other purposes.

The aim to reduce the proportion of spending on agriculture within the budget total is worthy, but I urge my right hon. and hon. Friends to try to secure that not so much by increasing other expenditure but by reducing the agricultural expenditure which, it is generally agreed, is wasteful. It would be unfortunate if, through the Community, we rediscovered, supported or allowed to develop some of the spending programmes that we have, with some pain but with much success, chipped away with good results. I think, for example, of certain capital grants to industry within the industrial and regional policies that this country used to follow. There is a notable coincidence between the beginnings of a recovery in some parts of the urban centres and industrial heartlands of the north and west and the termination of capital grants in a bold reappraisal of regional policy. We do not want that policy to be redeveloped through the European Community. It would cost jobs and taxpayers' cash and would cause disruption within the evolving economies of the European Community, rather than helping in their growth and development.

We must beware that, under many of the headings of expenditure in the Community budget, there are items where there are also domestic programmes. I do not want to judge what would be the right body, in any given case, to pursue those programmes. There may well be cases where the programmes can be most sensibly pursued at the European level. I urge my right hon. Friend to ensure that, where we have agreed to a European programme in a particular area, we make corresponding savings or some reappraisal in the domestic programme because we may otherwise find not only duplication but a wasteful overlap of expenditure. That would do no one any good.

I urge my right hon. and hon. Friends to take the opportunity afforded by the United States overtures on farm subsidies to determine whether the principles of competition and open markets, which we welcome in Europe, can be extended to the very expensive agricultural sector and whether Europe can make a good response to the American offer of multilateral disarmament in agricultural subsidies.

12.9 am

Mr. Christopher Gill (Ludlow): I do not share hon. Members' enthusiasm about structural funds. As they exist at the moment, there is simply not enough cash in any of the funds to make sure that the treatment of projects that are applied for can be dealt with in an even-handed manner. There will inevitably be winners and losers. Some may say that that is fair enough. It is acceptable if one is a winner, but it is totally unacceptable if one is a loser.

My hon. Friend the Member for Skipton and Ripon (Mr. Curry) referred to FEOGA. Nowhere is my argument better demonstrated than in the case of FEOGA funds. A project in my hon. Friend's constituency, which might stand absolutely four-square with a project in my constituency, might be lucky enough to attract funds and the project in my constituency might not. That is palpably unfair. It cuts across what we believe to be fair competition in the market in which we so earnestly believe. Clearly, if one company is advantaged to the extent of FEOGA funds and its competitor is not, that company is in an unfairly disadvantageous position.

There is a smokescreen in terms of the goal and the prizes that are to be won from the market if we concentrate on removing the barriers—whether they be real, imagined, financial, technical or practical—to the free movement of goods and services throughout the Community. That must be our goal. To a greater or lesser extent, the structural funds are a smokescreen and a distraction from the achievement of that most important objective, which, in the long run, is the only one that can deliver benefits and dividends to this country and the other 11 nations.

12.12 am

Mr. Brooke: With the leave of the House, may I say that I agree with those hon. Members who spoke warmly about the tone of the debate. I am conscious that I have been asked many questions, and I shall do my best to respond to them in the limited time left in the debate.

At present, my right hon. Friend the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food is attending the mid-term

review of the Uruguay round of the GATT negotiations in Montreal. He will be pursuing the United Kingdom Government's aim of an immediate freeze in support for agriculture, combined with a long-term reduction in agricultural subsidies to free resources for more productive use in the rest of the economy. As I said earlier, at the July Budget Council, the United Kingdom pressed hard for the Community to recognise the scope for savings in agricultural spending at the earliest possible opportunity.

The hon. Member for Vauxhall (Mr. Holland) asked me several questions about individual budget lines and specific amendments made by the Parliament. I will write to him in detail about the position that the November Budget Council adopted on those points.

The same applies to the question asked by my hon. Friend the Member for Southend, East (Mr. Taylor), who asked me about the celebration of the French revolution. I recall the quotation from Burke, which states:

"It is now sixteen or seventeen years since I saw the Queen of France . . . the age of chivalry is gone. That of sophisters, economists, and calculators, has succeeded; and the glory of Europe is extinguished for ever."

The sophisters and economists appear to have got hold of the celebration of the French revolution.

The hon. Member for Vauxhall asked me about the balance between agriculture and the rest. A shift in the balance of the budget is taking place. Even if expenditure on agricultural market support grows to the full extent allowed by the guideline, the annual rate of increase in real terms would be only about 2 per cent. a year between 1988 and 1992. However, for the budget as a whole, the figure implied by the financial perspective is 4 per cent. What the Prime Minister said about structural funds and Marshall aid was that, in real terms, the value of structural funds in the three years up to 1993 will exceed the value of the Marshall plan in the three years for which it ran.

Mr. Holland: Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Brooke: I shall not give way, given the limited amount of time.

Mr. Holland: We have conventions in the House and I agreed not to conclude for the Opposition. What the Paymaster General said is not the case. It can be true only in nominal terms. The impression given is wholly misleading. Marshall aid was a major programme whereas the structural funds are a minor programme.

Mr. Brooke: I stand by what I said and we can both read it again in the morning.

My hon. Friend the Member for Southend, East asked a series of questions. The revenue figures in the budget documents, including the PDB, the draft budget and the amending letter, show the yield from customs duties in detail, but again perhaps we may engage in correspondence. He said that nothing was being done about stocks, but, as my hon. Friend the Member for Skipton and Ripon (Mr. Curry) said, stocks have been reduced substantially in certain areas. Community stocks of butter fell by 85 per cent. between January 1987 and November 1988 and of skimmed milk powder by 99 per cent. over the same period.

My hon. Friend asked for our estimate of the United Kingdom's net payments to the Community institutions in 1989. He and I know from frequent cross-examination of the difficulty of comparing a calendar year for the Community with a fiscal year in which we report our public expenditure. He knows our forecast for public expenditure of £1,970 million in 1989-90 and £1,950 million in 1990-91, and I look forward to his comparison. I stress that the proportion of GDP represented by our net contribution is lower than it was in the late 1970s.

My hon. Friend intervened in my speech to make a point about advances. To have peace between us, advances are a legitimate means of dealing with cash flow problems. They do not facilitate higher spending. On the other hand, delayed payments require a proposal from the Commission. The present drift of the budget is away from delayed payments. Thus we have the substantial provision for stock depreciation.

The hon. and learned Member for Montgomery (Mr. Carlile) made an admirable speech, in part of which he referred to research and development. I hope that he will acknowledge as a result of the British Government's efforts that the difference between good and bad research has emerged. I am making a similar point on his speech to that which my hon. Friend the Member for Skipton and Ripon made about the effectiveness and efficiency in the structural funds.

In response to my hon. Friends the Members for Holland with Boston (Sir R. Body) and for Wokingham (Mr. Redwood), I recognise the Government's responsibility to watch new areas of production carefully. I will investigate the European Movement's alleged support of federalism, but I hope that my hon. Friend the Member for Holland with Boston would always wish to have a worthy opponent when he fought the opposite cause in order to improve his argument.

My hon. Friend the Member for Harrow, East (Mr. Dykes) raised the subject of the European Parliament's role. It has been valuable for agriculture and I shall return to the telephone matter, although without commitment. My hon. Friend the Member for Wokingham added considerably to the tone of the debate on agriculture and my hon. Friend the Member for Ludlow (Mr. Gill) joined in with my hon. Friend the Member for Skipton and Ripon on the subject of the use of the funds.

Finally, I hope that if some of the things which we think might come to pass do come to pass my hon. Friend the Member for Southend, East will have the generosity in due course to acknowledge that they have.

Question put and agreed to.

Resolved,

That this House takes note of European Community Documents Nos. 7271/88 and 7758/88 on the preliminary Draft Budget for 1989, 7908/88 on the Draft Budget for 1989, 8996/88 on Letter of Amendment No. 1 to the preliminary Draft Budget for 1989 and 9286/88 on the European Parliament's proposed Amendments and modifications to the Draft Budget for 1989.

Young Persons (Benefits)

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Alan Howarth.]*

12.19 am

Mr. Brian Wilson (Cunninghame, North): We move in one step from the politics of gross profligacy to the politics of gross parsimony.

I am grateful for the opportunity of this Adjournment debate to draw specific attention to what I regard as an act of wickedness perpetrated by this Government. I use those words advisedly to describe the cynical decision to cut off all legal sources of income from thousands of vulnerable youngsters in the full knowledge that many of them would be left without money, homes or hopes.

Charitable organisations and social services departments around the country are now anxiously awaiting the inevitable consequences of last year's social security legislation affecting the under-18s.

The director of social work for the National Children's Home has written to express his grave concern about the implications for young people with no family support to fall back on when this Government deprive them of all income despite being unable to offer them jobs or youth training scheme places.

The Central London Society Security Advisers Forum concludes from the early workings of the legislation:

"If you are young and anything better than really quite ill you can be left to sleep out."

That was based on the guidance offered by the Minister for Social Security who is to reply to the debate.

The social work chairman of Strathclyde region, the Rev. David Lane, has pointed out in stark and compassionate terms the moral danger into which the Government are pushing thousands of young people who now have no income from legal sources. He is not, of course, talking about the majority of youngsters who have been stripped of all their income because in many, probably most cases, families will succeed in protecting the youngsters from the fates to which I have alluded and to which that highly selective creature, the Tory conscience, is so wretchedly indifferent. However, when we are legislating about the very means of survival for 16 and 17-year-olds, is there not a binding moral obligation to consider the large number of exceptions, rather than hide behind the generality that most of them, one way or another, will manage to put hand to mouth?

This national scandal is based on a lie of Goebellian proportions from the Government. Since I cannot attribute an act of studied mendacity to individuals in this House or even to Lord Young of Graffham, I shall have to quote instead from the press release made parallel to statements in this House which was issued by the Department of Employment on 27 October 1987, confirming the effect of the Employment Act 1988. That press release stated without equivocation:

"This Bill, together with the social security changes, will give effect to our manifesto commitments to 16 and 17-year-olds. Every unemployed school leaver in this age group is guaranteed a place on the youth training scheme. No one who is able to take up a place on the YTS needs to live on benefit."

We knew, and said then, that that was a lie. We know now that it is a lie. In many parts of the country the guarantee of a YTS place has not been fulfilled, yet on the basis of that fraudulent prospectus and without regard to the consequences on individual young lives, the Government proceeded to take away all means of support.

Opposition Members disagree philosophically with the conscription of younsters on to youth training schemes of variable quality on pain of losing all benefits. However, in constituencies such as mine, that is not the issue. The issue is that the Government guaranteed YTS places but failed to deliver them and yet have proceeded to withdraw all benefit. I reckon that throughout the country at least 20,000 youngsters have no legal income tonight. The figure may be much higher and it will certainly be much higher after the next wave of school leavers who will not even qualify for the eight weeks' bridging allowance in the absence of jobs or YTS places, but who will straight away face having no income.

The case was put more eloquently by a young constituent who wrote to me, saying:

"How do young people survive after the bridging allowance? Has Mrs. Thatcher abdicated all responsibility for the younger generation? Before this legislation I received £19·20 per week. On bridging this has been cut to £15. After bridging allowance I will receive nothing. What hope is there for people like myself—no work, no money! I did not see this in the Conservative manifesto."

Perhaps the Minister will answer some of that young woman's questions. What price does he place on the value of a young life? I fear that it is not very high. I recently asked two questions of the Secretary of State for Social Security. I asked him to state how many YTS vacancies exist in each region of the country, which he did. I asked him to state also the number of people looking for YTS places in each region of the country—the other necessary half of the equation—which he refused to do, on the ground that the information could not be obtained "except at disproportionate cost".

Today, I received answers to parallel questions, not about the whole of the United Kingdom—I understand that it is beyond the means of the public purse to supply the information on a nationwide basis—but about the Ayrshire, Dumfries and Galloway area. Once again, the answer about the number of vacancies was given and, once again, an answer about the number of applicants was refused on the grounds of disproportionate cost. Behind such deceits Ministers shelter, but the victims are the young people of that area and of the country.

Tonight we shall hear about youngsters who are left bereft of income, but who can appeal on grounds of severe hardship. We know from our own areas, however, how harshly the criteria are being applied, presumably on the Minister's instructions. I have to hand a letter from the Scottish Education Department to principal careers officers in which it is made clear that they have no say in assessing severe hardship in individual cases. That is the unique function of a small central unit within the DHSS working on ministerial instructions. There is nothing to suggest that it is a liberal regime or that it will be so.

The only urgent answer is to restore income support to youngsters who do not have jobs or YTS places, at least until some semi-humane scheme, based on a far less broad-brush approach and which takes account of the human tragedy that is unfolding throughout the country among youngsters of whom we know little and about whom the Minister cares little, is put in place. If the Minister cannot do that in the name of humanity, I hope, at least, that he will spare us any festive cant about Christian society or suffering little children. To treat 16

and 17-year-olds in this way reveals the darkest side of a society that cares very little for young life or human dignity.

12.26 am

Mr. Dave Nellist (Coventry, South-East): I wish to associate myself with the criticisms that my hon. Friend the Member for Cunninghame, North (Mr. Wilson) has just made. I am conscious of the time restrictions in half-hour Adjournment debates and I shall restrict myself to asking the Minister to investigate a single case, which is symptomatic of many others.

Will the Minister assure me that his Department will investigate the case of 17-year-old Terry Flowers of Freeman street in the constituency of my hon. Friend the Member for Coventry, North-East (Mr. Hughes)? Last Friday, Terry was interviewed on the television programme "Central Weekend". Terry is 17 and his birthday is at Christmas. Nobody will have him on YTS for a month when they can have a 16-year-old for a full two years. He has had no money from the DHSS for one month. His mam is on income support and he has no prospect of any money before Christmas as a result of the Social Security Act 1988.

The only advice that has been given to him by the local office of the DHSS is that he should "Try the Salvation Army." Is that the face of caring capitalism that the Minister discussed with me when we sat on opposite sides of the fence on the Committee that considered the clauses and schedules that became part of the Social Security Act 1988? What can the Minister say tonight to the Terrys of this country about the future?

12.28 am

Mr. Bill Michie (Sheffield, Heeley): This is an important debate even though it is taking place late at night. I want to raise one issue that supplements what my hon. Friends the Members for Cunninghame, North (Mr. Wilson) and for Coventry, South-East (Mr. Nellist) have said. It relates to young people who have come out of care and who cannot rely on families once they reach the age of 17 or 18. Once those young people come out of the care of local authorities, which are themselves subject to financial constraint, they find themselves in difficulty.

The one example that I shall quote, also by coincidence, relates to a 17-year-old boy. He had been in care for three years after a family breakdown and he went into voluntary care. In July 1988 he left care and was working on a YTS placement. He received £28·50 from that scheme and out of that he had to pay £10·74 in rent and rates. That left him with £17·76 per week, out of which he had to pay for gas, electricity, food, household needs, clothing, fares to work, and so on.

In the second year, that youngster's pay increased to about £35, but the new housing benefit rules meant that he had to pay about £16 in rent and rates, leaving him £19 a week to pay for gas, electricity, clothes and fares. The position is much worse than it was before April 1988, when in the first year he would have been £7·74 better off and in the second year £11 better off.

I have intervened in the debate because I believe that those young people have had enough trauma in life. They do not have a loving family and have had to be brought up by the local authority, which does its best. At the age of 18 they are forced into circumstances in which they could not afford to take council accommodation even if it were offered to them.

Mr. Jim Sillars (Glasgow, Govan) *rose*——

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Sir Paul Dean): Does the hon. Gentleman have the leave of the hon. Member for Cunninghame, North (Mr. Wilson) and the Minister to intervene?

Mr. Wilson: It is all right with me.

12.30 am

Mr. Sillars: The Minister is nodding, so I assume that he does not mind.

I associate myself with the remarks of my hon. Friend the Member for Cunninghame, North (Mr. Wilson). It is a pity that the Minister for Social Security must answer for a policy that is widely regarded in the west of Scotland as malicious, wicked and totally evil. I hope that the Minister will not argue that there are guaranteed places for young people on YTS and that my hon. Friend's points are invalid. There is a big difference between the statistical promise of a place on YTS and the places available for young people.

The social work department of Strathclyde regional council, which is not given to extremist statements or statements without validity, has said during the past month that thousands of people in the west of Scotland —many of them in Glasgow—cannot find places on YTS and are, therefore, under this Government's policies, penniless. The social work department points out that many of those young people come from the most vulnerable sections of our society which for the past 10 to 12 years have been under enormous pressure from rising unemployment and family breakdown. How is it possible to justify making young people penniless? That is the effect of the Government's policy.

12.32 am

The Minister for Social Security (Mr. Nicholas Scott): I have taken note of the points made by the hon. Members for Glasgow, Govan (Mr. Sillars), for Coventry, South-East (Mr. Nellist), for Sheffield, Heeley (Mr. Michie) and for Cunninghame, North (Mr. Wilson). What I cannot accept for one moment is that the underlying thrust of the policy concerning the cases that have been mentioned this evening is wicked or unreasonable——.

Mr. Wilson: It is.

Mr. Scott: I hope that hon. Gentlemen will listen with some care to what I have to say. They know as well as I do that all hon. Members have a real concern for people of that age group who may be vulnerable—*[Interruption.]* The hon. Member for Cunninghame, North doubts that. I shall have a word to say later in the debate about some of the allegations that he has made, not surprisingly in the *Morning Star*, which is the most appropriate place for him to make such allegations.

Mr. Wilson: Like anyone else who wishes to raise an issue, I sent out a press release through the Press Association. Who uses it or does not use it is not within my control.

Mr. Scott: I am not surprised that the *Morning Star* was the only newspaper to pick up the point.

[Mr. Scott]

The point that we are trying to make in the new provisions is that, at the age of 16 or 17, young people are at the stage of transition from childhood to the young adult world. We must all be careful about the provision that we make for them. I hope that I can show the limited number of hon. Members in the House that the Government have been careful in that regard. I am convinced that it would be healthy neither for society nor for those young people if they could move straight from education into dependence upon state benefits as a normal stage in their transfer to adult life. I can think of nothing more debilitating for the mass of youngsters leaving education and entering the adult world than to have automatically to depend on state benefits. That is why from September we implemented the manifesto commitment that those under 18 who choose to remain unemployed should not be eligible for benefit. I shall later defend that assertion. However, at the same time, through our regulations I think that we have made sure that vulnerable young people will still be protected. We linked these measures with the guarantee of an offer of a place on the youth training scheme for every school leaver under 18 who applies for one and who is not in work or full time education.

I say not just in terms of my ministerial responsibility but as the Member of Parliament for Chelsea in central London and representing Earl's Court that I can think of no greater danger than for young people to be attracted to leave home and have the opportunity to live on state benefits and come into some sort of life in inner London or any of our other big cities and be exposed to the dangers, moral and otherwise, that can confront them. We are determined to ensure that that is not an easy option open to young people.

Mr. Wilson *rose——*

Mr. Scott: The hon. Gentleman has had the chance of initiating an Adjournment debate. I have to finish shortly and I hope that he will allow me to continue my argument.

I know that some Opposition Members have doubts about the training opportunities that we are offering to young people. They have doubts about the extent and quality of the training that will be available for young people. I maintain with certainty that the youth training scheme is a real and high quality opportunity for those who leave school without a job to make a sound start in their adult lives. Modern skills and qualifications will be essential to enable young people to get the jobs that Britain needs if it is to compete internationally in future.

Mr. Bill Michie *rose——*

Mr. Scott: Perhaps the hon. Gentleman would listen for a moment.

Seventy-four per cent. of young people who leave the YTS go into jobs, further education or other opportunities for training. Eighty per cent. of people who have completed YTS schemes say that they have benefited from them. Of course, once young people are on the youth training scheme, income support is available to top up the training allowance, if appropriate. That is paid if, for example, the young person has a board and lodging charge to meet.

Those are the arguments about why it is right for the young people themselves to have an opportunity to take part in the youth training scheme. This country is moving steadily into a climate in which we will experience a shortage of skills and manpower. The best thing that we can do for the economy as a whole and for our young people is to make sure that they are trained and have opportunities to participate in what will be an increasingly tight employment market in the next five to 10 years. I have no hesitation in commending this as being important to young people and to our economic development.

I appreciate that some young people will still require the protection of benefit. Many of them, through no fault of their own, find themselves in unfortunate circumstances. The regulations provide for such people so that benefits will still be available for them between the ages of 16 and 18. Lone parents looking after children, the severely disabled, the long-term sick and girls within 11 weeks of giving birth to a child will not be affected by the new arrangements. Many thousands of young people will come within those groups.

For those school leavers who can go on to YTS and who are living at home, child benefit is now available until the end of the year, by which time the offer of a YTS place will have been made. For those who can go on to YTS but who cannot live at home—either because they have no home or because they would be at risk of physical or sexual abuse if they did—income support is available for the same period. Again the offer of a YTS place is guaranteed. Therefore, we have gone to not inconsiderable lengths to protect young people who are most in need. *[Interruption.]* I can hear rumbles on the Opposition Benches, and no doubt hon. Members are saying that this is not enough. My answer to that is that it is not possible to regulate for every particular circumstance in which it would be unreasonable to refuse benefit to somebody under 18. That is why we expressly took the power to enable income support still to be paid to somebody under 18 who would otherwise suffer severe hardship, and this is a power that we have used.

In the 12 weeks since the new provisions took effect, 1,688 applications under the severe hardship provision have been received. In 1,139 cases, a direction resulted and in 549 a direction was refused. Each case has been considered on its merits. Examples of the factors that are taken into account include the young persons' health and vulnerability—for example, the risk of being led into crime, the risk of eviction and subsequent homelessness as a result of inability to meet accommodation costs, the availability of any income which would normally fall to be disregarded, the availability of any savings, the prospect of a speedy entry into YTS, the prospects of getting casual work, the young person's financial commitments and prospects for postponing payment, and whether the young person has any friends or relatives who could help. We gave a commitment to give decisions on these cases of severe hardship within 24 hours, and I am glad to say that that commitment has been met.

A point has been made about the places available on YTS. It has been suggested in some parts of the media that the restrictions on the availability of benefits for young people have been a way for the Government to save money, but the money that we have been spending on the expansion of the YTS has been far in excess of any savings that we could have had on the income support scheme. The

hon. Member for Coventry, South-East will remember the debates that we had in Committee about this, and the practice has borne out the arguments that I made then.

The hon. Member for Cunninghame, North talked about 20,000 young people across the country who have not been offered places. There are 120,000 vacancies available in the YTS scheme today. In Scotland, there are 13,000 places, in Strathclyde, 5,000 and in Cunninghame 267 places.

Mr. Wilson: How many applicants are there?

Mr. Scott: There are 20,000. The hon. Gentleman claimed in the *Morning Star* this morning that there is a shortage of 20,000 places, so he must believe that there are that many applicants. There are 120,000 places—six times as many places as he claimed were unfilled—available now to young people if they come forward and claim them. These are not young people left without a YTS place. We know that, of these people, many made no effort to seek a place during the eight weeks that they received a bridging payment. That was a payment specifically designed to bridge them through to the point at which they could take a YTS place.

Some of those who are said not to have achieved a place may by now have got a job. Other YTS places that were waiting for them may have been taken up. Some will have returned to full-time education. The careers service has not reported that it has been inundated with young people seeking places once their bridging allowance has run out. The places are there for them if they want them, and the figures that I have given to the House make that clear beyond peradventure. It will be clear in due course whether what I am saying is true or whether what hon. Gentlemen have said is true, but there is now an excess of places available over and above the number of young people who say that they have not been able to get such a place.

Mr. Wilson: If what the Minister says is right, will he explain why the cost is disproportionate to identify the number of applicants in each area? Whatever the global number, there are many areas in which there is a shortfall of places. The information that the Minister gave us earlier about the quality of youth training schemes is not germane to the debate. We are talking about those who have not been offered YTS places or jobs. They have had their supply of benefit cut off. They have not "enjoyed" any of the intermediate steps that the Minister has described. They have lived in poverty, or at least hardship, unless someone has taken up their cases. If the Minister believes that these cases do not exist in large numbers, he lives in a different world from the rest of us.

Mr. Scott: My departmental colleagues and I watch these matters carefully. If hon. Members can present clear and specific examples of young people in certain regions who are willing to accept YTS places, who have used the time while they are in receipt of bridging allowance to seek such places, who have not refused to accept a moderate journey from their locality to take up their places, and who still cannot find YTS places, I am sure that my departmental colleagues will take serious note. I am advised by them, however, and the careers service that there is no such picture arising across the country. There are places in excess of the number of young people who claim that they have not received an offer.

Mr. Nellist: The Minister has said that it is not healthy to move directly from education to state benefit dependence. How healthy is it for people such as Terry Flowers to be without any help for eight weeks—there are hundreds like him—before his 18th birthday?

Mr. Scott: The hon. Gentleman will know that it is unwise to raise individual examples unless he is prepared to write to me, or to my departmental colleagues, to present specific examples. If he is prepared to do that, we shall respond in detail, having investigated the specific circumstances of individuals, irrespective of whether they have received YTS offers. I shall ensure that the specific case to which he has referred is investigated. I know that he has a deep concern, as I have. I do not want to see youngsters deprived of benefit or left without benefit.

I am determined, however, that those who fall within the age group that we are discussing—I think that I carry many with me on this issue—do not have the easy option of moving from education into dependence on state benefit when training opportunities are available to them. I am sure that those opportunities will be of considerable benefit to them, to society and to the country as a whole.

All that young people have lost as a result of the implementation of the new arrangements is the option of doing nothing at the public's expense. We have sought to encourage them to take up worthwhile options in employment, education or training. If they take them up, they will be provided with a sound foundation for their adult life. It is easy to raise the individual hard case—we examine such instances with care, and the action that we have taken under the exceptional hardship provisions demonstrates how seriously we have done so—but I believe that on principle the Government are on sound ground. I make no apologies for the steps that we have taken.

Question put and agreed to.

Adjourned accordingly at twelve minutes to One o'clock.

House of Commons

Tuesday 6 December 1988

The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

PRIVATE BUSINESS

RIVER HUMBER (BURCOM OUTFALL) BILL *[Lords]*

PORT OF TYNE BILL *[Lords]*

Read a Second time, and committed.

Oral Answers to Questions

EMPLOYMENT

Training

1. **Mr. Alton:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many employment training scheme places have been taken up on Merseyside since the inception of the scheme.

The Secretary of State for Employment (Mr. Norman Fowler): At 25 November there were more than 3,250 people on employment training on Merseyside.

Mr. Alton: Although it is good news that 3,500 people are now taking up training, 31,500 people under the age of 25 are unemployed in the Merseyside area yet paradoxically, the Merseyside chamber of commerce points to a skills shortage. Does the Secretary of State agree that it is worth looking again at issues such as the remuneration of people on the schemes, and does he agree that it is futile for people to indulge in litigation that is costly to the ratepayers when what is needed is co-operation between local authorities and the Government to put many of these unemployed young people into work?

Mr. Fowler: Yes, I agree that the aim must be to try to provide training for as many unemployed people as we can. About 15,000 employment training places are now available on Merseyside, I hope that the hon. Gentleman will bring that to the attention of his constituents.

Historically speaking, Liverpool city council's action to punish local voluntary organisations and employers who co-operated with employment training was clearly against the interests of the unemployed. That is why we sought judicial review and won in the High Court. I hope that that is now behind us and that we can all get down to making employment training work on Merseyside.

2. **Mr. Favell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what representations he has received on his proposed alterations of training arrangements.

Mr. Fowler: The White Paper "Employment for the 1990s", which I published yesterday, sets out new ways in which training and enterprise activities are organised and delivered both nationally and locally.

I held a number of meetings prior to the White Paper and will now hold discussions in a number of areas concerned with training.

Mr. Favell: The Government are to be congratulated on recognising that training requirements differ not only from region to region but from town to town. Centralised planning is not the answer; local involvement is the answer to getting things moving. That is how our great towns and cities were built in the first place. The training and enterprise councils are a marvellous idea. When can Stockport have one? If we can be the first in the north-west to get one, we shall leave the rest standing.

Mr. Fowler: I am grateful to my hon. Friend. We are not yet quite in a position to set out the prospectus for training and enterprise councils; it will be set out in the next few weeks. I shall bear Stockport's interest in this very much in mind.

I entirely agree with my hon. Friend's general point. This is training for the local labour market. It is training for industry and it is relevant to jobs. That is what the new organisation is all about.

Mr. Wallace: As well as providing training for the unemployed, I am sure that the Secretary of State agrees that it is important that companies invest in training the employees who already work for them. To that end, has he considered giving credit or assistance to companies that invest more than most in training, and giving it at the expense of the companies that are not pulling their weight in providing training for their employees?

Mr. Fowler: There are no proposals on that in the White Paper, but what the hon. Gentleman said about companies training their own staff is crucial. As we go into the 1990s, the difference between one company and another will be largely the difference between the people, and the skills and training of the people, in those companies. The responsibility for training people in employment must obviously rest with the employers.

Mr. Couchman: Does my right hon. Friend agree that, with the diminishing pool of young labour and the intense competition for it, it becomes ever more important to attract older workers back into employment? Will he launch an initiative into recruitment and retraining of that group of potential workers?

Mr. Fowler: Yes, a whole range of lessons about the new labour market of the 1990s will have to be learnt. One of the chief lessons is that we must train people who are already in employment to be as adaptable as possible to new skills. Another clear lesson is that we must examine alternative forms of recruitment. We need recruitment of unemployed people, women, older workers and ethnic minorities. Those are all opportunities and I hope that employers will take them.

Mr. Meacher: Why should employers who already show less interest and devote less money to training than employers anywhere else in Europe show any more interest or spend any more money as a result of the Minister's latest proposals? Why should they who have so manifestly neglected their own employees improve on the dismal

record of ET? Will the Minister confirm that ET has failed to attract anything like enough long-term unemployed to fill the 187,000 designated places? More than half way through the first six months, fewer than one third of the places have been filled.

Mr. Fowler: On the first point, the hon. Gentleman is simply out of date on the attitude of employers to training in employment. More employers than before are now training in employment and a whole range of schemes such as the compacts initiative—the most recent—are proving employer's interest in training. In spite of all the opposition and the attempts at sabotage by the hon. Gentleman, the employment training programme has got off to a very good start. That is no thanks to the hon. Gentleman or to the Labour party. They have played a discreditable part in the whole employment training issue and they have no credibility whatever.

Small Firms

3. **Mr. Lord:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will make a statement on his Department's initiative to encourage the Government to purchase goods and services from small firms.

The Minister of State, Department of Employment (Mr. John Cope): The Government are committed to improving value for money in purchasing and small firms have an important part to play in achieving this. I therefore discussed with ministerial colleagues ways to increase their Department's purchasing from small firms. Departments that are large purchasers now publish booklets designed to help small firms become suppliers to the Government and, in collaboration with the central unit on purchasing, we shall shortly be publishing further guidance for officials on small firm purchasing.

Mr. Lord: Can my right hon. Friend tell the House precisely which Departments have taken part in this initiative and what part they have played? Is he satisfied that both the Government and small businesses are benefiting from what is happening?

Mr. Cope: I am satisfied that both Government and small firms benefit from the initiative. It is all about value for money. All Government Departments are playing a part to some extent, but the purchasers which play a particularly big part include the Ministry of Defence, the National Health Service, the Crown Suppliers, HMSO and the PSA as well as others and ourselves.

Mr. Cryer: While wishing purchases to be made from small firms, may I ask the Minister to tell us whether a small firm is defined as one with under 200 employees, as a result of the Bolton committee report, or whether it depends on the EEC definition, which is that a small firm contains under 500 employees? Has this initiative been cleared with the Commission because, with the advent of 1992, will not preferential treatment to United Kingdom small firms be in breach of the treaty of Rome competition rules? Are we at last to take an initiative that is independent of the EEC?

Mr. Cope: No, we do not give small firms favoured treatment in the sense of giving them contracts that we would otherwise give to large firms, except where they give us value for money. In that respect, the EEC has nothing to do with it and we can act entirely independently. For statistical purposes we use the Bolton committee definition. Given his experience in these matters, the hon. Gentleman will know that that is 200 employees in manufacturing firms and that various criteria are used for other types of firms.

Tourist Information Centres

4. **Mr. Gregory:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what information he has concerning the number of tourist information centres which stay open for the winter period; and if he will make a statement.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Employment (Mr. John Lee): Currently, out of a total of 562 tourist information centres in England, 394, or 70 per cent., are open during the winter months.

Mr. Gregory: We must be losing an enormous opportunity by not having more tourist information centres open in the winter months. Does my hon. Friend agree that it is a national scandal that such attractive venues as the Tower of London, which last year attracted about 2·3 million visitors, closes its information centre from autumn to Easter? Will he hold discussions with local authorities so that more tourist information centres are open to disperse visitors throughout the United Kingdom?

Mr. Lee: My hon. Friend is right. We should like more tourist information centres to stay open for longer periods. The majority of those that are open only during the summer are in fairly remote areas. I gather that the Tower of London TIC is located in a temporary hut that is unsuitable for winter use, but discussions on that are taking place between the London tourist board and the London Docklands development corporation.

It is a shade depressing to note that the tourist information centre in York is closed on Sunday mornings.

Mr. Fearn: Does the Minister agree that the success of TICs is due entirely to the tourist boards? Does he further agree that his current review of tourism should not damage in any way the network that those boards have set up?

Mr. Lee: I certainly would not say that the success is due solely to tourist boards, although they have had a considerable influence. As the hon. Gentleman knows, the money for the tourist information centre in Southport, which I opened about a fortnight ago, came from the local authority, English Heritage and the tourist board. It is a partnership.

Invisible Exports

5. **Mr. Butterfill:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what was the total value of Britain's invisible exports in 1987; and what percentage of this sum is attributable to the tourism and leisure industry.

Mr. Lee: In 1987 United Kingdom invisible exports amounted to £80 billion. The tourism account amounted to 8 per cent. of this, or £6·2 billion.

Mr. Butterfill: Does my hon. Friend agree that that creditable figure reflects favourably on the investment by the industry and on the activities of the British Tourist

Authority and the English tourist board? What does the figure represent in terms of tourist numbers, and what effect has it had on employment?

Mr. Lee: Last year was a record year for visitors to this country, with 15·4 million coming here. For the nine months to September the figure is about 2 per cent. up on the same period last year, at 12·5 million. Jobs in tourism and hospitality are increasing at an average rate of 1,000 a week.

Ms. Short: Is the Minister aware that the tourism and leisure industry is one of the worst payers in Britain, yet it is a profitable sector? Is he further aware that 40 per cent. of the work force are paid less than £132 a week, yet he tells us that the minimum protection provided by wages councils will be reduced? How can he justify that? Jobs are no good unless they give people decent incomes and dignity at work. The Minister is encouraging low-paid work, no training and a slum economy. That is the future for Britain.

Mr. Lee: May I say in personal terms that we are sorry that the hon. Lady is not in her customary place. Salaries and overall conditions of employment in tourism and hospitality are improving. Many of the better companies in the industry put huge amounts of money into training. I agree that more emphasis must be placed on training and the overall remuneration package, because staff turnover in the industry is unacceptable. But the position is getting substantially better.

Mr. Harry Greenway: How much did those 15·4 million visitors bring in foreign exchange? Is there a limit to the number of foreign visitors who can be accommodated comfortably in tourist inns?

Mr. Lee: I am sure that we can accommodate substantially more than we do now, and we want the number of tourists to increase. Of the £18 billion a year in total tourist revenue, £8 billion comes from visitors from abroad.

Mr. Strang: What effect will the appreciation of sterling have on invisible exports in general and on tourism in particular?

Mr. Lee: The hon. Gentleman will have to ask the Treasury about invisible exports in general. The balance of payments deficit on the tourism account increased from about £1 billion in September last year to about £1·8 billion in September this year.

Labour Statistics

6. **Mr. Jack:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will make a statement on the current levels of unemployment in the north-west of England.

Mr. Lee: In October 1988 the level of seasonally adjusted unemployment in the north-west region was 307,900, a fall of 61,500 over the last 12 months.

Mr. Jack: I welcome my hon. Friend's excellent answer, but will he confirm that unemployment in Fylde has fallen by 28 per cent. in the past 12 months and that Lancashire as a whole has benefited from falls in unemployment as a result of the Government's policies, which have attracted about £85 million worth of inward investment into the north-west?

Mr. Lee: My hon. Friend is right. He is well aware that the unemployment level in his constituency has fallen by 28 per cent. The unemployment level in Lancashire as a whole has fallen from just over 62,000 in October 1987 to 48,000 in October 1988—a total fall of more than 14,000. Other programmes are designed to bring about an even greater fall, and there are nearly 13,000 participants with training managers under our employment training scheme. The new training and enterprise councils, referred to by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Employment yesterday when he introduced his White Paper, will also have a beneficial effect in the fullness of time.

Mr. Pike: Does the Minister recognise that people in the north-west will be concerned about pay levels and the future of wages councils after the Secretary of State's statement yesterday? We fear that in the north-west that that will mean lower wages. Low pay in the north-west has not solved the unemployment problem so far. Does the Minister accept that jobs in manufacturing are 38 per cent. below the 1979 figure? When are the Government going to do something about that and get us to export more goods than we import?

Mr. Lee: I am sorry that the hon. Gentleman is so churlish as not to draw attention to what has happened to the level of unemployment in his constituency over the past 12 months. The level has fallen by over 1,000, or by no less than 24·49 per cent. He knows how well north-east Lancashire is doing at the moment, because his constituency adjoins mine. His comments are completely incorrect.

Mr. Neil Hamilton: Although the news that my hon. Friend has announced today is good, does he accept that there is a lot more yet to come? Does he also accept that when the unified business rate is introduced, and the existing business rate is abolished, that will be the greatest possible assistance to manufacturing industry in the north-west and should lead to significant reductions in business costs, and therefore to more jobs?

Mr. Lee: My hon. Friend is right. In the north-west the unified business rate will have a beneficial effect on manufacturing industry, and therefore on employment.

Training

7. **Mr. Flannery:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many people who have been on Government training schemes were removed for the duration of their training from the unemployed register since 1979 for each year, respectively, to 1988 and in total.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Employment (Mr. Patrick Nicholls): No such estimates are available.

Mr. Flannery: That is a disgraceful and dodging answer. The Minister should get hold of those figures, because they completely condemn the Government. Is it not true that the Government have used 24 different mathematical methods to get the unemployment figures down? The Government's unemployment figures bear no relationship to reality. However, the figures that I have

asked for would show how many people were being trained—badly—only to keep them off the unemployment list.

Mr. Nicholls: No. The hon. Gentleman is wrong in all three propositions. Clearly figures cannot be available, and are not available, in the form that he requests. If they were, the records would have to show the origins of people on various training schemes and their destinations afterwards.

With regard to the way in which the figures are compiled, the hon. Gentleman should be aware that there have been only seven changes which have affected the unemployment count since 1979. Two of those changes were statistical and five were administrative. Only two led to any difference in compilation. Obviously the hon. Gentleman will not take my word for that. If he cares to check the record, he will find that the previous shadow spokesman for employment made the point on television, when the same accusation was made some little while ago, that if he were in government he would have no intention of changing the base on which the figures were compiled. Obviously he changed his mind by the time that he came to the House, but after all that is politics in the Labour party.

Mr. Paice: Is not training substantially different from unemployment? Unemployment is a total waste of human resources, whereas training seeks to build on human resources and to provide benefits for the future. Apprentices were never included in unemployment statistics, so why should anyone on a training scheme be included?

Mr. Nicholls: My hon. Friend has made his point. The dismal and consistent way in which the Opposition regard these matters is that they believe that employment training is offered simply to massage the unemployment figures. Unemployment figures have decreased anyway because of the strength of the economy. Employment training gives a real opportunity to the unemployed to get back on the right side of the economic fence, but the Opposition have not yet grasped that.

Sir Cyril Smith: Is the Minister satisfied with the attitude of school leavers to training? Is he aware that in parts of the north and midlands—where I have an intimate knowledge of a certain engineering industry; I stress that it is knowledge of a certain engineering industry, not just of a certain engineering company—there is a terrible shortage of suitable applicants for apprenticeships? Would it not be better for the Government to meet their to talk about the possibility of their being encouraged to carry out their own training schemes? Can the Minister persuade his right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Education and Science that there is more to life than computers? My information is that school leavers are interested only in entering the computer industry and are not interested in engineering or manufacturing skills.

Mr. Nicholls: There is a great deal in what the hon. Gentleman says with which I can agree, although I prefer not to follow him in generalising about the attitudes of school leavers. One of the problems for employers now is that there are increasingly fewer school leavers, because of demographic changes. The hon. Gentleman made a fair point about the need for employers to be involved in the training of young people. The proposals announced yesterday by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State, when he spoke about the White Paper on training, will ensure that employers are able to play a proper part in training.

16 to 18-year-old Workers

8. **Mr. Franks:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will make a statement on his plans to remove barriers to employment facing 16 to 18-year-old workers.

Mr. Fowler: The Employment Bill published on 1 December will remove a mass of outdated restrictions, particularly on the hours that under-18s can work in industry and shops. That will make it easier for employers to take on young people and increase the opportunities open to them.

Mr. Franks: I welcome the greater job opportunities that will arise from greater flexibility, but will my right hon. Friend take the opportunity to reaffirm that the greater opportunities will not diminish the necessary restrictions which protect the health and safety of young people?

Mr. Fowler: I certainly confirm that the aim is to increase employment opportunities and flexibility, but we shall retain all the protections that the Health and Safety Commission has advised are still necessary for health and safety reasons, such as restrictions on working with dangerous machinery, lead and hazardous processes. All those protections will be retained. It is the legislation on working hours that will be tackled.

Mr. Eastham: Surely the relaxation of working conditions for young workers will bring about a deterioration in working conditions, the like of which we have not seen since the last war, since when young workers have not had to work night shifts and extended hours. Is the Secretary of State implying that anything goes under the new legislation, other than health and safety protection?

Mr. Fowler: What I am saying is that the law, self-evidently, needs to be modernised. We issued a consultation document which set that out in detail. We seek, for example, to tackle the present position, whereby if a group of 16 to 18-year-olds work in the same factory, they have to start work at the same time, have their tea break at the same time, eat their lunch at the same time and finish work at the same time.

Mr. Nellist: And they should be given the same wages as other workers.

Mr. Fowler: The hon. Gentleman must calm down. That is an absurd proposition and is recognised as such by young people.

Mr. Riddick: Is my right hon. Friend aware that one existing barrier to the employment of 16 to 18-year-olds, and other workers, is the continued existence of the pre-entry closed shop? Is he aware, for example, that my local council, Kirklees, continues to hoodwink new employees into joining a trade union by putting compulsory trade union membership into their contracts of employment, despite the fact that that closed shop

would not stand up in a court of law? Does he agree that that sort of abuse makes it inevitable that he will have to outlaw the pre-entry closed shop?

Mr. Fowler: It is exactly for reasons of that kind that, in the White Paper published yesterday, I made it clear that the Government are to review the operation of the pre-entry closed shop. Clearly, by definition, the pre-entry closed shop acts as a barrier to employment. We shall review it and act on that review.

Mr. Fatchett: Will the Secretary of State explain why this country, unlike any other Western European country, including our major competitors, France and West Germany, wants to abolish protection for young workers? Is it not the case that this Government's ideology and dogma demand that we have a part-time, low-paid, low-trained young work force? Is that the Government's ambition, and is that why they are introducing such measures?

Mr. Fowler: The aim is to try to get young people the job opportunities which I think they want. We are not in any sense abolishing protection for young people. What we are relaxing are the hours of work. I have made it clear that we are retaining all the protection of the Health and Safety Commission and the restrictions, for example, on 16 to 18-year-olds working in gambling, gaming, pubs and such places. Those restrictions have been retained. What we are doing is modernising the law.

Mr. Butler: Does my right hon. Friend agree that a major barrier to the employment of young people is the lack of skills among them? What words does he have for Warrington borough council, which is refusing to participate in employment training because of Left-wing ideology?

Mr. Fowler: That is utterly deplorable. The fact is that at the moment we have about 700,000 vacancies in the economy. Councils which refuse to co-operate with employment training should urgently reconsider their position, because those whom they are affecting are unemployed. I think that the action they are taking is immoral.

Labour Statistics

9. **Mr. Rooker:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment in how many parliamentary constituencies unemployment fell by 40 per cent. or more between August 1984 and August 1988.

Mr. Nicholls: Between August 1984 and August 1988 unemployment fell by 40 per cent. or more in 136 parliamentary constituencies in Great Britain.

I shall arrange for details of these constituencies to be placed in the *Official Report*.

Mr. Rooker: The Minister can save himself the time and trouble, because those figures are already there. They show that, of those 136 constituencies, 130 are constituencies of hon. Members who represent the Conservative party, and six—*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Rooker: ——and six are the constituencies of hon. Members representing the Labour party. When will the constituents of my hon. Friends benefit from what has been the obvious targeting of Government grants, Government decisions, investment and planning appeals and applications, which have clearly brought about such a disproportionate, unfair fall in unemployment between the constituencies of the two major parties in this House? Clearly that has not happened by accident. We want a fair share.

Mr. Nicholls: Unlike so many of his hon. Friends, the hon. Gentleman has a great deal of credit on this side of the House for the usual quality of his contributions. I am afraid that on this occasion he has let himself down sadly. The hon. Gentleman knows that the only targeting that has been done on this matter—I acknowledge it at once—is the extremely skilful way in which the hon. Gentleman has targeted his question. The hon. Gentleman is talking about the reduction in the unemployed, expressed as a percentage of itself. Obviously, if unemployment is low, any reduction in the number of unemployed people would have a correspondingly greater effect in percentage terms. If he considers the fall in unemployment over the past five years and looks at the figures that have been produced in *The Independent*, he will find that, on average, for each Labour constituency the reduction was 1,516, compared with 1,304 on average for each Conservative constituency.

Sir Bernard Braine: Will my hon. Friend confirm that in my constituency of Castle Point the reduction of unemployment in the period mentioned in the question was 52·5 per cent. and that that is clearly a reflection of growing confidence under this Government among employers and of good practices by local authorities?

Mr. Nicholls: My right hon. Friend makes the point exactly. Many ingredients underpin these figures, but if an area has an extrmely supportive Member of Parliament, a local ethic that praises employment and a local authority that supports employment training measures, it is more likely to do better than those that do not. Even on the basis that the hon. Member for Birmingham, Perry Barr (Mr. Rooker) chooses to present his question, there are many Labour constituencies that also have figures of which he would approve.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: Is it not true that many of the firms that have been set up in constituencies in the north-west, certainly in the Workington constituency, are labour-intensive only because of cuts in regional support? Is it not further true that when the Chancellor of the Exchequer finally decides to go into reverse gear and pursue a policy of credit-restriction-induced deflation of the economy, we shall then really be able to measure how successful the Government have been in relation to small firms in areas such as my own?

Mr. Nicholls: I am afraid that the hon. Gentleman has a fine line in economic illiteracy, but it will not do. Even on the basis on which his hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Perry Barr (Mr. Rooker) chooses to compile the figures, we find that in Workington the rate of unemployment has been reduced by 40·1 per cent.

Mr. Rowe: Will my hon. Friend comment on the fact that the Rochester-on-Medway city council has held the rate steady for 12 years, except for two years, when it

reduced it, that unemployment has fallen dramatically and that that is a direct consequence of good housekeeping by a Conservative Administration?

Mr. Nicholls: Again, my hon. Friend has made the point exactly. In his area, employers who are obviously trying to improve their businesses, or employers who are thinking of moving into the area, will find that there is a benign climate. It is a great pity that such a climate is not found more commonly in constituencies that are represented by Opposition Members.

Mr. Meacher: Is the Minister not aware that the unemployment that the Tories created in the early 1980s led to the loss of 2 million full-time jobs, whereas the reduction in unemployment since 1986 has involved almost exclusively part-time jobs? Will he confirm the Government's figures, that in the last two and a half years the number of full-time jobs has risen by only 56,000? Does that not show that the Government's much-trumpeted reduction in unemployment is as unbalanced as it is deceitful?

Mr. Nicholls: No, it does not. It shows that the hon. Gentleman is fixed on the proposition that if he repeats nonsense often enough it becomes the truth. The fall in unemployment during the last 12 months has amounted to 504,000. It is now running at 7·7 per cent. and it has been down for 27 months running. If the hon. Gentleman cares to look at international comparisons he will find— *[Interruption.]* The hon. Gentleman may not have asked for it, but he is going to get it. In terms of international comparisons, this country is doing extremely well. The trouble with the hon. Gentleman is that he is so locked into the past that he thinks the only reputable job is one that is absolutely full time. Patterns of employment in this day and age are far more varied than that.

Following are the details:

Paliamentary constituencies with a fall in unemployment of more than 40 per cent. between August 1984 and August 1988

Parliamentary constituencies	*Unemployed claimants* *August 1984*	*August 1988*	*Change*	*Percentage change*
Wantage	2,391	949	−1,442	−60·3
Horsham	2,180	881	−1,299	−59·6
Henley	2,020	819	−1,201	−59·5
Corby	5,914	2,444	−3,470	−58·7
Basingstoke	3,250	1,369	−1,881	−57·9
Tunbridge Wells	2,519	1,069	−1,450	−57·6
Witney	2,646	1,126	−1,520	−57·5
North West Hampshire	2,361	1,046	−1,315	−55·7
Reading West	3,334	1,496	−1,838	−55·1
North West Surrey	2,356	1,058	−1,298	−55·1
Aylesbury	2,741	1,248	−1,493	−54·5
Reigate	2,023	927	−1,096	−54·2
Chertsey and Walton	2,099	963	−1,136	−54·1
Mole Valley	1,726	796	−930	−53·9
West Hertfordshire	3,594	1,670	−1,924	−53·5
Stevenage	4,059	1,896	−2,163	−53·3
Saffron Walden	2,382	1,116	−1,266	−53·2
Gillingham	5,479	2,568	−2,911	−53·1
Mid Sussex	1,991	941	−1,050	−52·7
Newbury	2,650	1,257	−1,393	−52·6
Castle Point	3,430	1,630	−1,800	−52·5
Wealden	1,907	908	−999	−52·4
South West Bedfordshire	3,766	1,795	−1,971	−52·3
Medway	5,264	2,517	−2,747	−52·2
Guildford	2,097	1,008	−1,089	−51·9
Spelthorne	2,328	1,121	−1,207	−51·9
Brentwood and Ongar	2,438	1,175	−1,263	−51·8
Braintree	3,283	1,583	−1,700	−51·8
South West Surrey	1,661	804	−857	−51·6
Crawley	2,485	1,207	−1,278	−51·4
Chichester	2,278	1,107	−1,171	−51·4
Reading East	3,923	1,908	−2,015	−51·4
East Surrey	1,625	791	−834	−51·3
Maidstone	3,525	1,731	−1,794	−50·9
Tonbridge and Malling	2,678	1,318	−1,360	−50·8
Mid Kent	4,837	2,391	−2,446	−50·6
Esher	1,563	774	−789	−50·5
Chesham and Amersham	1,742	868	−874	−50·2
Rochford	2,828	1,413	−1,415	−50·0
Billericay	3,882	1,941	−1,941	−50·0
Oxford West and Abingdon	3,152	1,580	−1,572	−49·9
North Hertfordshire	3,573	1,792	−1,781	−49·9
Milton Keynes	6,750	3,423	−3,327	−49·3
Southend West	3,590	1,823	−1,767	−49·2
South West Hertfordshire	2,530	1,285	−1,245	49·2
Woking	2,387	1,213	−1,174	−49·2
Windsor and Maidenhead	2,612	1,330	−1,282	−49·1
Welwyn Hatfield	3,123	1,595	−1,528	−48·9
Banbury	3,263	1,668	−1,595	−48·9
Sevenoaks	2,416	1,241	−1,175	−48·6
Basildon	6,712	3,453	−3,259	−48·6
Wokingham	1,970	1,025	−945	48·0

Parliamentary constituencies	Unemployed claimants August 1984	August 1988	Change	Percentage change
Harlow	4,426	2,304	−2,122	−47·9
East Berkshire	3,196	1,666	−1,530	−47·9
South Colchester and Maldon	4,240	2,214	−2,026	−47·8
Hornchurch	3,047	1,592	−1,455	−47·8
Aldershot	2,971	1,571	−1,400	−47·1
Hertford and Stortford	2,093	1,111	−982	−46·9
Christchurch	2,254	1,197	−1,057	−46·9
Kettering	3,308	1,759	−1,549	−46·8
Arundel	2,786	1,488	−1,298	−46·6
Dagenham	4,311	2,305	−2,006	−46·5
Buckingham	2,561	1,375	−1,186	−46·3
Surbiton	1,554	840	−714	−46·0
Wycombe	2,932	1,586	−1,346	−45·9
Mid Norfolk	2,989	1,622	−1,367	−45·7
Ruislip-Norwood	1,779	966	−813	−45·7
Poole	3,702	2,011	−1,691	−45·7
Northampton North	4,789	2,609	−2,180	−45·5
South East Cambridgeshire	1,892	1,032	−860	−45·5
Harborough	2,566	1,404	−1,162	−45·3
West Gloucestershire	4,609	2,531	−2,078	−45·1
Slough	4,629	2,544	−2,085	−45·0
North Dorset	2,181	1,199	−982	−45·0
North Bedfordshire	4,573	2,515	−2,058	−45·0
Huntingdon	3,511	1,938	−1,573	−44·8
Southend East	4,675	2,586	−2,089	−44·7
Upminster	3,029	1,678	−1,351	−44·6
Hastings and Rye	4,259	2,361	−1,898	−44·6
St. Albans	2,462	1,368	−1,094	−44·4
Stratford-on-Avon	3,314	1,844	−1,470	−44·4
Mid Bedfordshire	2,756	1,536	−1,220	−44·3
Ludlow	3,722	2,076	−1,646	−44·2
Bosworth	3,557	1,987	−1,570	−44·1
South West Cambridgeshire	2,500	1,397	−1,103	−44·1
Beaconsfield	1,700	951	−749	−44·1
Cirencester and Tewkesbury	2,976	1,666	−1,310	−44·0
Wimbledon	2,894	1,622	−1,272	−44·0
Bournemouth East	4,951	2,784	−2,167	−43·8
Epsom and Ewell	1,901	1,071	−830	−43·7
South Suffolk	3,281	1,850	−1,431	−43·6
Bournemouth West	3,896	2,197	−1,699	−43·6
Stamford and Spalding	3,325	1,878	−1,447	−43·5
Oxford East	4,025	2,282	−1,743	−43·3
Blaby	2,915	1,653	−1,262	−43·3
North Colchester	4,129	2,345	−1,784	−43·2
Uxbridge	2,625	1,494	−1,131	−43·1
Leominster	3,192	1,817	−1,375	−43·1
Thurrock	5,822	3,343	−2,479	−42·6
Carshalton and Wallington	2,899	1,665	−1,234	−42·6
The City of London and West	5,423	3,120	−2,303	−42·5
Worcester	5,030	2,894	−2,136	−42·5
Wellingborough	4,111	2,369	−1,742	−42·4
Worthing	2,539	1,469	−1,070	−42·1
Hertsmere	2,595	1,502	−1,093	−42·1
Croydon Central	3,609	2,091	−1,518	−42·1
Devizes	3,310	1,921	−1,389	−42·0
Rutland and Melton	3,473	2,016	−1,457	−42·0
Central Suffolk	3,097	1,798	−1,299	−41·9
Salisbury	3,208	1,865	−1,343	−41·9
Cambridge	3,554	2,067	−1,487	−41·8
Winchester	2,057	1,197	−860	−41·8
Daventry	2,713	1,579	−1,134	−41·8
Sutton and Cheam	2,029	1,183	−846	−41·7
Aberavon	4,762	2,780	−1,982	−41·6
Cheadle	2,921	1,707	−1,214	−41·6
Romford	2,776	1,623	−1,153	−41·5
Shoreham	2,053	1,202	−851	−41·5
Suffolk Coastal	2,452	1,437	−1,015	−41·4
Staffordshire Moorlands	3,608	2,116	−1,492	−41·4
South West Norfolk	3,844	2,259	−1,585	−41·2
Ashford	3,396	1,996	−1,400	−41·2
Chelmsford	3,035	1,786	−1,249	−41·2
North Luton	4,332	2,558	−1,774	−41·0
Watford	3,235	1,911	−1,324	−40·9
Croydon South	2,023	1,197	−826	−40·8
Congleton	3,322	1,968	−1,354	−40·8
Stroud	3,743	2,223	−1,520	−40·6

Parliamentary constituencies	Unemployed claimants August 1984	August 1988	Change	Percentage change
Havant	4,918	2,928	−1,990	−40·5
Bexhill and Battle	1,774	1,057	−717	−40·4
The Wrekin	9,589	5,724	−3,865	−40·3
Gravesham	4,984	2,976	−2,008	−40·3
Wyre Forest	5,135	3,067	−2,068	−40·3
Alyn and Deeside	4,694	2,811	−1,883	−40·1
East Hampshire	2,419	1,449	−970	−40·1
Bishop Auckland	7,166	4,299	−2,867	−40·0

Employment Service

10. **Mr. Ian Bruce:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will make a statement on the development of the employment service.

Mr. Fowler: In the six months since April the employment service placed over 75,000 unemployed people in jobs, including over 120,000 long-term unemployed. It has also introduced new procedures, such as more effective interviews with those making new claims for benefit. Since last October, when we established the employment service, unemployment has fallen by 504,000 overall, with particularly steep falls in long-term unemployment.

Mr. Bruce: I thank my right hon. Friend for his wonderful reply. I hope that he will express the House's appreciation of the work done by civil servants in the Department. I wonder whether he is progressing well with obtaining agency status for the employment service? Are there plans for the re-amalgamation of the benefit service and the employment service, as is happening in Weymouth at the moment? Are there also plans to amalgamate the Department of Social Security offices and possibly, at long last, to transfer many of these services to the private sector?

Mr. Fowler: The plan on which we are working is aimed at improving even further the management effectiveness of the employment service. To that effect, we are considering creating one of the new agencies.

Mr. Nellist: How will the development of the employment service be aided by the attacks on the rights of 16 to 18-year-old workers? Having seen the abolition of the wages councils two years ago reduce the level of wages for that group, but not produce the 50,000 to 100,000 new jobs that the Government promised in July 1985, is not the single purpose of the provisions announced by the Secretary of State to increase the exploitation of school leavers, which will inevitably lead to an increase in injuries and deaths? If the Secretary of State is really concerned —*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman is asking many questions at great length.

Mr. Nellist: Why has the Secretary of State never signed the Employment of Children Act 1973?

Mr. Fowler: The purpose of our policies and of what we announced yesterday is to increase the employment prospects of young people. We want to reduce unemployment. I should have thought that the hon. Gentleman would welcome the fact that between 1986 and this year unemployment for 16 to 19-year-olds has fallen by no less than 62 per cent. That is the record of the Government.

Enterprise Allowance Scheme

11. **Mr. Burt:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many people are currently participating in the enterprise allowance scheme; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Cope: At the end of October, 91,856 people were participating on the enterprise allowance scheme.

Mr. Burt: Is my right hon. Friend aware that there are 400 people on the scheme in Bury and that that is a tribute to their initiative and enterprise and to the skills of those who are advising them, to whom we should pay tribute? How many people are on the scheme throughout the north-west, and what is the success rate for the new businesses so created?

Mr. Cope: About 14,000 people are on the enterprise allowance scheme in the north-west region. The success rate can be measured in terms of jobs. For every 100 people who start a business on the enterprise allowance scheme, about 120 people are working for those firms three years later.

Mr. Wigley: Does the Minister accept that many new enterprises will expect to make a loss not only during their first year but may make a loss well into their second year? In those circumstances, is there not a good case for enterprise allowance to be allowable at say 50 per cent. of the first year rate, so as to safeguard against that and to help people setting up enterprises who fear such circumstances?

Mr. Cope: We can certainly consider that suggestion. However, the enterprise allowance is intended, not to subsidise new firms against losses but to replace the benefit of those who are on unemployment benefit when they start the business.

Training

12. **Mr. Patnick:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he has any plans to meet the general secretary of the Trades Union Congress to discuss the employment training scheme.

25. **Mr. Janman:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he has any plans to meet the general secretary of The transport and General Workers Union to discuss the employment training scheme; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Fowler: I have not received any such request but if the recent decision by the Trades Union Congress general council leads to further positive co-operation by individual trade unions, that is to be welcomed.

Mr. Patnick: Does my right hon. Friend agree with the recent letter by the president of the Confederation of British Industry, published in the *Financial Times*, which says that skill shortages cause high wages and inflation? Will he press that upon the general secretary of the TUC and ensure that he supports employment training, which will make Britain more competitive, bring down inflation and reduce skill shortages?

Mr. Fowler: I entirely accept what my hon. Friend says. Of course, the employment training programme is taking place in the context of a very high number of vacancies in the economy. That is why we want the support of local authorities and trade unions for that programme, which can bring down unemployment further.

Mr. Janman: Does my right hon. Friend agree that the current general secretary of the Transport and General Workers Union is the most destructive, irresponsible and Luddite general secretary that it has had the misfortune to have for many decades? What advice can my right hon. Friend give as to how the Transport and General Workers Union can make a more positive contribution to solving the current skill shortage, which is resulting in bricklayers earning £175 a day in docklands?

Mr. Fowler: I very much hope that the Transport and General Workers Union will change its views on the employment training programme. Up to now, on Dundee and on employment training, the Transport and General Workers Union has turned its back on the interests of unemployed people in Britain. The most deplorable thing is that that has never been condemned by the right hon. Gentleman the Leader of the Opposition.

PRIME MINISTER

Engagements

Q1. **Mr. Bradley:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 6 December.

The Prime Minister (Mrs. Margaret Thatcher): This morning I had meetings with ministerial colleagues and others. In addition to my duties in the House I shall be having further meetings later today, including one with the Prime Minister of Iceland. This evening I hope to have an audience of Her Majesty The Queen.

Mr. Bradley: In the light of the evidence published today by Barnardo's that children leaving local authority care face abject poverty because of the cuts in their benefits, what advice would the Prime Minister give to a 16-year-old living in my constituency who is trying to survive independently on less than £20 a week? In this season of good will, will the Prime Minister support the introduction of a special benefit allowance for teenagers leaving local authority care, as recommended by Barnardo's?

The Prime Minister: We have only just received the report and the Secretary of State for Social Security will study it carefully. Ministers have given assurances that the reformed benefit will be monitored in detail. This monitoring will include all income support recipients, including the young people covered by the report. Once that exercise has been completed we shall consider what, if anything, needs to be done. About 80 per cent. of 16 to 18-year-olds live with a family and they will have seen a real increase in their benefit, so we are talking about a small minority of young people who are living independently. It must be emphasised that they receive maximum help with rent and rates.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: Is my right hon. Friend aware that the accidental discharge of 100 tonnes of crude oil into Milford Haven in my constituency has seriously polluted the area? Will she join me in congratulating the staff of local agencies and volunteers who have been tackling the disaster? Will she arrange for the Department of Transport to investigate the matter?

The Prime Minister: I understand that the harbour authority, Texaco and the local authorities are working together effectively to deal with the problem. The situation is being closely monitored by the Department of Transport and an officer of that Department's marine pollution control unit is at the Haven today, carrying out an on-site survey. The district inspector of fisheries is also keeping a close watch on the effect on fisheries, particularly fish farms. I gladly join my hon. Friend in thanking the staff of local agencies and the volunteers for tackling this disaster.

Mr. Kinnock: On another subject affecting young people, has the Prime Minister seen the official figures showing that the Government have allowed teacher shortages of 20 per cent. in mathematics, 17 per cent. in physics and 23 per cent. in technology, with worse to come in future? Does she think that this is the way to prepare Britain's young people for the economic and social challenges of the 1990s?

The Prime Minister: We shall have enough secondary teachers overall, but we shall need more teachers in some subjects, including technology, science subjects and modern languages and fewer in some other subjects. The Government plan to build on our successful campaign to recruit teachers in the shortage subjects. They can do that because of the change of structure in teachers' pay to ensure that schools have the teachers that they need to deliver the national curriculum.

Mr. Kinnock: As it is obvious, even from the Department of Education and Science figures, that shortages will remain, and will intensify in the 1990s, is it not clear that, rather than taking effective action to make up shortages, the Government are trying to shift the curriculum so that fewer young people will have the opportunity to study science? Would the Prime Minister put up with that for her own children?

The Prime Minister: Because of the changing structure of teachers' pay, we are able to offer teachers in shortage subjects more than we would otherwise have done. We are way ahead with the problem. On the science curriculum, it is possible that children can take the double curriculum, or we have been asked if they could take the single one. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Education and Science is looking at that.

Mr. Maxwell-Hyslop: Is my right hon. Friend aware of the devastation caused to the livelihoods of many people in the poultry industry by the reckless and uninformed

statement by a junior Minister with an uncontrollable tongue and an insatiable desire for self-advertisement? As my right hon. Friend is responsible for the composition of her Government, what action does she intend to take about it?

The Prime Minister: I understand my hon. Friend's concern, but the answer to his question is no, Sir. I read very carefully the statements by the chief medical officer, first, on 21 November and, secondly, on 5 December. Having read them carefully, I decided to have scrambled egg on toast for lunch, and I enjoyed it.

Q2. **Ms. Walley:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 6 December.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Lady to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Ms. Walley: In the course of her busy day, will the Prime Minister find time to meet the nurses who have come to lobby Parliament today and who are concerned about the long-term future of the National Health Service? Does she agree that nurses are being downgraded? Will she take the initiative to comply with their request for binding independent arbitration within the National Health Service?

The Prime Minister: No. It is under the Labour Government that nurses were downgraded, and downgraded very much indeed. They were not merely downgraded, but their pay was severely cut. It is under this Government that they have been upgraded, and it is under this Government that they have had a 46 per cent. increase in real pay, due to the excellent record of the Royal College of Nursing in always putting the patient first.

Mr. Dunn: Is my right hon. Friend aware that her comment in the House on 1 November that we do not have the same need for a Channel tunnel fast rail link will bring much comfort to many thousands of Kentish men and women who oppose the four options as proposed by British Rail? If my right hon. Friend is so against it, and so am I, why are we proceeding with that ghastly and unnecessary scheme?

The Prime Minister: Those comments caused joy in some areas and less joy in others. British Rail is considering taking a long-term view, but there are no immediate plans for that development.

3. **Mr. Matthew Taylor:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 6 December.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Taylor: Is the Prime Minister aware that Torbay council is presently engaged in selling off its entire housing stock, despite a petition signed by more than half its tenants, objecting to the plan and calling on the House to ask the Secretary of State not to allow the sales to go ahead? Will she offer any advice and comfort to those tenants to the effect that their wishes will be respected?

The Prime Minister: I believe that that proposal is at present before my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment, who will consider all matters before making a decision.

Q4. **Mr. Baldry:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 6 December.

The Prime Minister: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Baldry: Will not the reeds rustle at Runnymede if we as a House do not take every action to uphold the rule of law and defeat terrorism? To that end, will my hon. Friend ensure that *Hansard* is more widely available so that the whole nation can see the names of those Members who last night voted against the declaration against terrorism and who tonight may vote against the Prevention of Terrorism (Temporary Provisions) Bill? By their actions do they not unwittingly assist the IRA and give comfort to terrorists?

The Prime Minister: I recognise my hon. Friend's quotation from Kipling and I agree with him that people will believe that everyone is serious about fighting terrorism only when the Opposition Benches join this side in voting for the Prevention of Terrorism (Temporary Provisions) Bill.

Mr. Wilson: Does the Prime Minister accept that her reply to the question about the Barnardo report is hypocritical and unconvincing? Far from being a novelty of information to her, the precise consequences wrapped up in that report were inevitable as a result of the decision by her Government to withdraw all benefit from 16 and 17-year-olds. Does she accept that the "guarantee" of YTS places, on which the withdrawal of all benefits to 16 and 17-year olds was based, was and is a lie? *[Interruption.]* I am quoting from the press release issued by the Department of Employment, which used the word "guarantee". On the basis of that lie in the Department of Employment press release, every penny of legal income has been removed from at least 20,000 young people. Does the Prime Minister accept personal, moral responsibility for the fate of those 20,000 youngsters?

The Prime Minister: The YTS guarantee is being met *[Interruption.]* There are many more YTS places than young people applying for them in all regions. On 31 October, the latest figure available, there were 120,000 unfilled YTS places. Those not capable of YTS are entitled to income support at all times. Others guaranteed an offer of a YTS place if living away from parents after leaving care will be entitled to income support for a short period while awaiting a YTS offer. If living in board-and-lodging accommodation or a hostel they will normally be entitled to income support while on YTS.

Q6. **Mr. Knapman:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 6 December.

The Prime Minister: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Knapman: In the course of her busy day, will my right hon. Friend consider a recent report that appeared in *Pravda* and was reprinted this morning in the *Financial Times*, which states that over the past nine years my right hon. Friend has lifted the country out of its depressed state, privatised ailing industries and sacked incompetent people? Does she agree that the journalists of *Pravda* are more likely to grasp reality than Members of the Opposition parties in this House?

The Prime Minister: I am grateful to my hon. Friend. All round the world Socialists are abandoning their dogma because they know that it does not work and brings neither prosperity nor dignity. The only Socialist party that is to the far Left of the Communist party is the one that sits opposite.

Mrs. Margaret Ewing: Has the Prime Minister today had an opportunity to look at the opinion polls in Scotland and to consider their implications? Against that background, can she tell us at what stage, either in the percentage recorded in opinion polls, votes cast at a general election or seats lost at a general election, she will decide that she has no legitimacy whatever to implement her policies in Scotland?

The Prime Minister: I note, as I have noted before, that the people of Scotland are doing far better under this Government than under any previous Government and we shall continue with the same policies. I hope that most of us in the House still believe in the United Kingdom, and it is the majority of the United Kingdom that forms the Government. I also point out, as I have done before, that there have been times when the Labour party has not had a majority in England, but because it has in the United Kingdom we have abided by that result.

Q7. **Miss Emma Nicholson:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 6 December.

The Prime Minister: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Miss Nicholson: Has my right hon. Friend had time to note the *Western Morning News* report of yesterday that the Royal College of Nursing—[HON. MEMBERS: "Reading."]—is now recruiting at five times its normal membership rate and it is not in the lobby today? Does my right hon. Friend agree that that reflects the RCN's regrading policy of using the appeals procedure in cases of dispute rather than working to grade, which can harm patient care?

The Prime Minister: Yes, the appeals procedure is there should there be any dispute, and it should be used. I entirely agree with my hon. Friend that we owe much to the Royal College of Nursing. It was the devotion of its members to patients and the fact that they have never gone on strike that led us to set up a pay review body. It is due to the nurses' devotion that they now have a bigger pay award than they have ever had before. I am delighted to hear that the Royal College of Nursing is fast recruiting people from other unions.

European Council (Rhodes)

3.31 pm

The Prime Minister (Mrs. Margaret Thatcher): With permission, Mr. Speaker, I shall make a statement about the European Council in Rhodes on 2-3 December, which I attended with my right hon. and learned Friend the Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary.

The Council's detailed conclusions and the separate statements which it issued have been placed in the Library of the House.

First, the Council took note of the Commission's progress report on the single market, which is due to be completed by 1992. Approximately half of the measures required are now agreed. The priorities for the next stage will include banking and financial services and public procurement, which are of particular interest to the United Kingdom.

I made clear that we do not regard Community decisions on tax rates as necessary to complete the single market. There is, I think, a growing recognition of the bureaucratic and other difficulties which the Commission's proposals on indirect taxation raise.

As regards what is called the social dimension, it is also widely recognised that the best way to meet social needs and to advance the living standards of all the people is through the extra economic growth which the single market will generate.

The second main subject was the environment. The Council issued a declaration which draws attention in particular to the need for international action to deal with damage to the ozone layer and with the greenhouse effect. The United Kingdom is of course convening a conference in London in March on the depletion of the ozone layer.

Thirdly, we discussed the Community's role in the world. The declaration that we issued helpfully underlines that the Community will not close in on itself after 1992 but will keep open its markets and encourage others to do likewise. That is a good message for the mid-term meeting of the GATT Uruguay round which is taking place in Montreal.

In political co-operation we discussed the middle east and confirmed the cautious welcome which Foreign Ministers had given in their statements of 21 and 30 November to the outcome of the Palestine National Council meeting in Algiers. It would not be right to go further than that until the PLO has unequivocally recognised Israel's right to a secure existence and renounced violence.

I also used the opportunity of bilateral meetings with the Prime Ministers of Belgium and the Republic of Ireland to make clear the extent to which people in Britain felt let down by the Belgian Government's treatment of our recent extradition request and the delay by the Irish authorities in backing our warrants.

In its conclusions, the European Council recognised the need for co-operation between Governments to combat terrorism, and we are thankful for the co-operation that we receive from most of them.

I am grateful to the Greek Prime Minister, Mr. Papandreou, for chairing the Council despite his ill-health. I am sure that the House will wish him a full recovery.

The Council was an occasion for Heads of Government to take stock of European Community and wider world issues. Its principal result was to give fresh impetus to completion of the single market by 1992. That remains Britain's current priority in the Community. We can therefore be well satisfied with the outcome.

Mr. Neil Kinnock (Islwyn): I am grateful to the Prime Minister for her statement. It is obvious to everyone that the formal proceedings of the European Council in Rhodes made it something of a "wait and see" summit. However, will the Prime Minister confirm that there will not be any concessions on the VAT zero rating of food and other essentials, or on British border controls to combat terrorism and crime? Will the right hon. Lady resist any proposals that would put British producers at a disadvantage in securing public procurement orders?

In anticipation of the recommendations of the Delors committee on economic and monetary union—which will report to the next summit, the Madrid summit—what measures will the Prime Minister propose to inhibit destabilising short-term capital movements in the single market? On that subject, will she be taking the advice of her right hon. Friend the Chancellor or that of Sir Alan Walters?

For reasons that will be obvious to the House, the European Council summit last weekend will be remembered not so much as the Rhodes summit but as the Ryan summit. It appears clear to many of us that the Belgian Cabinet should have accepted the counsel of Belgian judges and should have allowed the extradition of Mr. Ryan to Britain. However, it is also clear that, if the confusion began with the political evasion by the Belgian Cabinet, it was turned into chaos last week by the prejudicial tantrums of the British Prime Minister.

To ensure that there is no hiding place for suspected terrorists in these isles, will the Prime Minister take what opportunities still exist for bringing the suspect, Patrick Ryan, to face charges? Will the Government use the proven instrument of the Criminal Law Jurisdiction Act to take action on the allegations of handling explosives and unauthorised possession of explosives? Will the right hon. Lady, as reported in column 575 of *Hansard* for 29 November, now takes her own advice, and back up her speeches and statements with "appropriate deeds" instead of indulging in damaging histrionics?

The Prime Minister: A value added tax or any other tax measure which the Community may attempt to impose cannot be adopted except by unanimous vote of all the members. We have made our position clear both on that and on zero rating on several occasions, and I confirm what has been said previously.

We have made it clear that, until there are other effective ways of stopping terrorists, of apprehending criminals, of dealing with those carrying drugs and of dealing with immigrants, some border controls simply must remain. Quite a number of countries are anxious to get rid of them, which one understands. They would like people to be able to travel from one side of Europe to another. However, it is vital that we have effective measures for those groups of people whom I have identified. So far there is no effective alternative. In some countries, people must carry identity cards and produce them when asked on any occasion. That is not the case throughout the Community, and it would give offence to a number of people if it were.

Public procurement orders are very much at the top of the agenda, because we feel that we do not get a fair whack

of business when applying for procurement in other countries, which is why we are anxious to have the appropriate directives.

I shall wait until the Delors committee reports, but, on the question of what the right hon. Gentleman calls destabilising short-term capital movements, I point out that there is already freedom of capital movement between countries such as the United Kingdom, the Federal Republic of Germany, Holland, Denmark and Luxembourg, and that has not proved to be destabilising for any of us, as we are always telling those who, in fact, want to introduce equal tax on capital movements. That is the view which we shall continue to take.

The facts about Belgium spoke for themselves. That was the trouble, the facts did speak for themselves. When we made those facts perfectly clear, I believe that most people who really believe in fighting terrorism were on our side.

We were asking the Republic of Ireland to back the warrants which were sent over so that Ryan was taken into custody while the application for extradition—which takes much longer—was fully and properly considered.

With regard to the Criminal Law Jurisdiction Act, which enables people to have extra-territorial jurisdiction, I am advised that only two of the four charges against Ryan could be heard under that Act. Therefore, it does not seem very relevant.

Sir Ian Gilmour (Chesham and Amersham): During her visit to Washington, my right hon. Friend was reported to have urged the American Government to build on the Palestine National Council's statement. Her remarks this afternoon seem, instead, to suggest that she wants further action from Mr. Arafat and the Palestine Liberation Organisation. Will my right hon. Friend clarify the Government's attitude?

The Prime Minister: While in Washington I said, having looked carefully at the comuniqué but not having done all the detailed work that I have since carried out, that it seemed to me that what the PLO had said about United Nations resolutions 242 and 338 was a distinct move forward and that we should encourage such moves forward. My right hon. Friend knows that many other parts of the communiqué are very much less welcome and which we could not possibly accept.

As for dealing with the PLO in this country, we have always made it clear that we believe that three conditions should be satisfied before senior Ministers discuss matters with that organisation. One concerns United Nations resolutions 242 and 338, the second is that the PLO should recognise Israel's right to exist, and the third is that it should renounce violence. Those conditions were laid down some years ago, and we have not departed from them.

Mr. David Steel (Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale): There will be some concern at the Prime Minister's choice of phrase in her statement about

"what is called the social dimension"

although we are not surprised at that coming from somebody who does not believe that there is any such thing as society. Does she agree that the European Community accepts that the social dimension of the Community is important and that not all the member states share her belief in the total beneficence of market forces? Will she accept that people outside the south-east of England will be looking to her to bat for Britain, especially in Scotland, and to see that we get a reasonable share of the regional and social funds of the Community?

The Prime Minister: I did refer to

"what is called the social dimension",

but it is called by many, many strange names, including social space.

Mr. George Foulkes (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley): What does the Prime Minister call it?

The Prime Minister: Social affairs, which is what we would normally call it in this country. Under the heading come such things as employment and training and measures to help with unemployment. Unemployment is rapidly going down in this country, particularly among the long-term unemployed. Some come under the heading of worker participation. We say that the best worker participation is wider share ownership.

Mr. Hugh Dykes (Harrow, East): Does my right hon. Friend agree that this has been an extremely successful summit—*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman is asking a question of the Prime Minister, not of others below the Gangway.

Mr. Dykes: The summit has been a success, notwithstanding that, unfortunately, it had to deal with extraneous matters. How confident is my right hon. Friend about the 285 Commission measures for the single market? How many will be agreed at the end of the Spanish presidency in a year's time, and how many by 1992?

The Prime Minister: As I have said, we have got on well with them so far, but there is not the slightest shadow of doubt that as we come closer to 1992 the more difficult ones will come. They are difficult because there are genuine disagreements and some of the measures will undoubtedly not be passed. That is exactly what we would wish. We do not accept that, for example, the Commission needs to impose tax measures on people merely to complete the single market. The single market can be completed without that.

Mr. Peter Shore (Bethnal Green and Stepney): The House will welcome what the Prime Minister said about not harmonising indirect taxes and also what she had to say about maintaining border controls against terrorists, drug smugglers and the like. If that is the British Government's attitude, and if it was properly communicated at Rhodes, as I am sure it was, why is it that the Rhodes communiqué, the presidential communiqué, speaks of irreversible progress towards a single European internal market without frontiers by 1992?

The Prime Minister: I think that the progress that we have achieved makes the single market irreversible—*[Interruption.]* It is not a phrase that I like, but it was used in the Single European Act that passed through this House.

We need border controls. It is not a Community without borders, and nor can it possibly be. We need to reduce the number of controls on the borders for travellers and for those delivering goods, but there must still be controls. Our international border—apart from the Republic of Ireland—is the same as our internal border.

Mr. Nicholas Budgen (Wolverhampton, South-West): After my right hon. Friend's justified anger and indignation about the Ryan case, did she calmly reflect that it was not an isolated case, but one that reflected the fundamental differences of view and approach between the people of the United Kindom and the people of the Republic of Ireland on the issue of Northern Ireland? Did she not calmly go on to reflect that no useful purpose would be achieved by the continuation of the Anglo-Irish Agreement?

The Prime Minister: It is clear that the present arrangements for extradition between the United Kingdom and the Republic of Ireland are not working well and that attention must be given to that. In the case in question, we were well aware that, all of a sudden, the Republic of Ireland had Mr. Ryan returned to it without warning. We were asking not for immediate extradition, but for a warrant for his arrest to be put into effect so that a due and proper decision could be taken on extradition in the usual way.

The Anglo-Irish Agreement is in place and we are currently reviewing the way in which it works. We shall consider the extradition aspect and consult with the relevant parties. I believe that the agreement should continue.

Mr. James Molyneaux (Lagan Valley): Can the right hon. Lady confirm that during the discussions she adhered to her attitude to the Europe of the future as set out in her Bruges speech, which had widespread support throughout the United Kingdom?

The Prime Minister: I confirm my support for the attitudes and approaches set out in the Bruges speech, which are supported by many other people, including many on the mainland of Europe.

Mr. David Curry (Skipton and Ripon): Does my right hon. Friend agree that the declaration renouncing protectionism is extremely important and that it comes at an opportune moment given the current GATT talks in Montreal? Did my right hon. Friend take the opportunity at Rhodes to point out that the Community has an excellent chance during those talks to translate its fine words into positive action?

The Prime Minister: Yes. In view of the apprehension of many countries outside the Community about the effect of 1992, we thought it vital to make it clear that, although we were taking away some of the internal controls on movement and trade, we were not putting up barriers around the Community. The original purpose of the treaty of Rome was to take away some of the internal barriers to trade as an example to others to do the same. I agree that the GATT talks present a great opportunity, and I hope that they will make progress. However, we must still tackle the fundamental agricultural problems.

Mr. Nigel Spearing (Newham, South): Are there not two interpretations of the single internal market? The first, which the Prime Minister favours, is little more than a Customs union and the second, which is favoured by others, is political and economic union and the construction of detailed legislation to give flat-field competition throughout the EEC whenever there is any commercial activity. Is it not true that the prerogative for such legislation lies entirely with the Commission, not with Ministers? Is it not also true that any decision on whether it is permissible under the treaty of Rome and, if so, whether it is subject to majority decision will be made by the European Court?

The Prime Minister: The hon. Gentleman will be the first to know that there are certain measures, of which taxation is one and immigration another, on which unanimous decisions are required. So we are particularly protective about those. Others are done by majority decision, and that is in the interests of this country, because some of the things that we want to do would otherwise be blocked by a few other members in the Community.

We have two interests: we need unanimity in some matters; in others, we want majority voting. The Commission does not always make it clear that the measures that come before the national Parliaments must be scrutinised by those Parliaments. We should make that abundantly clear to all our industries that have a particular interest in any directive that may come forward.

Sir Peter Hordern (Horsham): With regard to co-operation between the police and the security forces of different European Community countries on terrorism, drugs and fraud, would it not be a good idea if there were a European Community bureau of investigation within which all the efforts to combat terrorism and other offences could be closely co-ordinated? Has that been considered? Might it be considered in future?

The Prime Minister: As my hon. Friend knows, the Home Office Ministers meet regularly, and I think they are steadily working towards much closer co-operation between police forces—and between Ministers. I am not quite certain that what my hon. Friend wants would necessarily be the right solution, but I am certain that there is increasing co-operation. In the Belgian case, there was excellent co-operation between the police and security forces of both countries. There was no difficulty at that level.

Mr. John Hume (Foyle): Following the question asked by the Leader of the Opposition and the events of the past week, particularly the Prime Minister's conversations with the Prime Ministers of Belgium and Ireland, has the right hon. Lady given any further consideration to the question I asked her on 30 June? If she wants to achieve her objective of ensuring that there is no hiding place anywhere in these islands for people who commit horrific crimes—an objective shared by all parties in this House and in the Irish Parliament—that might be better achieved by making greater use of the Criminal Law Jurisdiction Act, an Act which is much less emotive and much more efficient and which was brought in by the Government of which the right hon. Lady is a member on the recommendation of an eminent commission of lawyers from both countries. That would also speedily build up the mutual trust that is necessary between both Governments to deal with problems of this nature.

The Prime Minister: Sometimes that Act can be used. It is no substitute for effective proceedings on extradition. In the case that we are now considering, I am advised that only two of the four charges would be applicable under the Act.

Mr. James Kilfedder (North Down): Is the Prime Minister aware that she spoke eloquently on behalf of the majority of the people of the United Kingdom when she made her statement at the summit about terrorism and extradition? Do not the Ryan case and other incidents reveal the need for the Government to establish an information unit that could convey to the Common Market countries and other countries the truth about the IRA, which is that its members are out to murder innocent people throughout the United Kingdom?

The Prime Minister: The hon. Gentleman has a point. Too few people realise that all the people in Northern Ireland can vote in a similar way to send hon. Members to this House, and that they all have the same civil liberties. In so far as there is any remaining discrimination, we are attempting to put that right in legislation going through the House this Session. So the people of Northern Ireland have all the apparatus of democracy and it is those who dislike the result of the ballot box who turn to bombing and maiming to achieve what they want. We must get the message across that they must never succeed.

Mr. Chris Mullin (Sunderland, South): Instead of lecturing the Prime Ministers of Belgium and Ireland, would not the Prime Minister be better employed in devising a way for the Government to persuade the judges to own up to the serious mistakes made in the cases of Guildford, Woolwich and Birmingham and, in so doing, restore international confidence in British justice?

The Prime Minister: In no way do I accept what the hon. Gentleman has said, nor, I think, would most Conservative Members. I believe in fighting terrorism in every way, including supporting the Prevention of Terrorism (Temporary Provisions) Act 1984.

Mr. John Redwood (Wokingham): While welcoming the progress that my right hon. Friend has encouraged in Europe towards an open and competitive market in industrial goods, we still have an agricultural system that results in dear food for the housewife and high tax bills for the taxpayer. Does my right hon. Friend think that the European member states might soon be ready to make a better response to American offers of mutual subsidy reduction in agricultural areas?

The Prime Minister: As my hon. Friend will remember, that problem was discussed at the Toronto economic summit. Some of us who were there were anxious to agree with America that we should do more to reduce the subsidy to agriculture. Although the European Community has done a good deal to put its agricultural house in order, it still has more to do. That is still our view, and it is shared by some of the other members of the Community but not by all. The steps that we took recently are working. Surplus stocks are going down fast. In 1987 there were 1 million tonnes of surplus butter and there are now only 158,000 tonnes. There were 700,000 tonnes of skimmed milk powder and there are now only 11,000 tonnes. The surpluses in beef, wheat and barley are also down. The policies are beginning to work.

Dr. Dafydd Elis Thomas (Meirionnydd Nant Conwy): With reference to the social dimension, does the Prime Minister understand that it is called a social dimension and social space because it is about the inequalities created spatially by a free market system? Will she commit herself anew to an increased regional policy so that the inequalities that will be created by the single market in 1992 will not disproportionately affect regions in the Community?

The Prime Minister: By a decision last February we increased the structural funds enormously to 52 billion ecu. As I said at Rhodes, over the next three years the amount will be greater in real terms than the whole of the Marshall plan for Europe after the end of the war. My right hon. Friend and I also said at Rhodes that under what is called the social dimension we do not believe in there being two sides to industry; we believe in every earner and owner pulling together for the prosperity of all.

Mr. Michael Grylls (Surrey, North-West): Is my right hon. Friend aware that only three weeks ago Mr. Jacques Delors wrote to the economic and social committee in Brussels asking it to give its views and, I think, to support social measures in industry? He also talked about "a people's Europe". Will my right hon. Friend assure industry, at least in Britain, that she will have none of that sort of thing and that we have been down that path before? If that were ever allowed to happen in industry in the EEC, we would cease to create the new jobs that we want and would see employment reducing.

The Prime Minister: The phrase "people's Europe" has been about for quite a long time and it is intended to mean freer travel and easier access across borders. Although it may not be popular in all parts of the House, that is why we have gone to a common-form passport, although passports are still issued in the name of each country. Passports are in a common form to enable people to go through border controls much more easily. I think that it was meant to make Europe more accessible to all citizens of all countries. That is why the phrase developed.

Mr. Eric S. Heffer (Liverpool, Walton): When the hon. Lady discussed the middle east, did she explain why the Government failed to support Mr. Arafat being allowed to enter the United States of America? Is it not clear that if there is to be any settlement in the middle east the PLO must be fully involved in any discussions? It is vital that the world should know what Mr. Arafat and the PLO are saying. Why did the Government refuse to support the entry of Arafat to the United States?

The Prime Minister: That is not correct, as our ambassador to the United Nations and the communiqué by all the Foreign Ministers of Europe made perfectly clear. We felt that Mr. Arafat should have been permitted to address the United Nations. We protested vigorously about the language of the motion, and if we had been able to amend it in accordance with our own motion we would have supported it. If the hon. Gentleman looks at the communiqué that the Foreign Ministers produced immediately after the United Nations communiqué, he will see that it is couched in moderate language. We all agreed on that communiqué.

Mr. Robert Adley (Christchurch): Nevertheless, it is today reported that my right hon. Friend has intervened to prevent a meeting taking place between the Minister of State, Foreign Office and a representative of the PLO. Can she explain this to the House? If it is the Government's policy to insist that the PLO put up an illuminated sign to ensure that the Israelis have the right to exist behind secure

[Mr. Robert Adley]

borders and that they renounce violence, why do we not expect the Israelis to put up an illuminated sign giving the Palestinians the right to a secure existence behind secure borders and the right to live without their children being mown down by Israeli bullets?

The Prime Minister: As I think I explained the last time I answered questions, and again this time, we set down three conditions for senior Ministers to meet anyone from the PLO. First, if whoever was coming from the PLO accepted United Nations resolutions 242 and 338, secondly, if they recognised Israel's right to exist and, thirdly, if they renounced violence the conditions would be fulfilled and we would meet them to talk. Two representatives who came previously could not meet those conditions, so we did not see them at ministerial level. The same has happened this time.

If my hon. Friend reads the Palestinian communiqúe all the way through, he will find some extremely good parts and some parts that hit out hard. For example, in parts Israel is called Fascist and racist. In other parts, the people involved in the uprising in the territories are urged to use every means possible to increase that uprising. My hon. Friend will find grounds for the view that we have taken.

Nevertheless, when I was in Washington I thought it right to say that the attitude taken at the Palestine National Council conference towards the United Nations resolutions was a step forward that we should welcome, which I did.

Ms. Marjorie Mowlam (Redcar): Will the Prime Minister clarify her response to my right hon. Friend the Leader of the Opposition and the hon. Member for Foyle (Mr. Hume) when she said that the Criminal Law Jurisdiction Act 1975 could not be used in relation to two of the four charges against Patrick Ryan? Why is it impossible to use the Act in relation to the other two charges, especially as six of the seven cases in which the Act has been used in the Republic have resulted in convictions?

The Prime Minister: Because those two charges are outside the scope of the extraterritorial jurisdiction. They are outside the scope of that Act, which granted extraterritorial jurisdiction.

Mr. Richard Alexander (Newark): Was my right hon. Friend able to advise the Taoiseach that those in Britain who wish for closer relations with the Republic, and even wish the Anglo-Irish Agreement well, would find it extremely difficult if he was seen to be attempting to find technical grounds on which to decline to return alleged terrorists to this country to answer for crimes alleged to have been committed in this country?

The Prime Minister: I accept what my hon. Friend says. Although there is limited extraterritorial jurisdiction, that is no substitute for effective extradition and no substitute for the warrants sent by one country being backed willingly by those in another.

Mr. Merlyn Rees (Morley and Leeds, South): Will the Prime Minister reconsider her reply in relation to the Criminal Law Jurisdiction Act, which was passed by the Labour Government following the Sunningdale agreement the previous February? Her explanation about the two sets of two charges was not clear enough. Why cannot the other two charges be dealt with in Dublin? It is most important that we get the matter clear. If extradition, which is the best way to deal with it, is not possible, would it not be possible to go to Dublin?

I have just been casting my eye over the report on the Prevention of Terrorism Act which the Home Secretary presented to the House in December last year. It is clear from the report that the law of conspiracy is complicated, that proving the offence is difficult and that the law is in a state of uncertainty. That may make it extremely difficult to obtain extradition in the normal sense of the term. It is vital to deal with terrorism. Why do we not consider using the 1975 Act?

The Prime Minister: The right hon. Gentleman would be the first to understand that I asked about this and that the legal advice which I received led me to give that answer. If the right hon. Gentleman challenges the legal advice—*[Interruption.]* I am not being difficult. If the right hon. Gentleman challenges the legal advice, he must ask my right hon. and learned Friend the Attorney-General about it.

Mr. Ian Gow (Eastbourne): Does my right hon. Friend recall the dismal conclusion of the Attorney-General in the House on Thursday that the refusal of the Belgian Government to agree to the extradition of Mr. Ryan was based not on legal but on political grounds? My right hon. Friend and the Foreign Secretary are both lawyers. Is there any legal reason, of which either is aware, why the Irish Government should not now agree to the extradition of Mr. Ryan?

The Prime Minister: I do not think that I should pronounce on legal grounds. I would only point out that the application for extradition went before the court of first instance in Belgium and the extradition was granted. It went to the court of appeal in Belgium, which confirmed the decision of the court of first instance. We understand that advice was given to the Minister of Justice. It would seem that that advice was similar to the view that the courts had taken. Nevertheless, the Cabinet in Belgium can say yea or nay to a matter of extradition, and it said nay.

Mr. Jeff Rooker (Birmingham, Perry Barr): When the Prime Minister is batting for Britain with our European partners, does she ever mention the fact that the only Head of State of a European Community member who has never addressed the European Parliament is the Head of State of our country?

Mr. Tony Banks (Newham, North-West): She is not the Head of State. She may like to be, but she is not.

Mr. Rooker: May I ask the Prime Minister——

Mr. Speaker: No. The hon. Gentleman has asked the question.

The Prime Minister: The formal meeting of the European Parliament is in Strasbourg. I should have thought it obvious that the Head of Government does the political work here. Having an executive president is very different from having a monarch.

Mr. Spencer Batiste (Elmet): Does my right hon. Friend agree that one of the greatest long-term difficulties in the development of the European Community is that its

political developments may outpace the economic and social realities that underpin it? In that context, does she agree that the proposal to abolish frontier controls when there are no satisfactory alternatives and the proposal to have worker participation on company boards are two examples from many of that process at work today?

The Prime Minister: Yes. If there is to be a European company statute, we must have the minimum required for such a statute and not try to include matters that may be all right for one country but not for another. Germany would have worker participation. We would have much more share ownership. We want a minimum European company statute. I very much agree with what my hon. Friend said about border controls.

Mr. Doug Hoyle (Warrington, North): On banking and financial services, will there be a directive for a free market in life assurance? If not, will the Prime Minister press for one? That would give Britain a direct advantage, since life insurance in this country costs only a third of what it costs in Italy and France.

The Prime Minister: We will press for a free market in that. That is why we have made financial services one of the priorities for the next round of directives.

Mr. James Couchman (Gillingham): Further to my right hon. Friend's answer to my hon. Friend the Member for Eastbourne (Mr. Gow), does she agree that the independence of the judiciary is precious to civilised countries and that the overruling of the Belgian judiciary by the Belgian Cabinet was very sad? In that context, will she ignore the weasel words of the leader of the Labour party, many of whose members are likely to oppose the Second Reading of the Prevention of Terrorism (Temporary Provisions) Bill tonight?

The Prime Minister: I hope as many people as possible will support the Prevention of Terrorism (Temporary Provisions) Bill being made permanent and support its Second Reading. I can think of nothing more important to show that people are determined in the fight against terrorism.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. Having regard to the fact that there is to be another statement after this and the business before the House, I will allow questions to continue for another five minutes before I call the Leader of the Opposition.

Mr. Robert N. Wareing (Liverpool, West Derby): No doubt the Prime Minister realises that working people in this country have far fewer rights at their place of work than most of their counterparts in the Community. Does she not find the term "social Europe" offensive because she is opposed to industrial democracy and wants the present autocratic system in British industry to continue? That was the real reason why she made her silly speech at Bruges. She simply wants an internal market to exploit her free market excesses. She does not want to extend that right to working people.

The Prime Minister: No; that is absolute nonsense. Health and safety comes under the social dimension. We have no fears about the health and safety regulations which Europe will introduce. We are well ahead in our arrangements.

With regard to workers' rights and citizens' rights, which everyone has, as the hon. Gentleman knows, the ordinary trade union member has far more rights now than previously. The ordinary citizen now has a greater chance to become a capitalist than ever before. We should like to extend that to other countries, as would many other member states.

Mr. Julian Brazier (Canterbury): In seeking assistance from our friends and allies in Europe, did my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister reflect on how much easier that task must have been 10 years ago for her predecessor when he could fully rely on her, the Leader of the Opposition at the time, to maintain a fully united front against terrorism? Will she further reflect on the fact that, whatever may take place in this House, the British people are right behind her right across the political spectrum?

The Prime Minister: Judging from the post-bag after the Bruges speech and from the many signs that we have had after returning from Rhodes, I accept what my hon. Friend says.

Mr. D. N. Campbell-Savours (Workington): The Prime Minister said earlier that she had been fighting terrorism in every way. When she met Mr. Haughey, did she refer to k and r—kidnap and ransom—insurance? Is there not a huge hole in the Prevention of Terrorism (Temporary Provisions) Bill in so far as it does not ban that practice which is a major source of funds for the paramilitary groups in Northern Ireland?

The Prime Minister: That matter has come up on several previous occasions. We have considered it and, at the moment, as the hon. Gentleman is aware, even if we refuse to have it in this country, some of it would go elsewhere. We must have agreement across countries that that is not acceptable. If we could achieve that, that would be very effective. I agree with the hon. Gentleman and am wholly against the taking out of any such insurance.

Mr. Ian Bruce (Dorset, South): Does my right hon. Friend agree that we have no mandate for bringing forward a united states of Europe, for the equalisation of taxes, or for social tinkering? When the British people voted in the referendum many years ago, they supported a free market in Europe. They still support that. The British people support my right hon. Friend as the leader within Europe of that free market principle.

The Prime Minister: I accept that we signed up to a European Economic Community.

Mr. David Winnick (Walsall, North): Like my hon. Friends, I am no less opposed to terrorism in Northern Ireland than the Prime Minister. However, on reflection, will the right hon. Lady consider that the manner in which she raised the Ryan case in this House and at the meeting with Mr. Haughey clearly caused the maximum of embarrassment and difficulty to our friends in the Irish Republic and gave a good deal of satisfaction to the IRA and its allies throughout Europe and the United States? Why did the Prime Minister act in a manner more characteristic of her junior Health Minister?

The Prime Minister: The hon. Gentleman is aware that I put the facts and will continue to do that. Bearing in mind that, under the extradition law of the Republic, the provisional warrant which the Irish Attorney-General can

[The Prime Minister]

issue is for three days, it is perfectly clear that the Republic considers that the provisional warrant is for three days and that that is sufficient for it to take a decision whether the warrant should be backed or not.

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): Is the Prime Minister aware that the main reason why she has difficulty in speaking about the problems of the common pound, the common bank and common frontiers is that she made a rod for her own back when she urged her right hon. and hon. Friends to vote on a three-line Whip to carry through the legislation on the single European market? She does not kid Opposition Members when she goes across to those booze-ups like the one in Rhodes and conducts a private brawl to give the impression to the British people that she is really against the Common Market. She does not fool us about that. If she wants to resolve the problem of the common frontiers and all the rest, she should bring forward legislation to repeal the Single European Act and we will give her a chuck on.

The Prime Minister: As is customary from the hon. Gentleman, that was a very confused question. However, if he wants to have a brawl with anyone, he must choose someone who is used to brawling. He had better choose someone his own size.

Mr. Eddie McGrady (South Down): I welcome the new-found conversion to a green policy and the decision to have a conference in the spring on the ozone layer and the greenhouse effect. Will the Prime Minister explain the apparent contradiction between that new-found concern and the fact that the Government have just announced a considerable reduction in the budget for the institute for research into the environment with the ensuing sacking or redundancy of 300 environmental scientists?

The Prime Minister: The amount for research on the environment, as the hon. Gentleman is aware, is determined by the advisory board which divides it between the scientific research councils, the Medical Research Council, the Natural Environment Research Council and the Agriculture and Food Research Council. The hon. Gentleman is aware that the amount available in real terms for basic research has increased and was increased further as a result of the Autumn Statement. If we had not had an effective amount for research, the British Antarctic survey would never have discovered the gap in the ozone layer.

Mr. Foulkes: What did they discover?

The Prime Minister: The ozone layer was discovered. I am surprised that the hon. Member did not know that.

Mr. Tony Banks (Newham, North-West): As most Heads of Government favour the abolition of border controls, would it be legally possible for this country to insist on maintaining border controls if other European countries abolish them?

What was the Prime Minister's opinion about a European federal police force?

The Prime Minister: Yes, it would because, apart from the border with the Republic for which we would have special reason to retain border controls, the external borders of the United Kingdom are international borders as well as internal borders. We must therefore retain our border controls at airports and ports. They will all maintain controls through ports and airports because that is the entry from the outside world. I said earlier that the Trevi Ministers meet frequently and they are moving closer together.

I am not certain whether a federal police force would be advisable. I believe that it would be very difficult to achieve because such a force would have to be answerable specifically to someone, and our present arrangement with co-operation between forces is better.

Mr. Kinnock: There have been several questions on the Criminal Law Jurisdiction Act, which the Prime Minister does not seem to have answered with the necessary clarity. Is she aware that, for the reasons given by my right hon. Friend the Member for Morley and Leeds, South (Mr. Rees), we can understand that, on the conspiracy allegations made against Patrick Ryan, the legal advice may have been that they could not be pressed effectively under the Criminal Law Jurisdiction Act? However, is that the advice that the right hon. Lady has received on the other two allegations against Patrick Ryan—possession of explosives and handling of explosives? Is she saying that if she cannot get everything—including bringing Patrick Ryan from Ireland to this country—she will not take legal means to achieve anything?

The Prime Minister: No, I am not saying that. As I told the right hon. Gentleman, my legal advice is that only two of the four charges would come under that Act. The right hon. Gentleman is making an assumption about which two they are, although I have not told him that. If he wants more specific answers, he knows full well that he must obtain legal advice from the proper officer—my right hon. and learned Friend the Attorney-General or my hon and learned Friend the Solicitor-General.

Let me make it perfectly clear that we believe, nevertheless, in a policy of extradition and that it is far better to extradite people to stand trial in the country in which the offences have been committed.

Scottish Enterprise

4.22 pm

The Secretary of State for Scotland (Mr. Malcolm Rifkind): With permission, Mr. Speaker, I should like to make a statement about the White Paper on Scottish Enterprise, laid before Parliament today. The proposals set out in this paper will further strengthen the Scottish economy to meet the challenges of the 1990s by integrating the Government's support for training and for enterprise creation into a new body, Scottish Enterprise.

The Government have already transformed the British economy and given new confidence to industry, commerce and, indeed, the whole business community. We have reformed industrial relations legislation, stimulated increases in productivity, pushed forward a programme of deregulation, and opened up many sectors of the economy to competition through our privatisation programme and by other means. As a result, unemployment is now in sharp decline and enterprise is flourishing.

As these processes have gained in momentum, our two main instruments of direct support to the business of wealth creation in Scotland have seen a change of emphasis. The Scottish Development Agency, in its early years preoccupied with the problems of declining and elderly industries, now has the more positive purposes of accommodating, advising, informing, financing, attracting and developing enterprise, as well as a continuing commitment to renewing our environment. The Training Agency has coped admirably with the difficult and demanding task of alleviating the worst ills of unemployment, but it is now increasingly engaged in the aim of uprating and updating the skills of new entrants to the labour market, of unemployed adults and, indeed, of those in jobs.

As we enter the 1990s, two challenges face us. One is that of international competition, typified by the single European market in 1992. Skills of the highest order will be required at every level as firms increasingly look outward. The other challenge is the prospect of skill shortages. Continued growth is offering the unemployed wider opportunities, while the number of young entrants to the labour market is set to decline in Scotland, as elsewhere.

These challenges are combining to bring into sharp focus the need for a new and integrated approach. Enterprise creation and the growth of existing businesses are inextricably bound up with developing the skills of the work force. Industry is now prospering and able to shoulder its full responsibility for investing in the skills of its work force. Employers have to rediscover fully a sense of ownership of the system of training and enterprise creation. It is my hope that the proposals I am announcing today will constitute a quantum leap forward in this process.

Our proposals involve the creation of a new national body, Scottish Enterprise, whose main role will be to consider strategic issues relating to enterprise, employment creation and training and a network of employer-led local agencies, which will be responsible for stimulating the growth of self-sustaining enterprise, encouraging the creation of viable jobs and improving the skills of the work force in each area.

Scottish Enterprise will be a powerful agent for change. The statutory functions and powers of Scottish Enterprise will be broadly like those in the Scottish Development Agency Act 1975, as amended, together with the powers in the Employment and Training Act 1973, as amended. Consequently, Scottish Enterprise will have a wide-ranging remit to enable it to continue the process of building the enterprise culture in Scotland.

It will continue the vital ongoing work of the SDA, but in addition, and for the first time, training in Scotland will be delivered through a Scottish body, working within a training policy framework for Great Britain agreed with my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Employment, but answerable to and provided with its resources by the Secretary of State for Scotland. Broadly speaking, Scottish Enterprise can be expected to receive the level of funding which would otherwise have been provided both for the Scottish Development Agency and for training programmes in Scotland. In the current year, that would amount to the best part of £500 million. The challenge for Scottish Enterprise and for the Scottish Office will be to use this enhanced role to meet the needs of business in Scotland in the 1990s.

A radical feature of our proposals is the creation of a comprehensive network of employer-led local agencies. Such local agencies will offer a one-door approach to employers and the wider community and will enable provision to be more closely attuned to the needs of the local labour market. They will allow local employers and others a much greater say in the delivery of services in their areas for training and enterprise creation. The opportunity is there to forge strong partnerships at local level and to provide a powerful focus for effecting local change. Local agency functions will include analysing the local labour market, developing training plans, subcontracting training work and monitoring performance, encouraging employers to increase their investment in training and providing business advice and support. Local agencies will, therefore, be responsible for the delivery of training tailored to meet local needs while operating within the framework of national policy.

Once local agencies have gained in strength and confidence, and shown themselves capable of taking on wider responsibilities, certain functions at present carried out by the Scottish Development Agency may be devolved to them. There are attractions in delegating as much authority as possible to the local level. However, in certain of its areas of operation, a national remit and powers have proved a major strength of the agency. A balance will have to be struck between local and central powers which enables the retention of present strengths as well as the desired improvement of local delivery. The Government have not yet come to a conclusion as to where this balance should lie and would welcome the views of all those concerned.

To set up the local agencies proposed, the Government will issue a prospectus inviting local employers to come forward with others from the community, such as people from enterprise trusts, colleges, training providers, trade unions, local authorities and voluntary organisations, to form the board of management in each area. We would expect two thirds or more of the membership to come from the senior ranks of private sector business. The Government are committed to giving the employers who will lead local agencies real responsibilities and the power to take the main decisions within a framework that ensures

[Mr. Malcolm Rifkind]

public accountability. We are confident that within each community there are local employers and others who can rise to this exciting new challenge.

I am aware that these proposals will touch directly the lives of many people in Scotland: trainees, trainers, those already involved in enterprise support and, of course, the staff of the two bodies that are to merge. The success of Scottish Enterprise and of the local agencies will depend greatly upon the quality of their staff. For that reason, the Government believe that many of the staff in both the SDA and the Training Agency will choose to continue their present work with either Scottish Enterprise or the local agencies.

I should now like to draw attention to the position in the highlands and islands. We have in mind that the same principles outlined for Scottish Enterprise and the local agencies should apply there. Local employers should be given the opportunity to take a similar role as elsewhere. Of course, the geographical and economic characteristics of the north and west are different and we recognise the distinctive value of the contribution made by the Highlands and Islands Development Board to the regeneration of its area. We take the view that future arrangements must build on success to date. This points to the retention of a distinctive body for the highlands and islands and we put forward three options: to set up a new body, Highland Enterprise, incorporating the HIDB's functions together with responsibility for training; to retain the HIDB as it is and invite Scottish Enterprise to set up local agencies for training services in the highlands and islands; or to invite the HIDB to act as a local agency with Scottish Enterprise for training provision. We look forward to hearing the views of those who live and work in the highlands and islands on these options.

In conclusion, I take pride both in pointing to the achievements of the past and in presenting a White Paper which opens up challenging new vistas for the future. In so doing, I pay tribute to the contribution of Bill Hughes of the Scottish CBI who has stimulated public interest and debate in these ideas. I have been delighted by the widespread interest and enthusiasm for these proposals already obvious in public and private comment over recent weeks. It is clear that the people of Scotland are attracted to the new opportunities offered by this approach to training and enterprise creation. Important new responsibilities are proposed for the Scottish Office, for the staff of the Scottish Development Agency and for those involved in training, and especially for the Scottish business and industrial community.

We have not sought to answer all the questions at this stage. There will now follow a full consultation period until the end of March. I hope that everyone concerned with training and enterprise in Scotland will take the trouble to comment on these proposals so that together we can produce the best possible Scottish solution to Scottish needs.

Mr. Donald Dewar (Glasgow, Garscadden): I cannot remember any announcement that has been so well trailed and heralded. When we received it, the statement had been well decorated with public relations copy, including a fetching picture of a well-known Glasgow public house. The Secretary of State has done well in the cliché business in the past few minutes. There was one really purple passage at the beginning, which says something for the right hon. and learned Gentleman's courage, or at least for his brass neck. However, it is not clear how much substance there is behind the style. I suspect that those who were alarmed by the advance publicity will be at least temporarily relieved and that those who wanted a real attack on the problems of industrial training will be bitterly disappointed.

I shall start with the positive, because there is a positive side. I agree with the Secretary of State and welcome the need for a Scottish dimension to training. There should be a means of tailoring schemes to our needs in Scotland. I welcome the transfer of responsibility to the Scottish Office, although I note that the Department of Employment will still call the shots on national schemes. Will the Secretary of State note that one test for the new organisation when it is in being will be its ability, working with the Scottish Office, to influence the development of employment training and new training schemes?

There is an assumption in the White Paper that training is done for, not by, industry. There is no attack on the sad failure of industry in this country, which has left us trailing so far behind our principal competitors. At some point the Government must think seriously about the responsibility of industry, not just in terms of seconding an occasional executive to a local agency, but of tackling training in its own plants and factories with determination and the necessary resources.

The Secretary of State said that local agencies will be employer-led. We will expect them to represent the community generally. There must be a partnership, and few of us are convinced that there is an army of bright business men ready to enrol. In any event, whatever contribution employers may make to the new structure, they cannot have exclusive jurisdiction. The trade unions and local education authorities must have their place—not just a nod in passing.

There was also an assumption in the White Paper that the new structure will be funded simply by aggregating the existing budgets of the Scottish Development Agency and the Training Agency in Scotland. I take it from that that there is to be no new money to back the new proposals. The Secretary of State must accept that adequate funding is essential if the quality is to be established and maintained. Our European competitors do that and do it well. Why should we not do the same? The Secretary of State talks about the challenge of 1992, but there will simply be window dressing if the investment is not made.

Training will obviously impact heavily on the Scottish Development Agency. Many of us feel that the case for combining the SDA and the Training Agency is not proven. Does the Secretary of State recall that the Opposition set down a number of tests which should be met?

I should like to ask the Secretary of State a number of specific questions. Will Locate in Scotland be affected in any way by the new arrangements? Will the ability of the Scottish Development Agency to stimulate investment, back growth and provide risk capital be in any way inhibited? Will the agency be able to mount local task forces and initiatives, linking with local authorities and the community, such as we have seen in Dundee, GEAR, Greenock and the Garnock valley? What happens to the Scottish Development Agency's decentralised structure? Will it continue, given that the agency's functions appear to be largely unaffected, at least at this stage? Does the

Secretary of State accept that we shall want to look closely at the impact of any transfer of function to local bodies, which may be proposed at some future date? Finally, will the Secretary of State give an assurance that, whatever option is selected, the Highlands and Islands Development Board will be in a position to carry on with its distinctive and valued work?

The Secretary of State made a lengthy statement, full of complex hints and suggestions. Inevitably there are worries about the loss of the SDA name—a trade mark built on years of well-tried success. The House is entitled to ask the Secretary of State why we should fall into line with the copywriters of his noble Friend Lord Young at the Department of Trade and Industry and why we should accept that sort of Thatcherian rhetoric in Scotland? I should have thought that the name Scottish Development Agency might have been preserved, even if the restructuring was to go ahead.

We are entitled to look closely at what we are getting in return. It may simply be a minor reform of the training structure—perhaps more of a lost opportunity than anything else. Does the Secretary of State accept that, despite its title, his White Paper says nothing about enterprise creation and says less on training than had been promised? The Secretary of State described his scheme as "a quantum leap". Whatever it is, it is certainly not that.

Mr. Rifkind: I thank the hon. Gentleman for at least a good proportion of his response, which has consisted of some perfectly relevant questions that I shall now seek to answer. I thank him especially for his welcome of the proposal in the White Paper that there should be a Scottish dimension to training and that responsibility for training in Scotland should become part of the responsibilities of the Scottish Office.

The hon. Gentleman made one point with which I entirely agree—that training should ultimately be the responsibility of industry itself, and that Scottish industry, and industry in the United Kingdom as a whole, has been sadly reluctant to acknowledge its responsibilities in that sphere to the extent that is found in other countries in Western Europe. It is enormously encouraging that many of the ideas in the White Paper have come from Scottish industry and the chairman of the Scottish CBI, and that those representing industry in Scotland have already stated publicly that they welcome the idea of industry being expected to take more responsibility for the provision of training. That suggests that in Scotland industry is well aware of the relevance of the points raised by the hon. Gentleman, and that points the right road forward.

The hon. Gentleman asked about the composition of the local agencies and whether local authorities would have a role to play. He will see from the White Paper that that point is specifically covered. It states that, of course, local authorities as employers may have a contribution to make in their locality and that there is nothing to stop them and other bodies from coming forward, together with the private sector, and putting forward proposals for the creation of local agencies.

The hon. Gentleman asked about funding. He will agree that the funding of Scottish Enterprise, which is to be about £500 million, is not exactly small beer. It is an enormous sum, of which £350 million represents what is currently being spent on training in Scotland. That illustrates the seriousness with which the Government have approached the needs of training in Scotland over the past few years.

The hon. Gentleman asked specifically about Locate in Scotland. I can give him a categoric assurance that the work of Locate in Scotland will not be affected by any of the proposals in the White Paper. Locate in Scotland is concerned with inward investment, and its role and the way in which it operates will not be in any way diminished, damaged or affected by the proposals.

The hon. Gentleman asked whether the decentralised structure that the Scottish Development Agency has introduced in the past 18 months will be affected by the proposals. It is unlikely that it will be, but that will be a matter for the agency to decide in the next few months. The agency has chosen to decentralise its responsibilities to a more local level, and that has been widely welcomed. As the hon. Gentleman recognised, there is nothing in the proposal that need interfere with that process unless the agency itself were determined, for some reason, to choose otherwise.

In both the statement and the White Paper, I specifically acknowledged the hon. Gentleman's point about the Highland and Islands Development Board. I shall simply add that the principle behind the proposals is to encourage local diversity with regard to the provision of training. There is no reason why training in Dundee should be identical to training in Aberdeen or in Glasgow, because in many respects it is important to identify the needs of local economies within the national framework so that local training can be tailored to those requirements.

If that is true of individual localities in the central belt, the same principle clearly has to apply when considering proposals for the highlands and islands which have an economic framework and sparsity of population which is peculiar within the United Kingdom, never mind within Scotland. From that it follows that, although the same principles might be relevant in the highlands and islands, we are as anxious as the hon. Gentleman to ensure that the community in that part of Scotland should make its own contribution to identifying the way in which these principles can best be adapted to the economic circumstances of that part of Scotland.

Sir Hector Monro (Dumfries): Does my right hon. and learned Friend agree that, in the context of a fall in unemployment of 70,000 in Scotland in the past two years, that will provide a tremendous opportunity for youngsters and people of all ages to take a leap forward in training and skills and that it will accelerate the opportunity to provide more jobs in Scotland?

In the context of devolving Scottish Enterprise to the regions, will my right hon. and learned Friend say a little more about the integration of the enterprise trusts, the Scottish Development Agency regional offices, the Training Agency and the regional councils' economic development and planning committees? Are they to work together to provide more jobs, bearing in mind that in doing so they will need largely increased financial resources?

Mr. Rifkind: Of course I pay tribute to the work of the enterprise trusts. When I visited my hon. Friend's constituency and met members of his local enterprise trust in Dumfries, they said that they were very excited about the ideas that were then being discussed in the press—ideas

[Mr. Rifkind]

of a kind similar to those that I have set out today. I have no doubt that the success of the enterprise trust movement throughout Scotland illustrates that large numbers of people who are actively involved in industry are both willing and enthusiastic about making their contribution to the economic development of their localities. This proposal will provide them with an opportunity to have not merely an advisory role but a role in the execution and implementation of training in their localities. That can only benefit the local economy.

Mrs. Ray Michie (Argyll and Bute): Does the Secretary of State accept that training that is employer-led—presumably by many friends of the Government—does not mix well with the development role of the Scottish Development Agency? Scotland will be worried to hear that the Scottish Development Agency's name and reputation, which have been built up over the years, are to disappear overnight. Will the Secretary of State also make a commitment that the Highlands and Islands Development Board will remain master in its own area and will not lose its social commitment to the people of that area?

Mr. Rifkind: On the first part of the hon. Lady's question, I think that she might not have properly understood the proposals. I suggest that she ought to read the White Paper before suggesting that employer-led local agencies do not mix well with the development role of the Scottish Development Agency. Over the last few years, the SDA has made it clear that it sees the encouragement and development of local, employer-led initiatives in the localities within the various parts of Scotland as crucial to its objective; otherwise, it will be wasting its time. I am quite sure that that is its view now.

We recognise that there is a continuing need for a distinctive body, such as the Highlands and Islands Development Board, to serve the needs of the highlands and islands. When the hon. Lady has had an opportunity to read that part of the White Paper which deals with the matter, I think she will acknowledge that that requirement and that concern have been fully met.

Mr. Bill Walker (Tayside, North): Is my right hon. and learned Friend aware that many people in Scotland will welcome the statement? Those who have been involved in training and in the running of businesses will regard it as the first sensible approach that there has been for a long time towards meeting the needs of industry. The divorce of training from the development of an industry has meant that bureaucratic machines have been dealing with two interrelated activities that were dependent on each other. The proposal will remove that problem, and it is to be welcomed.

During the consultations on the future role of training in the Highlands and Islands Development Board area, will he bear in mind that a large part of the Scottish highlands is not included in the HIDB area? Those who live south of the Drumochter pass in my constituency will expect training activities, incentives and management to be the same on both sides of the Drumochter pass.

Mr. Rifkind: On the latter part of my hon. Friend's question, we have said that the same principles should apply. We shall examine whether it will be possible, in the much more sparsely populated areas of north and west Scotland, to have the same structure of local agencies as might be appropriate either in the central belt of Scotland or even in constituencies, such as that of my hon. Friend, which, compared with parts of Sutherland or Inverness-shire, are more populated. Moreover, the structure of their local business communities is much more substantial. We hope that the same principles will apply. We shall seek the views of those who live in the highlands and islands about how best these principles can be adapted to their circumstances.

Mr. Ernie Ross (Dundee, West): The Secretary of State pays tribute in the statement to Bill Hughes for his initiative, but the right hon. and learned Gentleman knows that the original idea came from the private industry councils in the United States, where the main thrust of private industry councils is training. As my hon. Friend the Member for Glasgow, Garscadden (Mr. Dewar) said, we welcome the determination to bring training back into the Scottish forum.

In his statement the Secretary of State refers to a "one-door approach." He must know that the Dundee project is a one-door approach. I remind the House that that project was started by a Tory-controlled regional council, a Labour-controlled district council and the Scottish Development Agency. It is one of the best examples of how industry can be encouraged to come into an area. Will the Secretary of State assure us that the one-door approach of the Dundee project will not be lost in this initiative?

Mr. Rifkind: I can give the hon. Gentleman that assurance. I envisage that Scottish Enterprise will be directly involved in matters of national Scottish significance and that it may also be directly involved at its headquarters with projects which, although they may have only a local, geographical remit, may be of such significance to the overall Scottish economy as to justify that degree of involvement. Proposals about decentralising the functions of the SDA will continue with Scottish Enterprise unless and until it is demonstrated that they could be more sensibly dealt with at purely local level. We want to examine the best ways of delivering locally those services that can benefit the local economy. However, important projects will continue to have the same opportunities as they have now.

Mr. Alex Salmond (Banff and Buchan): Does the Secretary of State understand the concern that, under the guise of the welcome devolution of Training Agency functions to Scotland, we may be seeing the filleting of the Scottish Development Agency and perhaps of the Highlands and Islands Development Board? What core functions and how many jobs does the Secretary of State expect will be held at the centre of what succeeds the SDA and even, perhaps, the HIDB? Will the Secretary of State either confirm or deny that recruitment for the membership of local agencies is already under way? If not, what status does Sir Hector Laing's letter to enterprise boards, looking for likely candidates, have? Does he understand that there is a great deal of concern that the professionalism of the SDA and of the HIDB may be replaced by the patronage of the Conservative party?

Mr. Rifkind: On the hon. Gentleman's latter point, I have not seen any such letter, nor was I aware of the

possible existence of such a letter until I saw a newspaper report which, in every other respect, was inaccurate and which, for all I know, may have been inaccurate in that respect as well. Sir Hector Laing is involved with Scotbic, which has been involved with an enterprise trust. I suggest that the hon. Gentleman ought to address that question to Scotbic and find out what letters may or may not have been sent. I have no idea whether such a letter exists. I have not seen such a letter. The only knowledge that I have as to whether such a letter might exist is certain newspaper reports, which I presume are the source of the hon. Gentleman's information. Scotbic is not part of the Scottish Office. If it wishes to send letters, that is entirely a matter for Scotbic. No doubt it can provide the hon. Gentleman with the information that he seeks.

As for the staff who now work for the Scottish Development Agency and the Highlands and Islands Development Board at their headquarters, the hon. Gentleman will be aware that over the last year or so the number of staff has been reduced—in the case of the SDA, because it decided to decentralise some of its functions to its regional offices in various parts of Scotland. I do not envisage any of the proposals in the White Paper as likely to have a direct effect on the number of staff employed in the headquarters of the Scottish Development Agency.

Mr. Tony Favell (Stockport): Does my right hon. and learned Friend agree that the spirit of enterprise comes from within and that it is difficult to impose it from without? For that reason, may I urge my right hon. and learned Friend to make the local agencies independent? Four years ago in Stockport the president of the chamber of commerce, a Scotsman, Ernest Petrie, started our local enterprise agency. Since then, there has been a burst of activity in Stockport and jobs and self-employment have been created. There has been no grant and no development agency, and unemployment is now less than 6 per cent. If there are 10 Scotsmen half as good as Mr. Petrie still in Scotland, that country has a great future.

Mr. Rifkind: I thank my hon. Friend, and, in answering his remarks, I shall also deal with the point raised by the hon. Member for Banff and Buchan (Mr. Salmond) who talked about patronage. Contrary to certain press reports, the Secretary of State for Scotland will not appoint either the chairmen or the members of the local agencies. They will come fron the local community. As I understand it, that is how they operate in my hon. Friend's constituency.

Mr. Dick Douglas (Dunfermline, West): Will the Secretary of State reflect a little? In a way we are all indebted to Bill Hughes for launching this venture. Those of us who have had discussions with Mr. Hughes recognise that his views were extremely embryonic. However, the responsibility for the White Paper lies with the Secretary of State alone. Will he reflect on the fact that one of the difficulties of employer-dominated training is that employers tend to train for jobs as they are, not jobs as they are likely to be? For example, if we had had employer-dominated training in Clydeside we might still be training riveters if there were ships to build, and in Dundee we might still be training jute workers. The relationship between training, education and the future development of industry must be discussed, and there is little in the White Paper about that.

Does the Secretary of State accept that it is extremely difficult to reconcile the two roles of initiating new ventures and training? Those two matters are not as co-related as they appear to be in the White Paper. Will the Secretary of State address that issue; and does he accept that, although we welcome the devolution element, we are anxious to see more money and effort put into it?

Mr. Rifkind: I understand the hon. Gentleman's point. He said that he did not believe that training should be left to employers. However, he will recall that his hon. Friend the Member for Glasgow, Garscadden (Mr. Dewar) said that industry should accept responsibility for providing training for its employees. That view is certainly shared throughout Western Europe. We acknowledge that training must be provided, and we believe that a partnership of the type proposed is the best way to do it. In addition, we envisage local agencies preparing economic profiles of their localities showing the likely skill shortages over the next few years and identifying—at a time when demographic changes will lead to fewer youngsters being available for employment—the type of training necessary to ensure that the youngsters and other local people get the jobs available and that local industry obtains the people with the necessary skills.

For example, it is worrying that, with continuing high unemployment, a recent survey by the Scottish CBI identified that 15 per cent. of its members report skill shortages and an inability to recruit those with the necessary skills. That problem must be eliminated.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I shall endeavour to call all those hon. Members who are rising, but will they please ask briefer questions because that leads to briefer answers?

Mr. Alexander Eadie (Midlothian): The right hon. and learned Gentleman must be aware that nobody could quarrel with some of the language in the White Paper—for example, where it says that we should be prepared for the future, where it refers to "Scottishness," and so on, and, on page 27, where it says that the document is for discussion by the general populace in Scotland. Does the right hon. and learned Gentleman agree that it would be a good idea to help to retain the industry that already exists in Scotland? Is he aware that for the first time in a hundred years the Scottish coal mining industry is depleted and that all the planning, engineering and service industries will be dealt with south of the border? We have lost the Scottish coal mining industry as an indigenous industry for the first time in a hundred years. Will the Secretary of State look into that?

Mr. Rifkind: I am delighted that the hon. Gentleman was unable to find anything with which to quarrel in the White Paper, because on other occasions he has not found that too difficult. It is true that the deep-mined coal sector has been going through a difficult time. However, I am sure that the hon. Gentleman will acknowledge that there has been more growth in opencast mining in Scotland than in any other part of the United Kingdom and that it is now responsible for half the coal produced north of the border. Therefore, even within the coal industry, which has difficulties and problems, there have been areas of significant growth.

Mr. Adam Ingram (East Kilbride): Only a few weeks ago the Secretary of State issued a consultative document on the future of Scotland's new towns. Does not today's

[Mr. Adam Ingram]

statement prejudge the efforts that have been made in looking for suitable alternatives to replace the new towns as job attraction agencies?

Mr. Rifkind: I hope not. If the hon. Gentleman is concerned that it might, I should be delighted to hear the detailed reasons for his worry. I see nothing in the White Paper that is incompatible with the consultative document.

Mr. Dennis Canavan (Falkirk, West): How can the Secretary of State expect us to believe his assurance that Scottish Enterprise will be broadly based in view of the blatant abuse of patronage powers by the Government to invent what looks like a job creation scheme for failed Scottish Tory Members of Parliament, such as Ancram, Fletcher, Anna McCurley, Peter Fraser and Uncle Tom Cobbleigh and all?

Mr. Rifkind: The hon. Gentleman finds it difficult to accept that appointments to important public positions in Scotland should go to those best qualified to occupy them.

Mr. Norman Hogg (Cumbernauld and Kilsyth): Will the Secretary of State explain how the local agencies will relate to the enterprise trusts and the development corporations, to which my hon. Friend the Member for East Kilbride (Mr. Ingram) referred? It is important that that should be clarified.

Mr. Rifkind: The hon. Gentleman has raised important questions. Clearly, the enterprise trusts have been successful in attracting a significant number of people in local industry to serve in the local community and identify opportunities for economic growth and development. I am sure that many of those people would wish to serve on the local agencies. It might be that some of the enterprise trusts would put themselves forward as possible local agencies. We would like to explore those ideas with people who have experience in those matters.

As regards new towns, the responsibility for training has until now been the responsibility of the Training Commission—now the Training Agency—on a national basis. Clearly, if training is now to be delivered locally in the way we have suggested, there is no reason why that could not apply equally in the new towns. I accept that the new towns are in a special position and, as I said to the hon. Member for East Kilbride (Mr. Ingram), I shall be happy to hear the hon. Gentleman's views on any particular problems of which we should be aware.

Mr. John Home Robertson (East Lothian): Will the Secretary of State, for once, acknowledge the excellent work being done by local authorities in many parts of Scotland, including my constituency, in promoting industry and enterprise in their areas? I accept that the new training agencies may need to be slightly more broadly based than the local district council areas in Scotland now, but does he accept that the suggestion that Edinburgh and East Lothian should be regarded as a local area for enterprise creation in the future may not be greeted enthusiastically in my constituency?

Mr. Rifkind: Those who draft the boundaries for the local agencies will be happy to hear the hon. Gentleman's views. I am happy to acknowledge the contribution of local authorities. Indeed, it is referred to in the White Paper, which says:

"it is encouraging that many local authorities are already increasingly choosing to work in partnership with private sector interests to generate local economic development."

Mr. James Wallace (Orkney and Shetland): As well as training duties, the Secretary of State has said that he sees local agencies as having a role in providing a local economic audit or profile. How does he see the local area agencies, particularly in areas such as mine, being resourced for an administrative purpose.

Mr. Rifkind: We anticipate that the bulk of their funds —in some cases a high proportion of funds—will come from Scottish Enterprise. The local agency will present to Scottish Enterprise its proposals on the needs and training requirements of the local economy. If Scottish Enterprise were satisfied that the local agency consisted of people who were fit and proper to be responsible for the implementation of training policy and that they had sensible proposals which would involve the proper use of public funds, Scottish Enterprise would enter into a contractual relationship with the local agency for the delivery of the services.

Mr. Nigel Griffiths (Edinburgh, South): Is the Secretary of State aware that the White Paper is testimony to the lamentable record of the Government over nine years of failing to train people? Not only have they given training opportunities at a lower rate than the United States, France and Germany, but they have provided fewer than even Taiwan and South Korea. Will he tell the House what in this vacuous paper gives hope to the 6,000 youngsters who are currently unable to be offered YTS places by his Government?

Mr. Rifkind: As the level of resources and training provided during the past 10 years was light years in excess of anything provided by the last Labour Government, any defects in the United Kingdom in regard to training certainly did not begin in 1979.

Dr. Lewis Moonie (Kirkcaldy): Among the clichés and half-truths of the statement and the Minister's waffle today, there are one or two real nuggets of wisdom. The White Paper, in page 9, states:

"Efforts to date to persuade the private sector to take greater interest in and responsibility for training have had disappointing results . . . Even though skills shortages in some sectors are already becoming apparent, industry as a whole is still insufficiently aware of the key changes ahead in the labour market and so is not planning ahead to cope with future needs."

What makes the Minister think that people who have failed to plan for their own needs are in any way capable of planning for everyone else's needs?

Mr. Rifkind: That is a perfectly reasonable question. I make two points in response to the hon. Gentleman. First, Scottish industry and the Scottish CBI have said that they wish to be given the responsibility for the provision of training and for developments described in the White Paper. Industry would not have been calling for that a few years ago.

Secondly, in the past few years there has been the very welcome development of the enterprise trusts which have similar activities, which owe their genesis to the private sector in Scotland, and which now cover virtually the whole of Scotland. The fact that hundreds of local business men throughout Scotland have given their time, effort, enthusiasm and sometimes their resources not for the

immediate benefit of their own companies—although their companies often indirectly benefit—but to identify the local economic requirements of their community and to act in a responsible and constructive way in developing the potential of their locality is a very good reason for believing that they will respond to these new opportunities as they have said they will.

Mr. Calum Macdonald (Western Isles): I welcome the Government's admission that the Highlands and Islands Development Board, which the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Scotland described from the Front Bench in a Scottish Grand Committee debate on 14 July 1988 as a Bennite instrument of state intervention, has been of central importance to improving life in the highlands and islands in the past 20 years. Will the Secretary of State answer the question that he failed to answer from the hon. Member for Argyll and Bute (Mrs. Michie) and give an assurance that none of the three options will in any way diminish the unique social remit of the Highlands and Islands Development Board?

Mr. Rifkind: As the hon. Gentleman knows, there are lots of bens in the highlands and islands of Scotland, and I am sure that a good proportion of them have the unqualified admiration of all my hon. Friends. I am happy to give the assurance that the hon. Gentleman seeks. We recognise the distinctive contribution of the HIDB in the highlands and islands. We look forward to a contribution from the HIDB and from those who live in the highlands and islands on the sort of structure that they believe would be relevant in their circumstances.

Dr. Norman A. Godman (Greenock and Port Glasgow): Will the Secretary of State give an assurance that the SDA's area projects will not be diminished or adversely affected in any way by these proposals? More particularly, will he give the people of Inverclyde an assurance that the Inverclyde initiative will continue with its work? I remind him that annex A on page 29 contains an admission that Greenock, together with Irvine,

"exhibit a very high rate of unemployment."

Does he agree that the Inverclyde initiative, which has not done a great deal until now, requires more resources than the threat of being shifted to Irvine or some other place?

Mr. Rifkind: I assure the hon. Gentleman that there is no danger of the Inverclyde initiative being shifted to Irvine. He will be aware that I had a meeting with representatives of the local community in Inverclyde, who gave me a number of examples and suggestions as to what they believe should be the structure and format of the Inverclyde initiative. We have been able to respond positively to all of them, including the most important of all—the creation of the enterprise zone.

Mr. Thomas Graham (Renfrew, West and Inverclyde): I am quite surprised at the Minister. It was a lovely package but it says nothing because the most important element is missing—new money. There is no new money here. There is nothing to tackle the crisis that is about to arise in my constituency with the closure of the Bishopton royal ordnance factory.

The Minister mentioned employer-led initiatives. There are nearly no employers left in my constituency because the Government have done their best to close them. The most recent occurrence, at CalMac, is to move 200 jobs from Gourock to Oban. What does the Minister propose to do about the workers who will not move there? Is he going to retrain them? Nearly every penny that is committed here could be spent on the 1,100 jobs that will be lost in Bishopton. My constituents will see this as a fancy package with poison inside it. No one wants it unless it produces the goods. It does not produce the goods for Scotland. We need new money—a massive injection of cash—without it being frittered away by the Government.

Mr. Rifkind: That was a splendid, if not predictable, contribution from the hon. Gentleman. I appreciate that his solution for every problem in Scotland—and no doubt anywhere else in the world—is more money, but he does not appear to have worked out what he would do with it if it were provided. As Scottish Enterprise will have resources of £500 million, which represents the current resources of the Training Agency and the SDA, he can hardly suggest that it will be skimped for ways of ensuring that the needs of his constituents and of those in other parts of Scotland will be fully satisfied.

Mr. Tony Worthington (Clydebank and Milngavie): When the Hughes plan was mooted, I welcomed it because it would return training to Scotland and to Scottish control, but that is not what is proposed here. The White Paper states that the Department of Employment will remain the lead agency and that it will set the national framework. At the moment, if one wants to change the employment training scheme or the youth training scheme, one writes to the Department of Employment in order to get to the organ grinder, but one is referred back to the monkey. Will the Secretary of State confirm that nothing in the proposal will allow any Scottish alteration of the employment training scheme, the youth training scheme or any other scheme?

Mr. Rifkind: The hon. Gentleman has entirely misunderstood what is in the White Paper. I would advise him to read it more carefully before he jumps to conclusions. The White Paper and my statement today say that the national training policy will be decided jointly by the training Ministers. Obviously the Secretary of State for Employment, whose responsibilities cover 45 million people in the United Kingdom, is the lead Minister. It would be very odd for it to be otherwise. Training policy will be determined by the Ministers who are responsible for training, and in future the Secretary of State for Scotland will be responsible for training policy in Scotland.

Mr. John McAllion (Dundee, East): The Secretary of State said that he expected two thirds of the local agencies to consist of the senior ranks of private sector business. Will he expand on the role that he envisages for local authorities in the agencies, and in particular the mechanics for securing local authority representation? It is only a matter of weeks since his hon. Friend the Minister of State, Scottish Office came to Dundee and sang the praises of the local authority-led Tayside enterprise board as representing all that is best in co-operation between the public and private sectors. Why does he disagree with his ministerial colleagues in this matter?

Mr. Rifkind: I have already said that local authorities, as employers in their areas, together with other employers, will be perfectly free to come forward with proposals for local agencies. The primary purpose of the initiative is wealth and job creation. That must clearly be the primary

[Mr. Rifkind]

responsibility of those in manufacturing industry and in commerce and business generally. Therefore, any initiative that is not led by those who are essentially involved in the business of wealth and job creation would fail from the start. Local authorities have a contribution to make, as have other non-industrial organisations referred to in the White Paper, but it would be quite unrealistic to pretend that their responsibility in this area of policy should be the same as or greater than that of local industry.

Mr. Charles Kennedy (Ross, Cromarty and Skye): Further to the question by the hon. Member for Western Isles (Mr. Macdonald), may I say that the Secretary of State is quite right to point out that there are many bens in the islands and highlands, but there are also a few buts. One of them is on page 29. The White Paper seems to equate the social and economic features of Skye and Wester Ross with those of Sutherland, which would be true to an extent, and of Thurso and Wick. Surely the Secretary of State must concede that the economic base of northern Caithness is substantially different from those of Skye and Wester Ross. Looking to the future—it is a gloomy one—the only similarity that I can see is that, if the potential threat to Dounreay, as outlined by the Secretary of State for Energy, ever comes to pass, both areas will share in a sad major industrial rundown. In Skye and Wester Ross, it will involve the Kishorn yard, and, in the Caithness economy, it will involve Dounreay. What is the other basis on which it is a manageable area in terms of the similarities that the White Paper seems to suggest?

Mr. Rifkind: I shall be happy to hear the views of the hon. Gentleman and of those who live in those areas. If there is to be a structure of local agencies in the more sparsely populated parts of Scotland, clearly such areas cannot be so small as to be unlikely to provide those who will actually be responsible for running the local agencies and supervising the implementation of training policy. There is a certain minimum area size for an agency to be viable.

Mr. Kennedy It is enormous.

Mr. Rifkind: It is certainly enormous in geographical terms, but it covers a total population of 55,000—*[Interruption.]* No one is questioning the importance of it. As I said, these are not final conclusions on the areas of the local agencies.

The hon. Gentleman must consider whether an area as small as Skye or as small as Skye and Wester Ross—*[Interruption.]* In terms of population, it is very small—can provide the personalities and the framework that would enable a local agency to carry out its responsibilities. The hon. Gentleman will not be serving the interests of his constituents if he puts forward proposals which, by their essence, are non-viable. This is not a conclusion; it is a suggested framework of proposals, and the hon. Gentleman might like to bear that in mind.

Scottish Question Time

5.12 pm

Mr. Jim Sillars (Glasgow, Govan): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. I have already given you private notice of this matter. I refer to Scottish Question Time well ahead of 21 December, when we should first discuss these matters. I refer also to substantial interventions made by English Members during Scottish Question Time. I am seeking a remedy from you within the powers that are available to you and within your responsibilities.

On 30 November, in column 714 of *Hansard*, when the Scottish Transport Group statement was before the House, there was an interruption on the Opposition side of the House, no doubt because a Conservative Member representing an English constituency wished to speak. You said:

"This is a United Kingdom Parliament."—[*Official Report*, 30 November 1988; Vol. 142, c. 714.]

However reluctantly, I acknowledge that that is the case. More importantly, in column 352 of *Hansard*, on 22 July 1987, you are recorded as saying:

"Scottish Members take part in English Question Times and English Members may take part in Scottish Question Times."—[*Official Report*, 22 July 1987; Vol. 120, c. 352.]

You, Mr. Speaker, seriously misdirected yourself on the facts. This is not a personal attack upon you. I am sure that at some time in their careers everyone sitting in the House of Lords, the highest Bench, has misdirected himself. The important thing is that, when somebody misdirects himself, he must re-examine the conclusions that he drew at that time.

I have carefully looked through questions on the Order Paper, Department by Department. In my humble opinion, there is no such thing as a Department that can be categorised as dealing only with English questions. Moreover, even the Department of the Environment, which has a finger in the pie in the administration of Edinburgh castle, has a United Kingdom dimension, however large or small.

I have read "Erskine May" and Standing Orders. In a sense, the House is rather like the legal system, which operates on the common law and on statute, the common law being practice and the statutes being the Standing Orders. Under the heading "Written and Unwritten Procedure", in page 209 of "Erskine May", it states:

"On its smaller scale, the study of English parliamentary procedure presents the same difficulty as the study of English law in that its rules are not covered by any comprehensive and authoritative code."

It goes on to state:

"The written part is merely a pendant to the unwritten part."

We must look at "Erskine May" and Standing Orders to define exactly what your powers and responsibilities are, Mr. Speaker. Obviously, practice is important. When I was previously in the House, the practice was quite clear. Scottish Question Time was dealt with by Members of Parliament from Scottish constituencies. Looking at Standing Orders, which are the equivalent of statute law, the recognition of the Scottish dimension within the United Kingdom Parliament has been a progressive affair over a period of years.

When I first came to the House in 1970—you will recall this from your previous incarnation also, Mr. Speaker—when the Scottish Grand Committee was established, people such as Sir William van Straubenzee, who told the

Tory Whips that his name rhymed with Mackenzie, were directed to the Scottish Grand Committee. In those days Committees were made up to represent the Government and the Opposition numbers in the House. Many English Members served on the Scottish Grand Committee—a sort of purgatory for those whom the Whips did not like. Over time, that practice has been dispensed with.

Above all, this is a political institution, and it must be sensitive to political reality. It became an untenable practice to load the Scottish Grand Committee with Members of Parliament representing English constituencies. Why has the practice——

Mr. Speaker: Order. That is not a point of order for me. The hon. Gentleman is raising general matters.

Mr. Sillars: I am sorry, Mr. Speaker, but I must disagree with you. They are specific matters. We are talking about the change in practice, and that change is a recent one—it goes back only to the 1987 general election results. If you compare the period before that with the period since the general election, you will see that the practice has fundamentally changed. I suggest that the matter is within your powers and responsibilities. It is no longer the case that Scottish Question Time is reserved for Scottish Members of Parliament.

I seek two actions from you, Mr. Speaker. They are within your powers and responsibilities. The relevant authorities setting out your powers and responsibilities are "Erskine May" and Standing Orders. "Erskine May", in page 334, clearly states:

"The Speaker is the final authority as to the admissibility of questions.

The Speaker's responsibility in regard to questions is limited to their compliance with the rules of the House."

I shall quote an analysis of Scottish Question Time since this Parliament was established after the general election.

Mr. Speaker: As we have an important debate following this matter, in the interests of the House—we are dealing with the interests of the House—I think it would be sensible if the hon. Gentleman were to come to see me about this matter, when I would gladly and willingly consider it with him in great detail. I do not think that it is appropriate to raise these issues when we have such a busy day in front of us.

Mr. Sillars: That is an unacceptable suggestion from you, Mr. Speaker, because "Erskine May" tells us that the place to raise a point of order of public concern is in the House, and that is exactly what I am doing. I am about to give you an analysis of the position since 1987 which demonstrates clearly the unacceptability of the new practice that you have introduced.

Mr. Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman must not make accusations like that. Come to the point and I shall deal with it.

Mr. Sillars: This is not a question of accusations——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I have been here at Question Time and the hon. Gentleman has not been here. I know what he is talking about, and I do not need to be reminded of it.

Mr. Sillars: I take it that you are familiar with the fact that English and Welsh Tory Members of Parliament have asked nearly 20 per cent. of balloted questions and 15·9 per cent. of supplementaries, whereas the SNP has asked only 5·9 per cent. of supplementaries—*[Interruption.]* It is you, Mr. Speaker, who selects supplementaries. Four Tory Members representing English constituencies have been able to ask more questions than my hon. Friends in the SNP parliamentary group.

I will tell you why I am raising this with you in public, Mr. Speaker. On 21 December I want to ask the Secretary of State for Scotland a question about drug abuse in Govan and how further aid can be given to communities dealing with that problem. My constituents will fail utterly to understand if I am knocked out of the queue by English Tory Members who have no interest in the Scottish matter. Therefore, I am asking you to say that you will not select English Tory Members to ask supplementaries and that you will convene a conference of the Whips of the four relevant parties.

I hope that you will not refer me to the usual channels, Mr. Speaker, because, if you do, I shall refer you to Standing Order No. 130, which lays an obligation on this House to have a Select Committee on Scottish Affairs. The operative word is not "may" but "shall". Eighteen months into this Parliament, the usual channels have still failed to deliver.

Mr. Bill Walker (Tayside, North): Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: After 10 minutes on the preceding point, another two minutes on this will be about enough.

Mr. Walker: I have no wish to detain the House. When you take into consideration all the points raised by the hon. Member for Glasgow, Govan (Mr. Sillars), as I am sure you will, I trust that you will bear in mind the fact that Members, such as myself, who regularly attend Question Time, are frequently not called because of the numbers on these Benches. Frequently, Scottish Labour Members are called on matters in which we on this side have an interest. That is how this balances out. I hope that you will bear that in mind when you consider such aspects of this United Kingdom Parliament.

Mr. Speaker: I repeat that this is a United Kingdom Parliament and I have no authority to change that. It is a heavy responsibility for Mr. Speaker to be completely even handed. We welcome back the hon. Member for Glasgow, Govan (Mr. Sillars) after some time—[HON. MEMBERS: "Oh!"] Order. In that case I welcome the hon. Gentleman back. He only needs to do the arithmetic to see that if the Chair were wholly fair no Member of Parliament would be called to speak in a debate more than about four times a Session on average. If he looks at the record, he will find that members of his party have done rather better than that, largely because I have an obligation to look after the rights of minority parties.

I shall certainly not be put in a position of agreeing only to call Scottish Members at Scottish Question Time because this is a United Kingdom Parliament and certain questions, for instance on the Forestry Commission, can be answered only by Scottish Ministers. Therefore, it is perfectly legitimate for English Members to table questions on the day for Scottish questions and to participate as Members of a United Kingdom Parliament, just as it is legitimate for Scottish Members to take part in questions directed to other Departments, as was the case at both Employment Question Time and Prime Minister's

[Mr. Speaker]

Question Time today. I had not anticipated what the hon. Gentleman was going to say, but his party did rather well today. I do not think that he has any complaint.

Mr. Sillars: Further to that point of order——

Mr. Speaker: No. I am not taking it again.

Mr. Dennis Canavan (Falkirk, West): I raised a similar point of order in July last year about the first Scottish Question Time after the general election. If you check *Hansard*, Mr. Speaker, you will see that you made a mistake in referring to English questions and you corrected yourself afterwards and reference to said United Kingdom questions.

The hon. Member for Glasgow, Govan (Mr. Sillars) makes a fair point. There is nothing in the Standing Orders to prohibit an English Member from intervening in Scottish Question Time, but until July 1987 by custom, tradition and practice only rarely, if ever, did English Members intervene in Scottish Question Time. The tradition was broken last year because, to be blunt, the Labour party was too successful in Scotland, winning 50 of the 72 seats, and the Tories were reduced to a discredited rump of 10. We are being punished for our success because now it is more difficult for a Scottish Labour Back Bencher to catch your eye due to the infiltration of English Tory Members. All we are asking is that you use your discretionary power, Mr. Speaker, return to what was the custom and tradition of the House before July 1987, and let us have more opportunities to speak on behalf of our constituents.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I am on my feet.

I also have to bear in mind that we have questions to the Northern Ireland Office. In the past, I have been heavily criticised by Labour Members who have not been called for calling too many Northern Ireland Members to ask questions and supplementaries. Some of those hon. Members are nodding their heads now. I have a heavy responsibility and the House had best leave this to Mr. Speaker, whom I hope they trust to be entirely fair.

Mr. James Couchman (Gillingham): Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. In view of the substantial transfer payments from England to Scotland, is it not entirely reasonable that English Members should represent English taxpayers' interests by asking questions about Scottish business at Scottish Question Time?

Mr. Alex Salmond (Banff and Buchan): Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. May we have your direction on the point raised about Standing Order No. 130, which states that a Select Committee on Scottish Affairs "shall be" established, not "might" or "may be" established. What recourse do I have as a Back-Bench Member to ensure that this House follows its Standing Orders? Is that matter not in your province, Mr. Speaker?

Mr. Speaker: Last week there was a procedure debate in which the Leader of the House promised a debate on that very matter. If the hon. Member and his hon. Friends think that Mr. Speaker's practice should be changed, we have a Procedure Committee which has wide powers of reference and he could put this matter about Scottish questions to it. If the House in its wisdom decides that only Scottish Members should be called at Scottish Question Time or only Ulster Members at Northern Ireland Question Time, I shall follow that decision. Until then, I propose to carry on as I have in the past, being even handed to both sides of the House.

Orders of the Day

Prevention of Terrorism (Temporary Provisions) Bill

Order for Second Reading read.

Mr. Speaker: I have selected the reasoned amendment in the name of the Leader of the Opposition. Since we have such a late start to this important debate, I appeal for brief contributions from the Front and Back Benches.

5.30 pm

The Secretary of State for the Home Department (Mr. Douglas Hurd): I beg to move, That the Bill be now read a Second time.

Like my predecessors, Labour and Conservative, I have to show that the necessary effort against terrorism requires certain limited powers for the police and for the courts which go beyond those granted by the ordinary law. I hope that I shall not have great difficulty in doing that this afternoon because events in all our minds make the argument for me.

The Bill covers international as well as Irish terrorism. There are examples of how we have suffered from international terrorism which I need not rehearse because they are familiar to the House. But for some months now our fellow countrymen in Northern Ireland, and we ourselves, have been living through a particularly intense phase in the latest campaign by the Provisional IRA. The past 20 years have seen in the United Kingdom a terrorist campaign unparalleled in the western world, aimed ostensibly at the goal of a united Marxist Ireland. This campaign has caused the death of almost 3,000 men, women and children, more than three quarters of them Irish men and women. It has also been responsible for the deaths of more than 400 soldiers. This year alone 91 people have been killed in Northern Ireland.

Those statistics take their place among all the other statistical information with which we are bombarded, but they do not tell the full story of the individuals—of 21-year-old Gillian Johnson murdered in county Fermanagh: she is not just a statistic; a 12-year-old schoolgirl severely injured when a bomb exploded on a school bus; two elderly householders killed when a booby trap bomb exploded in a block of flats in Londonderry; 32 soldiers and six police officers killed this year; Mr. Lavery and his 13-year-old granddaughter murdered last week in the village of Benburb.

It should not be just for right hon. and hon. Members representing Northern Ireland constituencies to lay those tragedies before us. Recent events prove beyond doubt a point that was made at Question Time today—that we must redouble and intensify our efforts to tell the world the simple truth about the Provisional IRA.

I want to make two brief points before I come to the Bill. The record shows that the only currency in which the Provisional IRA is interested is that of corpses. In creating misery they are masters, but in advancing towards a united Ireland they are failures. They have not broken the determination of the people of Northern Ireland. They have not deflected our security forces. They have not bullied the House or our constituents into calling on us to abandon the effort against them. The few and fractious voices raised in support of the abandonment of Northern Ireland find no echo. For all their ferocity, the IRA has failed, and will continue to fail.

A month ago the hon. Member for Newry and Armagh (Mr. Mallon) accused the Government of working on

"the cardinal error that somehow we can make the law defeat terrorism."—[*Official Report*, 2 November 1988; Vol. 139, c. 1113.]

But it is not an argument against a particular measure that by itself it does not do all that is required. Success against terrorism in Northern Ireland, as elsewhere, depends on energetic co-operation in the security effort on both sides of the border. It depends on all the valiant efforts, in which the hon. Gentleman's party joins, being made to reconcile the two communities in the north. It depends on sustaining the economy. But it also depends, and depends crucially, on having in place laws properly adapted to the prevention and pursuit of terrorism. Terrorism is a crime, but it is an exceptional crime, directed at the heart of society, carried out on the whole by well-trained and well-equipped men. Society has to learn to protect itself by measures to prevent terrorism and then, if necessary, to bring terrorists to justice.

The Bill is called the Prevention of Terrorism (Temporary Provisions) Bill, not the "Punishment of Terrorism" Bill. The limited special powers which I shall ask the House to approve save lives because they are powers of prevention. I exercised those powers for a year as Secretary of State for Northern Ireland and for three years in my present position and, incident by incident, I have no doubt of that. If we have to wait to act until evidence of a specific offence is available, we may have to wait until there is a victim. That is to wait too long. We must be able to act where we can before blood is spilled on the streets.

The first Prevention of Terrorism Bill was introduced by a Labour Government in two days in November 1974 in the light of a particular violent campaign on the mainland. Members of the Opposition Front Bench once grasped the nettle and took the action that they have since come to oppose. The 1974 Act and the Act passed two years later in 1976 contained many of the powers which we have come to see as essential to our security forces—proscription, special powers of arrest and detention and exclusion, as well as examination at ports handling traffic within the common travel area. The 1976 Act was replaced by a further Act in 1984, which was given a five year life. It expires on 21 March 1989.

The Bill before the House replaces that Act. In working it out we have had in mind three principles. We want to preserve the core of the powers which have proved their worth in the fight against terrorism. We want to bring before the House a number of new measures, principally financial, which we believe will add significantly to those defences, and we want to bring in a number of reforms which have been proposed in the review of the legislation by Lord Colville.

During the passage of the 1983 Bill my predecessor announced an independent scrutiny of the operation of the Act each year. There have been thorough and critical reviews by Sir Cyril Philips in 1984 and 1985, and by Lord Colville in 1986 and 1987. Last year I asked Lord Colville to widen his terms of reference to consider not just the operation of the Act but the legislation as a whole. The Bill includes many of his recommendations, and I thank him for the care and thoroughness with which he has

[Mr. Douglas Hurd]

approached a difficult and sometimes thankless task. Lord Colville has agreed to continue his work of scrutinising the operation of the Act, by the police and the Executive, and that is good news.

The central powers in the Bill remain unchanged because we believe that they are needed. Lord Colville accepted the continued need for the powers of arrest and detention, but disagreed with us over exclusion. I share Lord Colville's dislike for exclusion in principle. I must take great care when exercising the power. A great amount of detail is brought before me in each case. But I see no alternative when it is not possible to bring charges against those who are planning acts of terrorism. Let me give an example.

Earlier this year the police were able to locate and follow a number of people in London whom they suspected of being members of an IRA active service unit. It was not possible to bring charges against them because no terrorist act had yet been committed. But I had no doubt on the information available to me that they should not be allowed to remain here to prepare or plan for acts of terrorism. As right hon. and hon. Members will know, we sometimes have intelligence which, for obvious reasons, we cannot quote in court. Case by case, there are justifications for exclusion. Let me give another practical example which crops up from time to time. Exclusion seems to be justified when people convicted of serious terrorist offences talk openly in prison of their intention to become involved in terrorism again once their sentence has expired. There again, with the proper precautions, a decision on exclusion is justified.

Mr. Tony Banks (Newham, North-West): Will the Home Secretary accept from me that no Opposition Member supports terrorism or bomb outrages, or indeed, as far as I know, the IRA? However, since the right hon. Gentleman is giving examples, let me give him one. One of my constituents, Peter Clifford, a bookseller, was arrested under the Prevention of Terrorism Act and, frankly, that was an outrage. That is why people such as me object to it. How many people have been arrested under the Act but have never been charged with terrorist offences?

Mr. Hurd: I am sorry that I gave way to the hon. Gentleman. I was dealing with exclusion. He misses the whole point of the legislation, which is prevention. It is illusory to suppose that every act of detention or exclusion can be justified only if a charge follows. If the hon. Gentleman had been following my argument, he would know that the whole point is that that is not necessarily so.

Mr. Andrew Hunter (Basingstoke) *rose*——

Mr. Hurd: I shall give way to my hon. Friend the Member for Basingstoke (Mr. Hunter), but I have already shortened my speech considerably because, as Mr. Speaker said, we are starting at a late hour through no fault of ours, and that will limit to some extent my giving way.

Mr. Hunter: I just felt that my right hon. Friend was being too fair in referring only to Lord Colville's objections to exclusion orders. It is equally relevant to record that Lord Jellicoe, in his review, regarded exclusion orders as being vital to public safety and to combating terrorism.

Mr. Hurd: There is disagreement between those two noble Lords, and I have given my view.

The system of three-year reviews introduced in the last Bill has meant a substantial reduction in the number of people excluded, which is now 123. Even if the power were used even less than it is now, I should continue to believe that in a rare number of cases it is necessary.

The power to arrest and detain persons on reasonable suspicion of involvement in the commission, preparation or instigation of an act of terrorism has shown itself to be an invaluable part of our armoury, and Lord Colville had no hesitation in recommending its continuance.

The House is aware of the judgment of the European Court of Human Rights in the case of Brogan and others, which was delivered last week. The court found that the purpose of the arrests of the four applicants in that case fell well within the purposes permitted by the convention—that these arrests were based on reasonable suspicion of the commission of an offence within the meaning of the convention, and that the intention behind the arrests was to bring charges if sufficient and usable evidence could be obtained. The judgment makes it clear that the arrest powers—a cornerstone of our prevention of terrorism legislation—do not conflict with the European convention on human rights.

Where the court differed from the Government was not over the arrest power or the length of detention available under the Act, but on the need for detainees to be brought before a judge or other officer authorised by law to exercise judicial power.

The Government have no doubt that the seven days detention, which has been available under the 1974 Act and its successors, is fully justified in some cases in order to give the police time to complete often complex inquiries to establish——

Mr. Chris Mullin (Sunderland, South) *rose*——

Mr. Hurd: I shall finish this section about detention, because it is an argument that runs forward, and then I shall give way to the hon. Gentleman.

I was saying that I believe, as our predecessors did, that this power is fully justified in some cases to give the police time to complete often complex inquiries in order to establish whether an offence has been committed. In his report, Lord Colville set out 14 reasons why the police might need this period of detention in such cases. The extended period of detention has led to major charges in respect of a number of terrorist crimes. I shall give an example. Following the shooting at close range of an off-duty part-time RUC reservist, and, acting on information, the police detained a person in connection with the crime. A three-day extension of his detention was requested for questioning about the suspect's alleged involvement in the incident and to await the completion of forensic and fingerprint comparisons. But it was only after a further two-day extension—up to the maximum—for the police to check out an alibi that the detainee could be charged with murder. He is now serving a life sentence.

Against the background of the terrorist campaign that this country continues to suffer, and the overriding need to bring terrorists to justice, we do not believe that the maximum time a detainee is available for interview under the terrorism legislation should be any less. We wish to ensure that the police continue to have the powers which they and we believe they need to counter terrorism. It

follows, as those familiar with the convention will know, that there are two ways in which we can proceed. We can decide to derogate under the convention in respect of the exercise of these powers, as provided for in article 15 of the convention; or we can introduce a judicial element into the procedure for authorising extensions of detention in order to comply with article 5.3 of the convention. The court recognised the difficulties of judicial control over decisions to arrest and detain suspected terrorists. It acknowledged that these may call for suitable procedural precautions. It acknowledged, too, the particular circumstances of Northern Ireland.

Our system contrasts with that on the continent, in which examining magistrates supervise police inquiries and also, normally, authorise detention. I have no doubt that the House, as I would, would have preferred to see this matter resolved before debating the Second Reading of the Bill today. But it would not have been sensible to rush into hasty decisions on a highly complicated problem between last week's judgment and today's debate. I believe that the House will understand why we feel it necessary to proceed with a little more deliberation in this case. We are examining the problem with an open mind, and I shall bring forward our proposals, as the House is entitled to expect, before the Bill leaves this House.

Does the hon. Member for Sunderland, South (Mr. Mullin) wish to comment on detention?

Mr. Mullin: Does the Home Secretary agree that at the root of many of the actual and alleged miscarriages of justice lie convictions based mainly—or entirely in some cases—on confessions obtained in police custody? Does he agree, therefore, that the longer a suspect remains in police custody, the easier it is for police to obtain uncorroborated confessions? Does he agree that that is an unhealthy aspect, which is common to many of the principal alleged miscarriages of justice, starting with Timothy Evans and finishing with the Birmingham and Guildford bombing cases?

Mr. Hurd: The hon. Gentleman's worries about these matters are to a substantial extent out of date. I believe that the Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984 and the changes in procedure as to what happens in police stations in Northern Ireland mean that many of those fears are now unfounded.

Lord Colville recommended that the Act should become permanent. We have considered his recommendation carefully and, of course, one can argue that after 14 years, if terrorism shows no sign of abating, Parliament should face the need for permanent legislation. We believe that it is right that exceptional powers, such as these, should be allowed to remain on the statute book only for as long as is absolutely necessary. We believe that Parliament should regularly have to take a conscious decision as to whether they should remain in force. That is why the powers in the Bill will, as now, have to be renewed regularly or they will lapse. They can be renewed wholly or in part, as Parliament decides, so that if Parliament takes the view at any time that a certain provision can safely be allowed to cease to have effect, this can happen. But we do not believe that it is necessary to have a new Act every five years. So we have returned to the position in the 1974 and 1976 Acts of annual review and continuance, but we shall give the Bill no expiry date.

There are two provisions in part V of the Bill which are new and which apply only to Northern Ireland. I shall mention them only in summary, because my hon. Friend the Minister of State will deal with them in his reply. Those provisions refer to changes in the remission arrangements, which arise because of our growing concern about the number of people who return to terrorism after being released from prison. Those changes will not affect those now in prison and will apply only to those who commit offences after the Bill becomes law.

We have decided first to reduce remission from one half to one third for people who commit serious terrorist offences and who are sentenced to fixed terms of five years or more. This will not apply to those sentenced to less than five years imprisonment or to those convicted of non-scheduled offences. We are also providing—remember that this is important—that people on conditional release from prison, who are convicted of a scheduled offence, will be required to serve first any unexpired period of remission relating to the previous prison sentence. These measures are designed to deter people from committing terrorist offences and, by restricting the opportunity for those convicted to become further involved on release, to protect the general public.

Ms. Clare Short (Birmingham, Ladywood): From the time that the right hon. Gentleman served in Northern Ireland, he will appreciate that the large numbers of young people who are in prison because they have been convicted of offences connected with terrorism tends to tie their families, those who live near them and whole sections of the community to support and loyalty to that individual and loyalty to the paramilitary organisation. He must know that because it relates to the concern to obtain the release of young prisoners. Does the right hon. Gentleman believe that the Bill will simply tie even more people, for even longer, to loyalty to the person in prison and thus to the paramilitary organisation?

Mr. Hurd: The great thing is to prevent people from being swept into that disastrous cycle. Notions such as, "You are in the Maze, but not for so long and then you come back and join us again" are held by certain people. If the new added deterrents are known, from the start, by new offenders I believe that they could have the opposite effect to what the hon. Lady fears. I believe that they will effectively discourage people from getting involved in such horror.

The new provisions on the finances of terrorism are complicated. I am truncating my remarks, but if there are any particular points that hon. Members wish to raise, as opposed to in Committee, my hon. Friend will deal with them later.

The existing Acts prohibit contributions to acts of Northern Irish terrorism and give a power to the courts to order the forfeiture of any money or property intended to be used for terrorist offences. In recent years, it has become clear that we must do more than that and that we need more extensive financial legislation to strike at the financial roots of terrorism. The Chief Constable of the RUC, Sir John Hermon, made that clear in his annual report for 1987. One estimate of the annual income of the Provisional IRA is put at between £3 million and £4 million a year. The provisionals need that money to buy arms and equipment because it is not all given to them by

[Mr. Hurd]

Colonel Gaddafi. They need the money to support the members of their ASUs and their dependants and also to fund the work of Sinn Fein.

Because money is so important to the Provisional IRA, that organisation has devoted a good deal of time and effort to fund raising. We must halt and reverse its success. Such fund raising is partly a matter of extortion and armed robbery and, of course, that is already covered by law. However, the IRA has gone into apparently legitimate business that gives it an assured income and a firmer base. It is, for example, producing, on quite a large scale, pirate videos. It is engineering mortgage fraud through unsuspecting estate agents. The RUC is actively investigating those matters, but the Chief Constable believes that the powers contained in the Bill are vital if he is to tackle the root of such terrorist racketeering.

It is not just the IRA which is involved in such things. We also have evidence that middle east terrorist groups have used the London banking system to their advantage. An Abu Nidhal cell was discovered in London in 1986 and it was run at a cost of about £50,000 a year. Money had been brought into the United Kingdom by couriers and maintained by the cell's leader to pay for safe houses, the travel expenses of the agent, as well as the salaries of the team.

In the Bill we propose a range of measures aimed at intercepting the flow of funds to terrorism. We have built on section 10 of the Prevention of Terrorism (Temporary Provisions) Act 1984 to provide a comprehensive scheme of investigation, prosecution and forfeiture of funds or property destined to be used to finance terrorism. Under clause 9 of the Bill it is an offence to solicit, receive or to make available money or other contributions for terrorist purposes. It will also be an offence to enter into, or otherwise be concerned in, an arrangement whereby money or other property is made available to a person for terrorist purposes, which are widely defined in the Bill. That is intended to cover, for example, banking transactions involving payments to a customer's order. The offence will also cover an arrangement whereby money or other property is made available to a lawful business and either that money, or the profits of that activity, is intended to be used for terrorist purposes. I make it clear—it could become an important point—that those offences will apply to Northern Irish and international terrorism. Moreover, entering an arrangement facilitating the retention or control of terrorist funds will be an offence—the so-called laundering offence. In order to commit that offence the person entering into such an arrangement must know, or have reasonable cause to suspect, that the arrangement is related to terrorist funds.

We hope that, as with the Drug Trafficking Offences Act 1986, the police will have the co-operation of the banks and other financial organisations. We have discussed the proposals with the financial institutions of the banking world in London and Belfast and they accept the need for incisive action against funds passing through banks and other financial institutions. We are glad of that.

The Bill will provide for the forfeiture of money or property destined for terrorist use or which was the subject of an arrangement for handling or laundering terrorist funds. It will prohibit dealings in property, which is liable to be forfeited, and the police will be able to apply for a restraint order before a person is charged. That power to freeze has been extremely important in the case of drug trafficking and that power is crucial if anyone liable to be charged with one of the financial offences is not to frustrate the forfeiture procedure by shifting his assets abroad while the proceedings go on.

The Bill provides for Orders in Council to designate other countries whose forfeiture and restraint procedures will be enforceable in the United Kingdom. Those Orders in Council will be made as and when we manage to negotiate mutual enforcement agreements with other countries. We would hope to start that process as soon as the Bill becomes law. If funds can cross international barriers, the powers to intercept those funds must also cross those barriers. That is an obvious point that was also applied to drug trafficking cases and it is beginning to work out quite well.

Linked to the strong new proposals on finance are new powers for the police to carry out investigations into terrorism. The police may apply to a magistrate for a warrant to search for material on terrorism that does not include "special procedure" or "excluded" material or items subject to legal privilege. All those terms will be familiar to those who soldiered through the Police and Criminal Evidence Bill in 1984. The police will also be able to apply to a circuit judge for an order requiring specified material to be produced, including bank records or bank transactions.

In Northern Ireland there will be a separate option available to the Secretary of State where he considers that a court-based application for a warrant or order would not be appropriate. He may then issue a "Secretary of State's Order", but only after applying a rigorous test to the case in question to prove that the RUC investigations would be prejudiced, that a person's safety would be endangered, or, on a broader plane, that the safety of Northern Ireland would be endangered. In weighing up such an application, the same considerations then apply to the Secretary of State's order as would apply to a court application.

The new measures, which hang together to an extent, are complex and far reaching. They aim to prevent the flow of funds to terrorist organisations. They will apply to the funding of terrorism here or abroad. I believe that if we get them through and get them working properly, they will greatly reduce the resources of terrorism and thus the ability of the terrorist to kill and maim.

Ms. Short *rose*——

Mr. Hurd: No. I have already given way to the hon. Lady and I am coming to the end of my speech. I am also aware that you, Madam Deputy Speaker, have a long list of speakers. It is already nearly 6 pm and the debate must end at 10 pm.

Finally, let us consider the point of principle. I hope that I have set out in summary, but nevertheless across the board, a convincing case for limited, special powers to resist terrorism, and, in particular, for the specific powers in the Bill. Some of those powers are familiar from similar previous Bills, but the provisions that I have spent the past 15 minutes outlining are new.

In recent years this subject has stoked up a great deal of anger and heat across the Floor of the House. Is it really unrealistic to hope that we can do better than that today? I have deliberately presented the case in uncontroversial terms and I have deliberately refrained from making the

kind of debating points that Opposition right hon. and hon. Members know that I could make, perhaps to some effect.

In answer to the hon. Member for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks), we do not say that the Labour party, here or in the country, supports terrorism because it has voted against the predecessors of the Bill. We simply say that, in our view, those who oppose the Bill have not thought through the nature of terrorism. They have not thought through the techniques that are at the command of terrorists, nor have they thought through the means that society, through the House and the Government, need to prevent the spilling of blood and to deal effectively with those who have spilt it. That is our charge, and it is a serious one. I hope that it can be met tonight.

It would be a great strength to this country if we could proceed on this matter with general agreement. There really is no abuse of power in the proposals. Lord Colville's scrupulous examination of how the powers have hitherto been handled confirms that. There is nothing tyrannical or abusive in the new proposals on finance. It is a carefully thought out response to the efforts of our enemies. I very much hope that the Opposition will, if they can, take advantage of the fact that it is a new Bill and support us tonight.

6 pm

Mr. Roy Hattersley (Birmingham, Sparkbrook): I beg to move, to leave out from "That" to the end of the Question and to add instead thereof:

"this House, reasserting its determination to defeat terrorism and believing that the defeat of terrorism in Northern Ireland can only be achieved with the wholehearted support of law-abiding citizens, declines to give a Second Reading to a Bill which undermines the rule of law on which the fight against terrorism must be based; and refuses to provide permanent powers either for a suspect to be detained for seven days without charge or for exclusion orders which effectively impose internal exile on British citizens, since such powers are wrong in principle and, by the offence they cause, aid rather than combat terrorists and terrorism; and further asserts its support for the measures to confiscate terrorist funds since these are both consistent with a free society and likely to provide practical results."

We invite the House to vote for our amendment which, if carried, would deny the Bill a Second Reading. We wish to do that as a demonstration of our irrevocable opposition to the continuation of powers that we believe to be wrong both in principle and in practice.

The way in which the Home Secretary moved the Second Reading enables me both to follow Mr. Speaker's injunction to be brief and to attempt to match the reasonable tone that the right hon. Gentleman employed in advocating his cause. He was right to say that the dispute between us—and dispute there is and will remain—concerns the best way to defeat terrorism and the obligations of a free Parliament in a democratic society. I am delighted that he put on record the fact that that is the nature of our disagreement, thus repudiating a Conservative research department brief—"AH(88)37 enquiries to Steven Brindle"—which was prepared for the debate and which made a quite different point.

I shall attempt to match the right hon. Gentleman's tone of logic and reason by saying, categorically, that in a free society it is wrong in principle to detain a suspect for seven days without charge and that it is wrong in a democracy to oblige a man or a woman, through the use of exclusion orders, to live in parts of the country stipulated by the Government. The application of both those measures is justified by those who advocate them, as they were justified by the Home Secretary today, as an undesirable but necessary encroachment on our liberties. To describe such powers as undesirable is grossly to understate the proper objections to such denials of our traditional freedom. To describe them as necessary misunderstands the way—and it is the only way—in which the war against terrorists and terrorism can be won.

Mr. Derek Conway (Shrewsbury and Atcham): I do not want to raise the heat of the debate so early in our proceedings, but can the right hon. Gentleman explain why twice as many people were detained under the legislation during the five years of the Government of whom he was a member than have been detained while the Conservative Government have been in office?

Mr. Hattersley: I shall attempt to reach out across the Floor and conduct the debate in the way in which I believe that it should be conducted. I accept that I was a member of the Cabinet that supported the continuation of the prevention of terrorism legislation. If I so choose, I could construct arguments to show that matters were different then from now. However, that is not the point that I wish to make tonight. I believe that my Government were mistaken at that time, but the fact that we were wrong then is no justification for being wrong now. There are occasions when it is sensible for politicians to say that what we did 10 years ago was wrong based on present evidence. Indeed, I said just that about an immigration matter dating back to 1967, and I say it about this Bill. If we feel able to say that, we are more likely to have a rational debate than if we were required to defend everything that we have done in the past.

I could mention special considerations not about terrorism in general, but as it is associated with Northern Ireland. It was to defeat the Northern Ireland terrorists that the measures were introduced and have been continued. They are punitive after 13 years of application—and that is the difference—and are no longer intended to meet a brief emergency, but to be an accumulative and permanent part of our legislation. Their present effect is the reverse of the original intention. At that time no one said that the purpose was to defeat terrorism in the way that it is now described by the Home Secretary. The measures were designed to convince the British people that the Government of the day were acting robustly in response to the appalling Birmingham bombings. They were also designed—and this was said publicly—to protect the Irish population living in the United Kingdom against a potential backlash. Now, they are said to have a crucial part to play in the war against terrorism.

The war against terrorism will be won only by the wholehearted support of the law-abiding population, including and especially the law-abiding population in Northern Ireland. Both seven-day detention and exclusion orders alienate and antagonise men and women whose assistance we need. If the Bill becomes law, it will impede rather than assist the defeat of terrorism and the suppression of terror that we all seek.

Mr. Robert Maclennan (Caithness and Sutherland): I was a junior member of the Government in which the right hon. Gentleman served. He does less than justice to the motives of that Government who brought forward the legislation in response to the Birmingham bombings by

[Mr. Robert Maclennan]

suggesting that it was simply to demonstrate an attitude of robustness to the troubles. He underrates the understanding of that Government that the measures, in themselves, would have a material effect on preventing terrorism—a view that was upheld two years later.

Mr. Hattersley: As I said, these matters were not whispered about in the Corridors that the hon. Gentleman and I habituated at that time—they were fully aired in debate. I am not putting words into people's mouths, imagining what they said to me, or interpreting what might have been their motives. The Government's views were made clear in debate and I am not in any way describing them as discreditable. They had to meet the position at the time, but the passage of time has changed the position.

The measures that the Home Secretary proposes to make permanent are likely to alienate the very men and women whom we need to support us. They will make the right hon. Gentleman's task harder. We are prepared to support those measures that appear to have a practical application and to be consistent with the rules of a free society. Therefore, in Committee we will support clause 9 which makes it an offence to solicit, receive, or accept contributions of money or other property intended to finance or support terrorism. There are some legitimate concerns even about that clause. The libertarians are concerned about the way in which the powers will be used. In some circumstances, the onus of proof will be upon the suspect. If he is to be acquitted, he will have to demonstrate that the money or property under investigation was not intended to finance terrorism.

I do not minimise the danger of requiring a suspect, innocent under the law, to prove innocence. I regret that this is the second time since the general election that it has been necessary—and I deliberately use that phrase—to switch the onus of proof so that innocent men and women are required to demonstrate that they have committed no offence. I believe, as I believed when the House debated the provisions to prohibit the carrying of offensive weapons, that when the need is desperate, desperate measures are justified to meet it. The power to prosecute those who financially assist terrorism and the matching power under clause 13 to confiscate funds used for terrorist purposes possess an advantage not enjoyed by other parts of the Bill. It will have a practical and positive effect and is consistent with the rule of law. We shall, therefore, support it.

On the other hand, part II, which deals with the power to make exclusion orders, will have quite the opposite effect. It is for that reason, almost as much as for the denial of the basic liberties which it involves, that we shall oppose it. A good deal has been heard about Lord Colville. The Home Secretary mentioned him today, and no doubt we shall hear more as the debate continues. I join the Home Secretary in expressing thanks for the meticulous work that has been carried out; but it is, I fear, Lord Colville's fate to be quoted and most admired when his conclusions coincide with those of the people who quote him. Lord Colville, let us not forget, recommended the abolition of exclusion orders. Sir Cyril Philips, who also examined prevention of terrorism legislation at the Home Secretary's request, made the same recommendation, and the Attorney-General in the Government who introduced the orders described them as "tantamount to internal exile". An examination of Lord Colville's statistics on this subject shows how accurate that description is.

A majority of the men and women excluded from Great Britain have been convicted of no offence. They are innocent under the law, yet they are exiled to Northern Ireland or to Ireland. We do not know—we are not told and we are told that we cannot know—the reason for their exclusion, but we are told that the right to appeal to the Secretary of State's advisers should reassure us that exclusions, in Lord Colville's words,

"are only enforced when they are absolutely essential".

Will the Minister who replies give us even a hint of the criteria by which it is judged absolutely necessary to exclude men or women from this country? Such criteria must involve the inability to prosecute these men and women for offences or proposed offences under the law. I understand, for instance, that members of an Irish folk dance society were prevented from making a reciprocal visit to Wales by the application of exclusion powers. A dozen jokes immediately come to mind, but I fear that the joke is on Great Britain as the IRA asks its rhetorical questions about British respect for Ireland, Irish men and the rule of law as it is applied to them.

It is equally true that many members of the majority community in Northern Ireland find exclusion orders offensive. The idea that terrorists can be excluded from the mainland of the United Kingdom and be required to live in the six counties of the north is wholly inconsistent with the idea that Northern Ireland is part of the United Kingdom and should be treated like other parts of it. There is much resentment at the idea of Northern Ireland being used as a repository for terrorists, who are left free to walk the streets of Belfast and Derry but not to walk the streets of Birmingham or Derby.

I admit at once that the resentment caused in the majority community is nothing compared with that felt by innocent Irish men and women who, because of part IV, clause 16, risk being treated like suspects if they visit Britain. The system on which port controls are based—cards filled in by a proportion of randomly selected passengers—is interpreted by many Irish passengers as a sign that general suspicion hangs over the whole country. All hon. Members who represent large numbers of Irish constituents know how their relatives feel about the checks to which they are subjected. They think that the checks are carried out merely because of their Irish origins and accents. I do not claim that their resentment drives them into the arms of the IRA—they are far too honest and sensible for that—but it erodes the feeling of wholehearted support for the rule of law which is essential if the war against terrorism is to be won.

Our complaint against the exclusion orders is based on the same principle as our complaint against detention: coercive powers are applied to men and women who have been convicted of no offence. The common response—I was going to say the weak-minded response—to this complaint is that because of the nature of terrorism in general and Northern Ireland terrorism in particular normal judicial conviction is often impossible. Translated into honest English, that amounts to the assertion that in some situations policemen and politicians must be allowed to override the rule of law, the necessity for evidence, the obligation to convince a jury, the duty to persuade a judge of the propriety of the proceedings and the discipline of justifying all those actions in public. With detention orders

—part IV—all those aspects of proper judicial process are missing, and that is not acceptable to the Opposition. We have argued against it for seven years and now our opposition, at least to the length of detention, has been echoed by democratic world opinion as represented by the European convention on human rights to which this country is a party.

Mr. Hurd: I do not want the right hon. Gentleman to go down a wrong path. It is not the length of detention that is the matter between us and the court—in many European countries people are detained for much longer than seven days. The question is whether there should be recourse to judicial proceedings.

Mr. Hattersley: I am referring to the length of detention under this process without charge and trial. I shall continue to describe such detention as the result of Executive, not judicial, action; and the length of detention as well as its method is crucial.

The Home Secretary's response to the decision by the European Court of Human Rights was wholly unsatisfactory. The Government have been found guilty by a court whose powers they endorse and whose jurisdiction they accept. It is the Government's clear duty to accept the ruling and abandon the practice of imposing detention without charge or trial. I do not want to heighten the temperature of the debate, but I must say that the Government's refusal immediately to accept the ruling of the court shows their true relationship with the rule of law, both national and international. From the sinking of the Belgrano to the police raid on the BBC's Scottish studios the Government have shown that they support the rule of law when it is convenient for them to do so.

The Home Secretary should have made an announcement about the Government's intentions today—whatever they may be. His failure to do so naturally and inevitably raises the fear that the Government intend, once the debate is over and the Irish extradition treaty is out of the way, to apply for a derogation on the wholly spurious ground, that the IRA is a threat to national security throughout the United Kingdom—the only terms on which a derogation is possible.

To claim that the IRA is a threat to national security throughout the United Kingdom is to elevate it so far beyond its real importance that that provides it with a victory in itself. Were the Home Secretary to have recourse to that alternative, the IRA's greatest victory would be won in the propaganda war. I can offer the right hon. Gentleman the headline now: "Britain defies human rights court". That message would reverberate throughout Northern Ireland and the republican clubs of North America.

The Home Secretary has told us that he will announce the Government's response to the European Court's ruling before the Bill's Committee stage is over. He said that he wanted proper time to give appropriate judicial consideration to what is a difficult problem. Exactly the same argument was used to me in Dublin a week ago, when I was pressing for the early extradition of Mr. Ryan. Leaving that aside, it is wholly unacceptable, and should be unacceptable to the House, to be told that we shall be given the Government's view on how they will, or might, amend the crucial aspect of the Bill before the Committee stage is over. The Government's intention must be announced before the Committee begins, and it must be announced to the House. I trust that if they refuse to make such an announcement the Chair will protect us against such a clear abuse.

I have tried as best I can to advance the pragmatic arguments against the Government's proposals, which will alienate the support that we need and provide our enemies with a propaganda victory. These pragmatic arguments against the Government's intentions are overwhelming. But the argument in principle is equally irresistible. The extent of the offence against our traditional liberties can be demonstrated simply by stating last year's figures. In 1987, 184 men and women were detained in Great Britain under the Prevention of Terrorism (Temporary Provisions) Act 1984 and 17 were charged with committing an offence either under that Act or under other legislation. Some of those charged might have been acquitted, but at least 104 were innocent under the law. However, they were held in custody by Executive authority.

In Northern Ireland during the same period 1,479 men and women were detained and only 343 were charged with any offence. That means that throughout the United Kingdom 1,663 men and women against whom no charge could be laid, let alone sustained, were detained in custody by Executive action. It is not altogether surprising that Lord Colville reported:

> "I have been told that there are worrying indications in the level of charges brought as a proportion of detentions made under the Act."

Whoever expressed the worries, I fear that it was not the Government because when they were arraigned before the European Court they attempted to justify holding a suspect without charge for up to seven days on the most spurious ground imaginable. The Government's case submitted to the European Court is the most disturbing of all the possible answers. I shall read from the Government's submission which they are reported to have made to the court to justify prolonged detention not endorsed by courts. They insisted that they could not make the necessary evidence available and said, "If it is produced,"—that is, the evidence—

> "there is a strong risk of compromising the source of information—perhaps even with fatal consequences. If it is not produced, there is an equally real risk that terrorists will go free notwithstanding the existence of evidence against them."

In simple language, that means that, despite the lack of evidence to warrant a formal charge, politicians and policemen believing a detainee to be guilty can hold him in the hope of drumming up enough information to make a formal charge possible.

Mr. Conway: Reasonable suspicion.

Mr. Hattersley: If there is reasonable suspicion a person can be taken to court. That is the case that we are struggling to make. Our case is that if it is possible to take a man or woman to court, that should be done. If it is not possible, it is the beginning of a most dangerous slippery slope for politicians and policemen to say, "We may not be able to convict them under the normal process but because we know that they are guilty we shall take special measures."

Mr. Ken Maginnis (Fermanagh and South Tyrone): Perhaps the right hon. Gentleman would weigh what he says against the facts. I shall give him an example. The people who exploded the bomb on the Ballygawley road that killed eight of our young soldiers and injured many

[Mr. Ken Maginnis]

more had been brought in for questioning again and again because high-grade intelligence had shown that they were guilty of terrorist offences. Unfortunately—or perhaps fortunately for the cause of justice—the courts require greater proof than simple high-grade intelligence. The right hon. Gentleman will remember that the people to whom I refer were, within a short time of the bus bombing, killed by troops as they carried out another act of terrorism. He must weigh the detention of suspected terrorists against the vast number of people—2,800—who have died in Northern Ireland during the present troubles.

Mr. Hattersley: Of course I appreciate that and I hope that the hon. Gentleman will give me credit for doing so. I do not minimise the strength and passion of the hon. Gentleman's question and I shall answer him in two ways.

Mr. Kenneth Hind (Lancashire, West): Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Hattersley: The hon. Member for Lancashire, West (Mr. Hind) may not have heard the intervention by the hon. Member for Fermanagh and South Tyrone (Mr. Maginnis) and I propose to answer that first. My first point—and I hope that the hon. Member for Fermanagh and South Tyrone will not regard me as unacceptably idealistic in making it—is about my opposition to and terror of the concept of high-grade intelligence being used to say that a man or woman is guilty. If it is not information that can convict in a free, open and democratic court, it should not be used outside such a court. I understand the pressures to accept such a system, but if we begin to accept it we shall begin to accept a view of justice and democracy that should be unacceptable despite the price that has to be paid.

My second point is a pragmatic one. I am aware, as hon. Members must be aware, that to defeat for ever terrorism and terrorists—which is our mutual objective—we must have the overwhelming support of the majority of the law-abiding minority population in Northern Ireland. Acting outside the judicial system by saying that security reports may convict a person even though the courts could not and that he will be detained or excluded makes success over terrorism further away than it would be were we able to carry the whole majority population with us.

I have heard many questions about British justice and the way that it is applied in Northern Ireland. Like the hon. Member for Fermanagh and South Tyrone, I have done my best to say what I believe, that British justice is fair and even-handed and that normally, with the inevitable human exceptions, does what is right and proper. However, we have to create that impression in sceptical minds and the idea of convicting people without using the courts is one of the ways in which we will undermine confidence in British law. That confidence is essential to the defeat of terrorism and without it terrorism will not be defeated.

Mr. Hind *rose*——

Mr. Hattersley: I shall not give way, not least because other hon. Members want to speak.

Less than 22 per cent. of men and women held in detention by Executive action are charged and taken to court. That demonstrates a gross infringement of the liberties of Britain. More important, there is a profound and fundamental danger in policemen and politicians acting as though they know that a man or woman is guilty even though the guilt cannot be proved in court. Without proof acceptable under the law, men and women are innocent and must be treated accordingly, but under this legislation they may be kept in prison for up to seven days. Paragraph 36 of Lord Colville's report says:

"The reasons adduced by the police for an extension"—

from the original 48 hours to perhaps seven days—

"included a few alibi enquiries, some requests for an identity parade and a substantial number of forensic investigations."

Those things in themselves are not arguments for using special power. All those procedures are features of the normal system of criminal justice. Lord Colville also said that "broadly" application for detention

"was based on suspicion of involvement in a particular crime".

That is what normally results in prosecution under the criminal law. I shall give a non-contentious example that I gave when we last debated this. I am open to convincing that it is my ignorance that makes me incapable of understanding it, but I do not understand why the persons convicted of the attempted murder of the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland could not have been prosecuted under our normal criminal law. People loitering in private gardens with no reason or purpose for being there are arrested every day, held in custody and their cases pursued.

Dr. Maire O'Shea, an elderly psychologist in my constituency, was arrested under the Act, charged and acquitted. Nobody who looked at the charge sheet could doubt for a moment that she could have been prosecuted in the normal way. Perhaps the Minister who replies to the debate will explain exactly the point that was made by the Home Secretary. He told us about a policeman shot at close range and a suspect held under the Prevention of Terrorism (Temporary Provisions) Act and eventually convicted.

Mr. Hurd: He was held for seven days.

Mr. Hattersley: Yes, held for seven days.

What happens in the United Kingdom if a policeman is shot at close range, not by a member of the IRA but by a bank robber? The idea that it is necessary to have special powers to convict a man who shoots a policeman does not bear close analysis. But, in the spirit of rational debate which the Home Secretary urged us to follow, I am open to conviction when the Minister replies.

There are other explanations of why the processes of normal justice are unnecessarily bypassed in detention cases. One certainly applied to the case of Dr. Maire O'Shea. Detention under the Prevention of Terrorism Act was the easy way to facilitate her arrest and to begin prosecution. But another reason, which many people fear is why detention without subsequent prosecution is so widespread, is far more sinister. Detention without normal access to a solicitor or the full use of custody sheets is a way of obtaining information from innocent men and women who may have a passing, peripheral, innocent association with terrorism. That is an intolerable use of the powers.

On detention, the Government seem to believe that one safeguard should satisfy us. That is the need to obtain the Secretary of State's fiat if detention is to be extended beyond 48 hours. I mean no disrespect to the Home

Secretary or to the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland when I say that they are wholly unsuited to the task. It is not the job of a politician to decide, on Executive authority, that a man or a woman who has not been before the courts can be held in detention for a further five days. If the job must be done at all, it is a job for the judges.

Under the Police and Criminal Evidence Act, special rules apply to terrorist suspects. They can be held for 48 rather than 36 hours without access to a solicitor. Yesterday *The Guardian* argued that the law should be amended to allow terrorist suspects to be held, as now, for 48 hours on the authority of the police alone and that judicial agreement should be required for their further detention after that time.

I do not advocate that as the solution to the Home Secretary's dilemma. I believe that the European Court ruling should be accepted in toto. But if the right hon. Gentleman will not go that far, what is the possible objection to the judicial review that *The Guardian* suggested yesterday? Some people fear that it will involve the judiciary in Executive decisions. That argument is wholly wrong. Judges would be brought in to protect us from Ministers usurping the judges' proper role. I assume that no one believes that a judge sitting in camera would run to the IRA with the evidence that the police provided to justify the extra five days' detention. The only conclusion that can sensibly be drawn is that the Government want to detain men and women for that extra period on evidence and on a basis of which the judiciary would not approve. That is wrong in principle and is unlikely to help in the war against terrorism.

If we are to defeat terrorism, as every Member of the House wants, we must never be seen to adopt tactics or policies that provide terrorists with the opportunity to claim, here or abroad, that the democratic processes are denied to them and that violence has become their only avenue of expression.

At the time of the atrocity in Enniskillen, the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland said with great courage that to oppose the reintroduction of internment, which many Conservative Members demanded then—[HON. MEMBERS: "Hear, hear."] They say, "Hear, hear." That confirms my point.

Mr. Jeremy Hanley (Richmond and Barnes): It was Labour Members who said that. The right hon. Gentleman is deaf as well as daft.

Mr. Hattersley: The Secretary of State for Northern Ireland said with great courage that the reintroduction of internment without trial would act as a recruiting sergeant for the IRA. The Opposition agreed with and supported him. We believe that the Bill will have the same effect. That is why we shall vote tonight for the reasoned amendment, which if passed would deny the Bill a Second Reading. That is why, if the Bill is not drastically altered in Committee, we shall vote against it on Third Reading.

6.34 pm

Rev. Ian Paisley (Antrim, North): I wish that the position in Northern Ireland could be described as normal. The Opposition spokesman, the right hon. Member for Birmingham, Sparkbrook (Mr. Hattersley), has been dealing with normal circumstances, but they are far from normal in Northern Ireland.

I give two simple illustrations, and I wonder how hon. Members would feel if this happened in their constituencies. Last Saturday week, my telephone rang at 12.30 am. A distraught parent was on the other end of the phone saying, "We have been burned out for the second time. The shed in our farmyard, which contains about 1,000 tonnes of potatoes, has been put to the torch. We telephoned the Antrim police at 7 o'clock when it happened. At half-past 11 the sergeant telephoned us and said that he could not come out until the morning. When the police arrived in the morning, they said that they were unable to enter our area without Army backing, so if anything happened during the hours of darkness they could give us no protection." That was not on the border; it was not in Crossmaglen; it was two miles from Belfast airport. It is not normal that people can be burned out, yet the police can do nothing for them in the hours of darkness.

The second example is the tragedy on the Ballygawley-Omagh road. I was in the area last week. The road is again closed to police and Army vehicles. It was closed six months before the tragedy, and it is closed again. It is practically a no-go area for the police, but it is an all-go area for the IRA. That is not normal. In abnormal circumstances, unpleasant things must be done that ordinary people do not like and that I personally do not like, but they are necessary to defend lives and to look after people's safety.

During the three to four years before 1985, the graph of violence in Northern Ireland was going down. There was less violence, less murder and less terrorist activity. Then in 1985 the Anglo-Irish Agreement was signed and immediately there was an upward spiral in violence.

Replying to yesterday evening's debate, the hon. Member for Leicester, South (Mr. Marshall) said:

"In a democracy, political change must come as a consequence of discussion and through the ballot box."—[*Official Report*, 5 December 1988; Vol. 143, c. 101.]

The Anglo-Irish Agreement did not come about as a result of discussion amongst the people of Northern Ireland; nor did it come through the ballot box. From the day that it was signed, the upward spiral recommenced.

Let us consider the tragic figures. In 1985 there were 54 killings. This year, until 6 December, there have been 91. The figure has almost doubled. In 1985 the RUC lost 14 members. This year it has lost four. In 1985 the RUCR lost nine members. It has lost two members this year. In 1985 two members of the British Army were killed. This year 21 have been killed. In 1985 four members of the UDR were killed, this year 11. In 1985, 25 members of the general public were killed, and so far this year 53 have died. We have now been warned by the Chief Constable of the RUC that there will be horrific murders and IRA violence up to Christmas. We do not know what lies ahead for the people of Northern Ireland.

I want to present some figures to the House tonight which will be of much interest to Opposition Members because they were not prepared by a Unionist. They were put before the SDLP annual conference by that party's leader, the hon. Member for Foyle (Mr. Hume), who is not in the Chamber at the moment. I will quote from a typescript of the speech that he made to his party. No one can say that these are Unionist prepared statistics to put a gloss on the situation. The statistics were given by the leader of the SDLP. Around this place I find people who

[Rev. Ian Paisley]

seem to think that the UDR is concerned with shooting and killing Roman Catholics and that the RUC is engaged consistently in an anti-Roman Catholic campaign.

The leader of the SDLP said, when he addressed his party conference on 26 November:

"Up till last Saturday 2,705 people have died in the 20-year period of the current troubles . . . who killed all these people?"

His answer was:

"The statistics are devastating. 44 per cent. were killed by the provisional IRA and 18 per cent. by their fellow travelling 'republican' paramilitaries."

That makes 62 per cent. killed by the IRA and their fellow travellers.

"27 per cent. were killed by Loyalists. 10 per cent. were killed by the British Army. 2 per cent. were killed by the RUC and 0·28 per cent. by the UDR. In short people describing themselves as Irish republicans have killed 6 times as many human beings as the British army, 30 times as many as the RUC and 250 times as many as the UDR. And wait. One of their main claims"—

referring to the IRA—

"is that they are the defenders of the Catholic community. Of the 1,194 members of the Catholic community who died, 46 per cent. were killed by Loyalist paramilitaries, 37 per cent. by people describing themselves as republicans and 17 per cent. by the security forces. And in the last 10 years since 1 January 1978, of the 306 members of the Catholic community who have lost their lives, 112 have been killed by people describing themselves as republicans . . . In the last 20 years republicans have killed more than twice as many Catholics as the security forces and in the last 10 years have killed more than the Loyalists."

Those are the facts as the hon. Member for Foyle sees them and as he presented them to his party conference. That puts a different slant upon what is propagated in this country about the position in Northern Ireland.

As I consider those figures, I am bound to ask why there is such agitation to get the UDR and the RUC off the roads of Ulster when their term of killing is nothing compared with the other people mentioned by the hon. Member for Foyle in his representation to his party conference.

Ms. Short: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Rev. Ian Paisley: No, I will not give way because I wish to be brief and the hour is late. No doubt the hon. Lady will be able to make her point as effectively as she usually does.

Those are the facts as seen by us. I have referred to personal happenings in my constituency and to the representations made by the leader of the SDLP. What can we do in that situation? We must remember that we have to show that there is a will in the Government and in this House to deal effectively and adequately with the problem. I will not argue the case for the great deterrent of hanging. I am convinced that capital crimes of this nature should receive capital punishment, and I have argued that in this House before.

I will not dwell on the question of Executive detention. However, I was amazed that the right hon. Member for Sparkbrook claimed that the Home Secretary, or a Cabinet Minister, does not have the right or knowledge to detain people executively. During the war the Home Secretary had the sole right to detain. Executive detention is a weapon in the armoury of any democratic Government, and it is used by democratic Governments in emergencies.

We also hear much in this House about the Irish Republic. It would be interesting for the House to know that the same kind of law—seven days detention—is on the Irish Republic's statute book. The Government of the Irish Republic will also have to have a derogation or they will have to drop their legislation. That fact has not been announced by Mr. Haughey. He has not made a declaration about what he is going to do.

In 1976, during a state of emergency—which still exists—declared by the Dail, legislation on detention was passed. When it was no longer used after 12 months, section 2 gave the Irish Government authority to bring in that detention up to seven days. The Irish Republic has the same law on its statute book as we have on ours, a law which some people try to tell us will antagonise the South of Ireland and those who support the South of Ireland. The Irish Republic has such a law on its own statute book, so it should clean up its own house before telling this House how it should act.

We read in the papers that there is uproar from the South of Ireland about the fact that remission will be cut. One fifth of terrorist prisoners released in 1984 have committed a further scheduled offence within two years. If people return to crime within two years of being released as a result of a 50 per cent. cut in their prison sentence, they deserve to have to serve out the rest of that sentence when they are apprehended after committing another criminal offence. The figures also show that one quarter of non-terrorist prisoners committed a scheduled offence within two years of release. The deterrent and the punishment must fit the crime.

The situation in Northern Ireland is serious and horrific. I spoke to an hon. Member from Northern Ireland today and he said, "Ian, do you worry when the phone rings?" I said, "Of course I do." He said, "That's how I feel because I don't know what the news will be." Therefore, I believe that the Bill can help.

I know that it is an infringement of civil liberties to take away a person's liberty for seven days. However, if a person is innocent of a crime, and if he can stand up to four days of interrogation, he can stand up to seven days or 14 days of interrogation.

Ms. Short: That is not true.

Rev. Ian Paisley: I know a little about the matter because I live in Northern Ireland and I know about it from both sides of the community.

I have always supported the police, but that does not mean that I support actions by police officers that are contrary to the law. If people are detained for seven days, their rights should be defended when they are being interrogated. Nobody should be abused, cursed or threatened and family matters that are immaterial to the interrogation should not be introduced. Let me give an illustration.

A young man was detained recently. His father had hanged himself, so there was tragedy at home. The police officer who interrogated him said, "You'll be at the end of the rope like your father." Such language should not be used in interrogation. The Minister should consider such incidents carefully. I am glad that we have an independent police complaints board and I have taken the case that I have just mentioned, and many others, to it. Some members of the divisional mobile support unit in Northern Ireland need to realise that they cannot treat people in that

disgraceful way even though they have been lawfully arrested and detained in detention centres. Such abuses must cease.

I shall lend my support to the principle of the Bill. I trust that the House will acknowledge the reasons why we are discussing these matters. The sooner that the Anglo-Irish Agreement is put on ice, the sooner that it ceases to be implemented, and the sooner that the constitutional parties of Northern Ireland get round the table, the better it will be for everyone concerned. There will be no way forward until the constitutional parties discuss Northern Ireland together in such a way that we can find an agreement that will supersede the Anglo-Irish Agreement, which is flawed and has failed. We must bring constitutional and political hope to the people of Northern Ireland. That is my plea to the House tonight.

6.55 pm

Mr. Ken Maginnis (Fermanagh and South Tyrone): The Bill is based on the review of the Prevention of Terrorism (Temporary Provisions) Act 1984 that was carried out by Lord Colville between April and November 1987. He was able to undertake that review in the light of the experience that he had acquired when he reviewed the operation of the Act in 1986. Therefore, the noble Lord is not unfamiliar with the Act when he tells us:

"I fully believe that there is a continuing need for special legislation against terrorism".

Those of us who have been privileged to make submissions to Lord Colville have been impressed by his deep understanding of the needs of our nation, threatened as it is by both home-grown and international terrorism.

Yet we are equally aware of Lord Colville's anxiety to ensure that we, as a nation, do not become hedged in by harsh and rigorous law, which would in itself become oppressive. No one who loves and values freedom and democracy would wish to see any legislation on the statute book that would diminish or devalue those ideals.

But we live in a world where the shadow of the great and ugly wars of yesteryear has been superseded by the mean but equally ugly spectre of terrorist violence. Some people—I admit to being one of them—believe that today's widespread terrorism, which pervades virtually every corner of the globe, constitutes the third world war. Although I share Lord Colville's convictions, I cannot claim to do so on the basis either of academic study or of professional training in legal matters. I share his convictions because of 20 years of practical experience of having lived cheek by jowl with the reality of terrorism and having been obliged, both as a soldier and as a politician, to witness—often at first hand—the tragedy and suffering that have been inflicted on thousands of citizens of the United Kingdom by ruthless and brutal assassins.

It is right that the House should examine carefully the provisions in the Bill. However, it should do so with the conviction that only by ensuring and maintaining the democratic integrity of our whole community can it hope to promote the civil rights of individual citizens. The United Kingdom is facing political and economic terrorism, such as that carried on by the IRA, so we all have a responsibility to differentiate between the immediate luxury of philosophical libertarianism and the long-term benefits of belonging to a properly free and fearless society.

The Bill is particularly important in so far as it is a major piece of legislation that addresses the threat of Irish Republican terrorism without the Government of the Irish Republic having the right to influence its form and format as they have done with exclusively Northern Ireland legislation.

Unfortunately, the folly of the Anglo-Irish Agreement has meant that, for example, the Northern Ireland (Emergency Provisions) Act 1978 has become a political football. The Irish Republic exercises the authority given to it through the Anglo-Irish Conference to question, and more often than not dispute, any measure that might be considered to oppose the terrorism of the IRA. Sadly—I sincerely wish it was otherwise—the SDLP and the Irish Government have opposed as means to inhibit IRA violence the following measures: capital punishment; the proscription of Sinn Fein; selective internment; an anti-violence pledge for candidates for election; identity cards; the removal of the 50 per cent. automatic remission from prison sentences for terrorism; the banning of Sinn Fein from the airwaves; and the change in the matter of the right to silence.

Mr. Seamus Mallon (Newry and Armagh): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Maginnis: In a moment.

The list is much longer. It could even include opposition to protective barriers outside vulnerable police stations such as the Strand road station in Londonderry and to look-out posts manned by the Army in south Armagh.

It is well known that I would not support all the measures that I have mentioned, but to reject them all out of hand surely verges on the malicious and could give considerable comfort to the terrorist.

Mr. Mallon: I thank the hon. Gentleman for giving way since he referred to my party specifically in his panegyric. Will he tell me exactly where he and the members of his party were when the public order legislation was going through the House? Will he have the good grace to tell us why they did not vote for that legislation? Just to keep the record straight, will he recognise the fact that I was the only Member of the House from Northern Ireland to vote for the legislation, in the face of our colleagues on the Labour Benches who voted against it? The hon. Gentleman should now have the good grace to put the record fully straight. He should also point out—as I will do later if I catch your eye, Mr. Deputy Speaker—that I welcome very much—I shall expand upon this—the part of the legislation dealing with racketeering. Indeed, I sought such a measure long before it was considered for legislation in the House.

Mr. Maginnis: We did not vote for the public order legislation because it was entirely different from the legislation that applied to Great Britain, but was in line with aspects of proposed legislation which was thrown out for Great Britain.

Mr. Mallon *rose*——

Mr. Maginnis: No, I am sorry——

Mr. Mallon: I would thank the hon. Gentleman for——

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Sir Paul Dean): Order.

Mr. Maginnis: I am sorry, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I have answered the hon. Gentleman's point. *[Interruption.]* I hope that I have answered it fully.

[Mr. Maginnis]

I was talking about the attitude of the SDLP and the Irish Government to virtually every proposed measure that is designed to inhibit or prevent terrorism. This House has seen the obstructive attitude of the Government of the Irish Republic in the case of Father Ryan, a man who has acquired a reputation as an international terrorist. The House has seen the destructive attitude of that same Government in its campaign against the British court system, not only or indeed mainly in Northern Ireland, but here in Great Britain.

To put it bluntly, where there is doubt about international co-operation in the fight against terrorism —surely there are grave doubts—we must, as legislators, ensure that we meet our responsibility to the nation.

Bearing in mind your request for brief speeches, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I felt that on the Second Reading of this Bill it was appropriate to address the principle rather than the detail. That is not to imply that my party accepts the details because the opposite is the case, but it would take too long to deal with, for example, the Home Secretary's somewhat flawed and somewhat naive reasoning on the matter of terrorist funding and how it might be prevented or hindered.

Ulster Unionists will hope to table amendments to improve the effectiveness of the Bill as it progresses through its various stages. Indeed, we hope to have the opportunity to play a full part in the consideration of the Bill at each stage. Tonight we will, as we did last night on the Elected Authorities (Northern Ireland) Bill, vote for this Bill in principle.

7.5 pm

Mr. Ivan Lawrence (Burton): The right hon. Member for Birmingham, Sparkbrook (Mr. Hattersley) seemed very pleased with himself when he resumed his seat. He had made a speech against the Bill to please the half of his party that wants to see no anti-IRA measures passed, and a speech in support of some parts of the Bill to please those of his party who believe that terrorism has to be opposed by legislation and by a united approach across the Chamber. However, the British public will be thoroughly unimpressed by his performance. They will have heard with amazement his assertion, which I hope the media will cover tomorrow, that the IRA is not a threat to the British nation as a whole. The public will show what they think of that contemptible and mealy-mouthed performance at their first opportunity, which will be at Epping Forest and the Euro constituency of Hampshire, Central next Thursday.

On 8 March 1973 I was leaving court at the Old Bailey when a bomb went off outside the building, leaving a great deal of devastation. I arrived at the House of Commons one morning minutes after a bomb had blown out the north window in Westminster Hall and destroyed the secretaries' offices. In 1979 I left the Car Park minutes before Airey Neave was blown to pieces by a terrorist bomb. I was with the Israeli ambassador shortly before he attended a function at the Dorchester and had half his brain blown out and became, as he still is, a paralysed relic of his former self.

Many of us in this place have had the experience of our parliamentary and political friends being assassinated or of attempts being made on their lives by terrorists. Many of us were living in London during the 1970s when bombs went off, killing and maiming hundreds of people in Hyde park; in the Green park Underground station; at Harrods; and at the Woolwich arsenal. There were also the bombings at Guildford and Birmingham. Those are some examples from just Britain alone.

In 1981, there were 3,618 terrorists incidents worldwide. By 1984 that figure had risen to 6,653, and the number continues to grow——

Ms. Short *rose*——

Mr. Lawrence: I shall give way when I have finished this.

In that year there were 3,324 bombings; 1,123 assassination attempts or assassinations; 1,341 arson or incendiary attacks. The murder, the maiming, the destruction and the misery goes on. There are 3,000 dead in Northern Ireland, including soldiers, policemen, civilians and women.

The terrorist threat continues. This year there has been the hijacking of the Kuwaiti Airlines jet; the foiled car bomb attack in Gibraltar; the cowardly murder of the British service man in the Netherlands. The bombs, the bullets and the destruction of the men of violence in Northern Ireland and elsewhere goes on and on.

Ms. Short: Obviously we agree that that is a catalogue of tragedy and we all want to bring it to an end and avoid it. However, the prevention of terrorism legislation has been on the statute book for most of the period that the hon. and learned Gentleman quoted, so it clearly is not preventing terrorism. That is our argument. Indeed, that legislation is likely to make some people more likely to support that kind of activity. That is our case. Of course, we all deplore the deaths.

Mr. Lawrence: We know that that is the hon. Lady's case and that several of her hon. Friends, who will vote against the Bill, have voted against such measures consistently when they have been introduced to the House. Indeed, they voted against such measures when they were introduced by the Labour Government in 1974 and 1976. We know that some people share that view, but the question is: what will end the murder and the maiming? Will cynical deals with terrorists by frightened Governments end it? Will weak Governments refusing to co-operate with information and action ever conquer terrorism? Will weak laws, half-heartedly enforced, achieve that end, or the wringing of hands, accompanied by weasel words? Will opposition to sensible Prevention of Terrorism Bills, showing that Britain is not united in its determination to root out this spreading virus, destroy terrorism? No. Only tough, determined, united, single-minded measures can possibly stop this terrible virus of international terrorism.

The first requisite is a Prevention of Terrorism Act that gives to the security forces the necessary powers to counter terrorism. We have such an Act, as the hon. Member for Birmingham, Ladywood (Ms. Short) said, though Labour opposes it and is pledged to repeal it. Because of that Act, the IRA bombing campaign of British resorts in June 1985 was thwarted. Because of that Act, 54 people who were detained for Irish terrorism and 18 people who were detained for international terrorism have been charged with offences such as possessing explosives or conspiring to endanger life. Fifty-three out of 77 of the cases that

came for trial in 1988 were found guilty, and these people were sentenced to more than five years' imprisonment under the legislation. How absurd it is to suggest that it has played no part in the control of terrorism.

What is needed is this power to proscribe terrorist organisations and to exclude from Great Britain, Northern Ireland or the United Kingdom, as a purely preventive measure, those who are suspected of involvement in terrorism. We need this power to arrest and detain for up to seven days and this power to control the movement of passengers in and out of the United Kingdom. The prevention of terrorism legislation has struck hard at the terrorists and has helped to make the United Kingdom a safer place, whatever the hon. Member for Ladywood may say.

All of those who are determined that the fight against terrorism ought to be strengthened, not weakened, will welcome the powers in the Bill. They will welcome the power that strikes at the heart of terrorism—the fund raising—by confiscating the assets of terrorist organisations, stopping the laundering of their assets and requiring the forfeiture of terrorists' possessions. We welcome the wider power that is to be given to the police to apply to the courts for search warrants and orders requiring specific materials to be produced and the power to apply to the Secretary of State for warrants in Northern Ireland when the police have reason to suspect that certain offences are likely to be committed or are being committed. We welcome the changes in the remission arrangements that will do much to increase the element of deterrence.

So great is our concern, however, that civil liberties should be curtailed to the least possible degree that even here, in dealing with the abominable crimes of terrorism, we control the powers of the police by obliging detention for more than 48 hours to be reviewed, and we maintain parliamentary control by requiring the new Act to be debated and renewed in this place and the other place annually. As my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary concedes, there will have to be further amendment as a result of the ruling of the European Court of Human Rights against detention for interrogation for longer than four days.

The question must be asked: why do the police need more than four days? The answer can be simply given: because forensic testing these days is a very detailed process that requires a great deal of diligent care, because alibis sometimes need to be checked thoroughly—and that takes days—and because other people are sometimes arrested and new information is brought that has to be used in the process of interrogation.

The facts are that over 80 per cent. of those who were detained in 1988 for terrorist offences were either released or charged within five days and that, of the other 20 per cent., half were charged with serious offences, 16 were charged with murder and eight with attempted murder. The police simply must have all the powers that they need and the time to exercise those powers, or terrorism will not be defeated.

The next question is what the Government should do about it. My guess is that most people in this country would say, "What on earth is a court of foreign judges, brought up under a very different legal system and without the United Kingdom's terrible experience of unremitting terrorism, doing telling us what we may or may not do, particularly since we always give terrorists a fairer trial than terrorists ever give their victims?" But the Government will not take that over-simplistic stand. They will want—and they will be supported by most hon. Members—to keep us within the restrictions of the European convention on human rights, if at all possible —which, of course, it is.

That leaves two options. First, we could derogate from the ruling of the court on the ground that the powers are needed because of the threat posed by terrorism to the life of the nation. Secondly, we could compromise by rejecting the ruling, but we could meet the spirit behind it by requiring a judicial element—a High Court or circuit judge, or a magistrate, or a tribunal of judges—to consider any police applications to extend the interrogation time beyond four days.

Derogation is, in my view, the least acceptable of those alternatives. When we derogate, although we act within the system, we make no concession to the civil liberties of the suspect, who might be innocent. We reject the ruling out of hand, although we do it politely within the terms of the convention. It would be more acceptable to many of us to require a judicial element—a judge, if there is no problem of availability, or a stipendiary magistrate, if that is more practicable. But what is needed is that the public should have confidence that injustice is not being done by the procedures. I think that a judicial element would meet that requirement.

There is the problem that defence challenges to police requests might bring out into the open highly sensitive material. That is a possibility. As always, the police will have to decide whether it is important enough to the success of their application to speak of such material. If, however, such hearings were in camera, as are applications for bail before a judge in chambers, there is less likelihood that such statements would get into the public arena. It is only a week since the ruling. The Government will need, and the House will support their request for, time to consider these matters.

That is the first requisite in dealing with terrorism—a Prevention of Terrorism Act.

The second requisite for a tough and effective campaign against terrorism is international co-operation over information, intelligence and action. The Government have taken the lead in Europe in such co-operation. Quiet, good work has been done through the Terrorism, Radicalism, Violence, International Committee of the European Countries—the Trevi group—and by anti-terrorist police and army units, such as the SAS, the GSG 9, Holland's marines and Spain's anti-terrorist group. The Government have improved international co-operation further by reforming the law of extradition, thereby satisfying the European convention on extradition which has served Europe well for 30 years. Are we not entitled to expect similar international co-operation from our friends and allies in this fight against terrorism?

We were all shocked and hurt by the cowardly behaviour of our friends, the Belgians. The arrest had been made in accordance with the Belgian laws. Belgium had sought our co-operation in asking for extradition. When appealed against to the courts, the extradition was upheld. When there was a further appeal to the court of appeal in Belgium it was upheld. The Belgian Government overruled the decision of the Belgian courts. The Belgian Government decided not to tell us—as they had undertaken to do 24 hours before they took action—what they were doing so that we could not try to stop it. They

[Mr. Lawrence]

just did what was necessary to get the problem off their plate, which is as near an act of cowardice as I have ever seen any Government perform.

We are all staggered by the reaction of the southern Irish Government over Patrick Ryan. They may need time to examine the evidence for extradition. Nobody doubts that. However, they needed no time to back our warrant for his arrest. Can they be surprised if many people in Britain are asking today whether the southern Irish Government's heart is in the fight against IRA terrorism?

The third requisite for the effective containment of terrorism is the maintenance of border controls—the minimum necessary to reach as close as possible the unified Community market, targeted for 31 December 1992, and its concomitant, the free movement of peoples and goods, but the maximum possible to contain terrorism, as well as drugs trafficking and other serious crimes. My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister is absolutely right. We want to strengthen the European Community in its freedoms but certainly not at the expense of the security of the United Kingdom.

The fourth requisite is the determination of a united people in the United Kingdom to share in the responsibility of fighting terrorism. We all share that duty —every citizen and every organisation. It is wholly contrary to that obligation for any broadcasting authority to refuse to supply to the police film of atrocities in west Belfast or anywhere else. It is wholly contrary to that obligation for the IBA to allow film about the shooting of the three IRA terrorists in Gibraltar to be shown before the inquest has been held. It is contrary to that responsibility for mischief-making film makers to take statements from people who will not sign them and then to use them on television. It is most certainly contrary to the principle of joint responsibility for the Opposition to be less than totally united with the Government as they always used to be on matters of terrorist legislation.

As my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State so effectively said, for all the murder, maiming, misery, heartbreak and human agony, the IRA is no closer to its aim of a united Ireland, nor will it ever be if the Government—with British people of all political parties resolutely behind them—stand strong in their total rejection of the inhumanity of the terrorist, wherever he may appear in our realm.

7.22 pm

Mr. Peter Archer (Warley, West): That contribution was unworthy of the hon. and learned Member for Burton (Mr. Lawrence) for whom, as he knows, I have great respect. He was not the only hon. Member in the House who knew and respected the Israeli ambassador. Many of us have known well other victims of terrorism and we do not minimise the tragedy. No one doubts the concern or sincerity of the hon. Members for Antrim, North (Rev. Ian Paisley) and for Fermanagh and South Tyrone (Mr. Maginnis). However, I wonder whether any of the previous three speakers listened to the contributions from either of the two Front Bench spokesmen.

This debate is not about whether to take a firm stand against terrorism, whether to protect the people of Great Britain and Northern Ireland from political violence, or whether to bring paramilitaries to justice; it is about how best to obtain those goals. We must not permit terrorists to destroy—either by their own hands or by manoeuvring the Government into doing it for them—the freedom under the law which the people of these islands regard as their heritage. If they achieve that, they will have succeeded in their principal objective.

There may be general agreement in the House over some of what the Government are doing in the Bill. Sometimes it is necessary to give to the police powers which are not shared by other citizens. Sometimes it is necessary to impose inconvenience on our citizens in the interests of security. Sometimes it will be necessary to sentence convicted offenders to long terms of imprisonment. No doubt it will sometimes be necessary to intercept funds that would otherwise find their way to the paramilitaries. So far as I know, none of that is in dispute in the Chamber, although I have no authority to speak for my right hon. and hon. Friends.

But equally, the Government must be aware of two traps, both of which were mentioned by my right hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Sparkbrook (Mr. Hattersley). They must beware of doing something simply in order to give the appearance of activity and to deceive the public into believing that something is being done. When young Albert's ma announced, "Somebody's got to be summonsed" she was voicing the anguish and frustration that people feel when they believe that someone, somewhere, should be doing something dramatic about a tragic situation, yet they cannot be specific about what would remedy or even improve it. It is misleading and cruel for a Government to respond by appearing to be doing something which will not solve the problem, or worse, which may be counter-productive.

We do not prevent terrorism simply by passing an Act of Parliament and calling it the Prevention of Terrorism Act. Secondly, we have to beware of doing something, which, because it is seen to be unfair, will lose the sympathy of decent, law-abiding people and transfer that sympathy to the very people to whom we are trying to deny support—*[Interruption.]* If the hon. and learned Member for Burton wishes to intervene, I will gladly give way to him. This is intended to be a serious debate. All of us may be wiser over a period of years because so much blood has flowed under the bridges.

Those who try to understand the psychology of terrorism do not always agree, although they probably accept that there is no one single diagnosis or one single remedy. However, they all believe that potential recruits are not deterred from violence by the clang of the prison gates. All prison can do is to keep those who are properly convicted where their power to commit acts of terrorism is restricted. But that depends on whether we are convicting the right people.

We know that the most important single factor in influencing a young Catholic in Divis or Bogside or a young sikh in Southall who is deciding whether to join the men and women of violence is not speeches made by politicans in the House or editorials in newspapers but the opinion of their peer groups—young people of the same age group in the same area, whose assumptions are similar to their own and whose opinions they value. If they believe that the law is unfair and discriminating, they will influence one another to resist law and order. If they can be persuaded that the law and the authorities are trying to

be fair and that someone is trying to listen to what they say, they will look for ways of airing their grievances within the system.

The Opposition believe that there are unjust provisions in the Bill, which for that reason are likely to be counter-productive. The time to look at those provisions is in Committee, but I shall give two examples, both of which were mentioned by my right hon. Friend the Member for Sparkbrook. The exclusion powers in part II of the Bill are seen as discriminating in two ways. First, it is frequently people with Irish connections and Irish accents who are almost automatically on the receiving end, and, secondly, the powers are used to confine people to Northern Ireland. So someone who is thought to have terrorist connections must not be allowed to walk the streets of London or Birmingham, even if his family lives there, but it is perfectly acceptable for him to walk the streets of Belfast.

In addition to being discriminating, it is unfair in operation. The subjects are not told why the order is made. There is no public hearing where it can be challenged and no appeal to an independent arbitrator. There is just a pointless and usually frustrating interview with a Government-appointed adviser.

There is no evidence that the most minimal contribution to protecting anyone from terrorism arises from those powers. No one could accuse Lord Jellicoe, Sir Cyril Philips or Lord Colville of being soft on terrorism. The Government use their recommendations in support of the legislation. Yet they have all expressed reservations as to the value of retaining the exclusion power and Lord Colville has twice recommended that it should be excluded from the Bill. The Government do not seem to have grasped the fact that the value of being able to rely upon the recommendations of a distinguished reviewer is totally lost if it is seen that they use them not as guidance but selectively, as backing for the Government's preconceived conclusions.

The second example is the power of detention in clause 14, to which the hon. and learned Member for Burton referred and which was condemned by the European Court of Human Rights in the Brogan case. If that power were not in the Bill, the Government would have to rely on the powers of detention in the Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984, which does not seem particularly worrying because it is their own creation, and presumably was considered by the Home Office under the present Government to be adequate to the requirements of the police. If it is said that the PACE powers do not extend to all the situations contemplated in clause 14, they could table an amendment saying that the PACE powers should extend to clause 14. I am not saying that I approve of all the PACE powers but they are not the subject of debate tonight.

It is now clear that, once again, the United Kingdom, which used to boast to the world about its tolerance, its rule of law and its respect for freedom, has fallen foul of the European convention on human rights. According to the Prime Minister, and, as I understood it, according to the Home Secretary tonight, the Government are considering not only what to do about it, but whether to conform with it. I hope that I did not misunderstand the Home Secretary or do him any injustice, but I thought that that was the burden of what he said. If I am wrong, I welcome being corrected by the Minister when he replies to the debate.

Considering whether to conform with our international obligations which have been accepted by successive Governments because everyone knows that the European convention on human rights represented the consensus of the whole of western Europe as to the minimum standards which a citizen is entitled to expect from his Government and their legislation—

Mr. Maclennan: Does the right hon. and learned Gentleman recall that the Government of which he was an ornament as a Law Officer derogated from the European convention on human rights in 1978 on the introduction of the Emergency Provisions (Northern Ireland) Act concerning detention?

Mr. Archer: Derogation is one thing, and it is a possible course that is now open to the Government. We should be clear that derogation, as I understand it, entails declaring that the paramilitary organisations have endangered the life of the nation. Those are the words of article 5. If the Government say that the paramilitaries have endangered the life of the nation, I suspect that that accolade would occasion some rejoicing among the paramilitary organisations, particularly when the Government are saying that month by month they are failing and becoming less effective. So I do not think that derogation would be an issue on this occasion.

How dare the Government say that they are considering whether to comply with a legal regime which, as far as I am aware, occasions no difficulties to any other police force or Government in Europe. How can the Prime Minister preach about the rule of law or respect for the law and then announce that the Government are considering whether to bring British law into accord with the international convention accepted by all our neighbours?

Finally, the Bill is claimed to be a temporary provision, but will it no longer be looked at afresh over periods of five years? It will be reviewed every year, but we all know what that means. It means an hour and a half's debate at 11.30 on a Thursday night. I know that some of us will want to say something about that in Committee, but I bear in mind the injunction of Mr. Speaker and I know that other hon. Members wish to speak.

I say again to the hon. and learned Member for Burton —I do not think that he is totally impervious to argument, and it may be that on reflection he will want to think again —that any hon. Member who seeks to represent our concerns as being soft on terrorism has either failed to understand what we are saying, or simply is looking for a stick to beat a political drum. He will be doing no service to the rule of law or to the people of Britain. To question how best to preserve the safety of our citizens and to maintain the rule of law is a serious matter, as the Home Secretary said. It requires analysis and not slogans, and it deserves better than to be trivialised by the Prime Minister, and the arguments should be addressed properly in the House.

7.35 pm

Mr. James Kilfedder (North Down): I always listen to the right hon. and learned Member for Warley, West (Mr. Archer) with respect. I have known him for many years, but I have to disagree with his observations tonight. I have reservations about the exclusion orders, but in my opinion they are necessary in the fight against terrorism. I put human life before human restriction.

[Mr. James Kilfedder]

The right hon. and learned Gentleman condemned exclusion orders as discriminating against the Irish. As someone who was born outside Great Britain, I think that no country in the world is as tolerant as the United Kingdom, and particularly the English people. I do not think that any other country would take in tens of thousands of citizens of the Irish Republic who are glad to come and live here and who are welcome. The Irish do not feel discriminated against. If they did, they certainly would not come to this country, and we must bear that in mind in considering the Bill.

The reduction in remission from one half to one third for prisoners who have been charged with scheduled offences and sentenced to five years or more is welcome to the vast majority of people in Northern Ireland. My Unionist colleagues and I have been pressing for such a change for many years. Our only complaint is that it has taken so long. That is our criticism of all the measures in the Bill. Why have we had to wait for 20 years for the forfeiture of money and property to be used in terrorist campaigns? The IRA depends on money to maintain its carnage in Northern Ireland, the United Kingdom and on the continent. The Home Secretary estimated that the annual income of the IRA is £3 million to £4 million. Every effort must be made to make sure that that money is not available to the men of terror.

The present IRA campaign of terror has lasted for 20 years, three times longer than the duration of the last war when we had restrictions on the rights and liberties of citizens, and, as has been pointed out, there was internment of people on the order of the Home Secretary. During the past 20 years, 2,800 innocent men, women and children have been slaughtered by vicious terrorists. The IRA has slaughtered people in Northern Ireland, in Britain and on the continent. After every atrocity there is a torrent of words condemning the IRA on all sides, and from the Irish Republic there are words of condemnation and sympathy to relatives of the victims. However, whenever the security forces shoot a terrorist, or whenever a terrorist is tried and convicted, there is an immediate outcry.

Many people in Northern Ireland are as perplexed as I am at the contradictory attitude which seems hypocritical in that the forces of law and order are meant to defeat Irish Republican terrorists but not to harm or convict them. In fiction, it may be possible to do that, but we are dealing with the world as it is, with all its harsh realities. The shadow Home Secretary, the right hon. Member for Birmingham, Sparkbrook (Mr. Hattersley), waxed strong about the resentment of citizens of the Irish Republic who were

"likely to have their support for law and order eroded".

It seems that the right hon. Gentleman was not aware that citizens of the Irish Republic are also liable to arrest and detention for seven days on reasonable suspicion. Like many other measures, that measure was introduced in the Irish Republic to deal with the threat of the IRA. It is only right and proper that we should be able to introduce measures of that kind without criticism of the Government and talk about discrimination against citizens of the Irish Republic.

The IRA wins every propaganda campaign that it mounts. It is highly successful and highly sophisticated. It has the help of many people in Ireland, the United Kingdom, America and elsewhere, who, for their own personal prejudices, are only too glad directly or indirectly to further the cause of the IRA.

The IRA is engaged in a bloody campaign of sectarian slaughter in Northern Ireland. The past 20 years have been punctuated by the most horrendous outrages committed in cold blood. Yet, throughout the world, there is the belief that Britain is holding down Northern Ireland by sheer brute force, against the wishes of the vast majority of the people there. There is the appalling belief that IRA members are freedom fighters who are defending a helpless Roman Catholic population against the terrorist attacks of the Protestant community. As hon. Members know, that is untrue. At his party conference, the leader of the SDP stated that the IRA has killed more of its own Roman Catholic compatriots than have been killed by members of the security forces.

As one newspaper suggested recently, the United Kingdom Government must spend an equal amount of money on trying to win the propaganda battle. It will be an uphill struggle, especially when those who are involved in television and radio broadcasting are doing everything possible to get around the ban on interviewing the spokesmen of the men of terror.

I hope and pray that political progress will be made in Northern Ireland and that constitutional politicians will get together and devise a system that is acceptable to the decent people of Ulster. Of course, constitutional progress will not bring an end to terrorism in Northern Ireland. Evil men are waxing fat on the profits of their evil deeds. We can destroy terrorists only by tough measures—measures that we would adopt only in a time of war. No matter what anybody may say, the IRA is waging a war against the decent people of this country. We should respond in kind. We must be tough. We must be resolute. We must be determined.

I hope that the measures will be implemented by the Government and that more will be introduced so that the Government can show that they are determined to destroy the IRA, not in another 10 or 20 years but as soon as possible. These measures may help towards that end, and I pray to God that they will do so.

7.43 pm

Mr. Seamus Mallon (Newry and Armagh): It is regrettable that, over the past few weeks, a certain atavism has grown up in Ireland and here in relation to justice and security matters. The Secretary of State was wise to ensure that that atavism does not raise its ugly head tonight. Unfortunately, in some cases it has done so.

One point crops up again and again. I do not like wearing my heart—other than my political heart—on my sleeve, but accusations were made against me personally and against my party, and we should nail them. I represent the constituency of Newry and Armagh, and I am proud to do so. It was christened "bandit country" by a former Labour Secretary of State. It is a difficult area. We do not keep going a political organisation that is committed to non-violence to constitutional politics without having to fight hard against people who demonstrate the same atavism that the House has witnessed tonight.

I know what it is to have to fight my way out of a polling station in the dark. I know what it is to have to take my workers to a polling station, when men with guns stand outside to prevent people voting. I know what it is to visit

my election agent and find him dead on his doorstep, with his four-year-old daughter sitting beside him. I know what it is to sit in my house and hear and see the mob outside trying to burn it.

Let nobody in this House or anywhere else believe that, when we talk about beating violence, we are soft on terrorism or have any sympathy with it. We see it at the coal face. When I say "we", I mean all hon. Members from the North of Ireland—Unionists and Nationalists alike.

The Secretary of State referred to the death and funeral of Mr. Barney Lavery. For over 30 years, he was a close friend of mine. I knew his little granddaughter well, too. I was at that funeral, as was, to his credit, the hon. Member for Fermanagh and South Tyrone (Mr. Maginnis). It would have taken tears from a stone. Let nobody here imagine that, when we talk about suffering and terrorism and violence, we do not know it from all sides.

The Secretary of State referred to what I said previously in the House about using the law as a weapon to defeat terrorism. Maybe he should have finished the quote. I said that it was a weapon not to defeat terrorism but an instrument to create justice. I stand by that view. I stand by that view also in relation to this legislation, as I have done in relation to other pieces of legislation that we have considered recently, and I do so for one reason. I ask the House to think about it in rational terms. There are two ways of regarding the legislation. One is the negative way, saying that it will defeat terrorism; and the other is the positive way, asking whether it will create peace. There is a clear distinction.

An important point is at stake. Surely everyone's aim is to create peace in Ireland—a peace that will last; a peace that will not poison relationships every week of the year; a peace that will not bring poisoned relationships into inter-governmental squabbles such as the one that we saw last week, the one that we have seen brought into Europe, and the one that we have seen poisoning the relationship between people who live happily together on this island and in Ireland, and between two Governments who have the right to live without embarrassment and without such a poisoned relationship on an almost daily basis. Without that peace, the defeat of terrorism will not be successful.

The Prime Minister rightly coined a phrase when she talked about the oxygen of publicity for terrorism. I make the point with all the sincerity at my command that, at present, the IRA, or Sinn Fein, does not need to look for publicity, because the House is giving it to it on a weekly basis. Those organisations were mentioned 168 times in yesterday's short debate. We all belong to political parties. If we were getting that type of cheap, free publicity, would we have to worry about what happens outside the House? Over the past four weeks the newspapers, the television screens and the legislation have given that oxygen of publicity to the very same people from whom everyone wants to take that oxygen.

There is the oxygen of abnormality. I commend to everybody concerned about the problem a most accurate article by Simon Jenkins in *The Sunday Times* last week in which he addressed that point. The habitat of the terrorist is the abnormal situation. He thrives in it and gets recruits and sympathy from it. Normality, where people go to work and lead normal lives, is the one thing that urban and rural terrorists cannot live with. They thrive on the abnormality that we have seen created in the North of Ireland. It is a tactic that they use successfully because we give it to them. A Sinn Fein political spokesman said:

"We thrive with repression, but we cannot live with reform."

He knows from where he gets his recruits and support. But what do we do? We provide abnormal courts and abnormal laws, such as those on the emergency provisions, the prevention of terrorism, the freedom of the press, the right to silence and, as of yesterday, elected authorities. On and on we go. That is the context in which terrorism thrives. Surely the Government must consider the oxygen of abnormality sooner rather than later.

Over the past few weeks this country and the Irish Government have developed an abnormal international profile because of a running sore. That sore has run not for one, two or three weeks, but for almost 800 years. I suggest with all the sincerity at my command that if a fundamental problem lasts that long, surely to heaven we all have the ingenuity and vision to start to see where the answer is, instead of putting the rubber stamp on abnormality each week as it goes by.

Under this legislation 656 people were detained and released without charge between April and September 1988. Surely that must raise questions, one of which must be: is this legislation being used not on "reasonable" suspicion or even suspicion, but to trawl for intelligence and information? I believe that it is. Two weeks ago in Newry, at 6 am, a schoolboy of 18 was taken in on foot for questioning about a little civil disturbance. Before he left the police station he was taken into a room by two people who questioned him about his neighbours and asked him to join Sinn Fein so that he could provide information. He was told that his call number was Roger, and Roger rang that night. That is how the legislation is being used. Like the hon. Member for Antrim, North (Rev. Ian Paisley), I have made an official complaint about that. I have been making official complaints for 20 years and not sustained one, and I do not have great confidence that I shall ever sustain one. However incompetent I may be, I do not see how I can get them all wrong. I ask the Minister to look into that because that is an example of what is happening.

I have one point to make on the European Court decision in the interests of this country and the standards of justice to which the hon. Member for North Down (Mr. Kilfedder) referred. It is not an a la carte Europe where we can take what we like and leave what we do not like. If we subscribe to the European convention on human rights, we have a duty to listen carefully and to do what is required with good grace. We should not be dragged screaming and kicking so that once again the bedrock of justice in this country is questioned publicly and the country is embarrassed internationally.

There is the oxygen of duplicity. I cannot think of a better word so forgive me for using it. I have spent many years, as have members of my party and Church leaders in the North of Ireland, asking this and other Governments to introduce legislation on racketeering. We told them what was going on and asked why there was no legislation. Irony of irony, it was introduced as a result of good investigative journalism by Roger Cook—the type of investigative journalism which will be prevented by legislation introduced a few weeks ago. Why did successive Governments not introduce such legislation? There are two reasons. First, it did not suit this Government's propaganda. For them it was good that people should believe that all the money comes from the United States. Secondly—the Loyalist paramilitary experience in Northern Ireland points to this—where there is

[Mr. Seamus Mallon]

racketeering on such a scale, one has a constant entry into the intelligence of an organisation. Let us not be self-righteous about this or feel that something great is being done. We asked for this many moons ago and it is coming now because of a brilliant piece of investigative journalism.

There is duplicity about the way in which racketeering has been presented. What about the racketeering of the official IRA? It is believed that £6 million a year is laundered through banks in Newry. I have been told that there is no official IRA now, yet at the end of the summer I found myself at a conference sitting with the political head of the same organisation, discussing how racketeering could be tackled. What will be done about that? What will be done about UDA racketeering? We have seen what is happening on the streets of Belfast. These are the problems that we are bringing to the Government and there is agreement that we have long asked for action.

I have experience at first hand. Four years ago a young builder gave me all the details of his case. The police did not want to know because they did not have the power to do anything and the Government did not want to know because they were not going to deal with the matter at that time. That young man is now out of business and has had to come to the mainland to work on a building site. That is what we mean when we talk about the oxygen of duplicity.

There is the oxygen of grievance, whether real or imaginary. One of the awful aspects of this legislation is that Irish people feel aggrieved by it. People coming through the ports are stopped and questioned. Lorry drivers are held for three days at Dover and their loads go bad. If one speaks with an Irish accent, especially if one is young, wears denims and has long hair, one is a suspected terrorist. That builds up a sense of grievance which showed itself this past week in the awful atavism that we have seen in Ireland. That frightens me as much as the atavism that I have seen from some Conservative Members. That caters for the lowest common denominator—something that borders almost on racialism in the two countries where we should be living as peaceful people, sharing our neighbourhood in a positive and constructive way, not as is happening at present.

That oxygen of grievance is to be found in those young people who are affected by the removal of 50 per cent. of remission. We are not comparing like with like when we say that we are simply seeking to bring Northern Ireland into line with the Republic of Ireland or Britain. Here and in the Republic of Ireland parole is available after one third of a sentence has been served. That is not so in the North of Ireland. People are not sentenced by Diplock courts here; they are in the North of Ireland. They are not sentenced generally under emergency legislation here, but they are in Northern Ireland. Those grievances build up. As someone once said, that turns Nationalists and Republicans into terrorists. We live with the results of that.

Mr. William Cash (Stafford): Surely the hon. Gentleman is making a case for a united Ireland.

Ms. Short: The hon. Member for Newry and Armagh (Mr. Mallon) has not mentioned that.

Mr. Cash: He has not mentioned it, but the question is whether that is what he is driving at. How does the hon. Gentleman reconcile what he is saying with the grievance that would be present if the views of the majority of the people of Northern Ireland were to be overridden by the sort of arguments that he is putting forward?

Mr. Mallon: I cannot fathom the rationale behind that question. I wish that I could, because I know of the hon. Gentelman's interest in the Irish situation. May we discuss the matter outside the Chamber, because I do not understand his question sufficiently to answer it? I am not sure whether anybody else understands it either.

Finally, there is the oxygen of emotion, and that is a cogent factor in the type of problems that the Minister knows we have to deal with on a daily basis. That emotion can substantially carry people away. Exclusion is central to that emotion. We are to have internal exile in the days of glasnost and perestroika. The world is opening up as this type of legislation closes us in. Is there not something ironic about that? Unionists and Nationalists alike find it offensive.

The Government will never defeat terrorism, because they cannot. They have to go down the road of derogation which will damage the Government and the country more than it will damage terrorism. I make that as a serious point. I am in no way supporting terrorism; I am simply making the point that terrorism will not be defeated by such an approach or by this type of legislation. What will defeat terrorism, or, to put it in a more positive way, create real and lasting peace in Ireland is when there is consensus among Irish people on the island of Ireland. Then we shall see terrorism defeated so quickly that we shall wonder what we have been doing for the past 20 years.

8.3 pm

Mr. Tony Baldry (Banbury): No hon. Member will doubt the personal integrity and courage of the hon. Member for Newry and Armagh (Mr. Mallon). However, it is slightly sad that, although he told us what he does not like in the Bill and what he does not like about what the Government are doing, apart from his latter comments, he told us nothing about what he and his party would wish the Government to do. It is sad that Opposition Members are always saying no—no to the Elected Authorities (Northern Ireland) Bill, no to the Prevention of Terrorism (Temporary Provisions) Bill, no, in due course, I have no doubt, to the Northern Irish equal opportunities legislation. There is very little that they say yes to in Northern Ireland. They say very little about how they would seek to combat terrorism. It is all very negative. They do no more than knock copy.

Let me briefly comment upon why the Bill is necessary. Hon. Members have asked whether other powers for arrest and detention are available. The right hon. and learned Member for Warley, West (Mr. Archer) suggested that those powers are available under the Police and Criminal Evidence Act. But Lord Colville's report shows clearly that the ordinary powers in the Police and Criminal Evidence Act are not adequate to prevent acts of terrorism because they can be activated only when an offence has been or is being committed. For the victims, it is too late if the police cannot take action until a bomb has gone off. Therefore, the police need a pre-emptive power to arrest on reasonable suspicion at the preparatory stage of terrorist crimes.

Nor is it sufficient to say that in such instances the police should arrest on suspicion of conspiracy to murder

or to cause explosions and matters of that kind. The police frequently do not have sufficient evidence to prove an agreement with another person or persons to commit an offence, as the law requires.

Ms. Short: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Baldry: I shall not give way. Many hon. Members, including the hon. Lady, have been waiting patiently to speak.

The police frequently do not have sufficient evidence to prove an agreement with another person or persons to commit an offence as the law requires, but they may have grounds for reasonable suspicion that a person is preparing to carry out an act of terrorism.

It is suggested that it is wrong to lock up a person for a period without access to a solicitor or without being able to notify his family of his whereabouts. A balance has to be struck bearing in mind the seriousness of the potential offence. Clearly people in police detention have the right to have someone informed of their whereabouts and to consult a solicitor. But it is essential that the police, on the authority of a senior officer, should in certain circumstances be able to delay the exercise of those rights for up to 48 hours. There are undoubtedly cases where, if it becomes known that a person has been arrested, the police could have difficulty in preventing an act of terrorism or would be seriously hampered in investigating terrorist crimes and arresting other suspects.

Lord Colville is right to say that a suspect's right to notify his family of his whereabouts and to have access to a solicitor should not be delayed a moment longer than is necessary and that the detained person should throughout be kept informed of his rights and the authority for their deferral if they are deferred. In that context it is important to realise that schedule 3 gives effect to Lord Colville's recommendation that the regime for detainees under the Prevention of Terrorism Act should be brought closer to that of people detained under other police powers.

The Bill includes new safeguards because throughout the review officer has to consider whether the reason for delay remains valid, at all times seeking to do the best to strike a difficult balance between the rights of the person detained and the rights of the community to be protected from terrorist offences.

It is vital to recognise that the Bill is essentially pre-emptive. It is designed to prevent acts of terrorism because its powers are often exercised while terrorist crimes are still in preparation. In some cases, preparation will not have gone far enough for a charge to be brought. We must recognise, too, that in some cases the information on which the determination was based may be too sensitive to bring before a court. However, the detention will clearly have been justified in preventing the terrorists' operation going any further. Let us be clear, as Lord Colville said in his review of the operation of the Act in 1986. Criticism of the Act based on the number of charges, which result from the operation of the detention powers, is misconceived and flawed, because it misses the central point that this Act's powers are pre-emptive in attempting to prevent terrorism. After all, it is the Prevention of Terrorism Bill, and, by definition, powers must be exercised in advance of the terrorist act, which is its entire purpose. That may mean that the preparation has not gone far enough for sustainable evidence to be available for substantive charges.

When considering statistics of charges for offences under the legislation—we have heard something about this—it is misleading to say that, simply because only a few charges are brought under it, this legislation is defective. The Act creates very few offences and they are generally ancillary, such as making a contribution to terrorism or withholding information about terrorist acts.

This legislation is about preventing terrorist offences from taking place. If a terrorist offence has taken place or it can be proved that it would have taken place, those crimes—such as murder or explosion offences—will be prosecuted under other legislation. There is an adequate body of substantive criminal law. This Bill is about measures to prevent terrorist offences from ever taking place. There must be a reasonable suspicion of involvement in terrorism for a detention to take place. There should not be any shadow of a sustainable suggestion that the police are using their powers improperly. Indeed, we have not heard any such suggestion.

In the recent case which was referred to the European Court of Human Rights, it was accepted that the arrests were proper. Lord Colville concluded that the allegations of abuse of this legislation were not justified. In any event, the Bill contains new powers for review of detention during the first 48 hours, similar to the tried and tested procedures contained in the Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984. If a suspect feels that the police have it wrong, there is the statutory police complaints procedure, both in the United Kingdom and in Northern Ireland, under which any complaints of alleged ill-treatment are thoroughly investigated. It is interesting to note that in all the thoroughly investigated cases mentioned in the 1988 Amnesty International report no evidence has yet been found of any justification for those complaints.

When one puts this legislation in the balance and considers what it is seeking to achieve, one sees that it is the Prevention of Terrorism Bill and, as such, when one analyses what it is doing, as against the ills and evil which it seeks to combat, I believe that it is a sound and balanced piece of legislation which the House should swiftly put on the statute book.

8.13 pm

Mr. Robert Maclennan (Caithness and Sutherland): The continuance of organised international terrorism has shown no sign of abating. Many instances have occurred in the United Kingdom in recent years which show that there can be no loosening of the necessary measures of protection required to safeguard the British public. Terrorist groups associated with Northern Ireland continue to show a capability to inflict murder and mayhem in the Province and in Great Britain. The casualties have certainly fallen from the highest levels of the early 1970s, but the threat and the actuality of outrage is ever present. It is against that background that Parliament again reviews these exceptional measures.

The provisions of the Bill are for the most part not new. However, they are exceptional in their treatment of those suspected of involvement in terrorist activity. The powers of detention and exclusion, especially, are not those which would be considered appropriate in other circumstances. It is, therefore, right that their effectiveness and acceptability should be under constant review both by Parliament and independently. I am glad that the Government have

[Mr. Robert Maclennan]

decided not to accept the recommendation of Lord Colville in his review of the 1984 Act that the core controls provided by the legislation should no longer be subject to annual renewal by Parliament. Lord Colville argued that the temporary nature of the controls fuelled what he called

"the unnecessary controversy that surrounds them",

making it more difficult to provide proper facilities at the ports and airports.

The controversy that surrounds these measures is not unnecessary. It is a continuing and healthy reminder that the measures are exceptional and cannot be taken for granted. This debate has shown that these issues are still alive—and so they should be.

Internal banishment—that is what the power of exclusion provides for—is a power that we would not wish permanently to associate with the criminal legal system of the United Kingdom. That is why the Government are right to have provided—designed to replace the existing statute—that this Bill should expire under the provisions of clause 26 on 22 March 1990, and be renewable only if Parliament so decides by an affirmative resolution on an annual basis. This arrrangement is a reversion of the provisions of the 1976 Act and seems preferable in that it does not assume the necessity for the legislation to continue for a five-year period, even though that may be more likely than not.

Lord Colville called for annual reviews. I believe that it is proper that Parliament should pronounce on the outcome of those. I am glad that it has been agreed that Lord Colville will continue his role of providing Parliament with an annual report—which I hope will continue to be a thorough one—on the effective operation of the Act.

Lord Colville's review was the third major examination of the workings of this legislation since its inception, and I believe that it was of great value. I am glad, however, that not all of its recommendations were accepted. The right hon. and learned Member for Warley, West (Mr. Archer) suggested that, because the Government had departed from the recommendations, they were calling in question the value of them. I say to him that to accept the recommendations without cavil or question would be to deny Parliament and the Government any part in the review process, which is patently absurd.

The Home Secretary was right to retain the offence of withholding information, which might be of assistance in preventing the commission by another person of an act of terrorism in Northern Ireland or in securing the apprehension, prosecution or conviction of another person in relation to such an act, notwithstanding Lord Colville's view that it should go.

The new special search provisions for use in a great emergency appear to be of potential value in making effective the new measures to deal with financial assistance for acts of terrorism. I am glad that the Bill contains these measures, because there is no doubt that the huge financial resources that have been available to the terrorist organisations have sustained them as effectively as the outside intervention of other Governments. Many of these resources are traceable and I hope that these provisions will enjoy universal support.

The Colville report did not go deeply into the proposals contained in part III of the Bill, but they appear to follow fairly closely in principle and in operation those already introduced in the Drug Trafficking Offences Act 1986.

Undoubtedly, the most controversial departure from the Colville recommendations is the Home Secretary's decision to retain the provisions relating to exclusion in part II of the Bill. The exclusion power is the most draconian contained in the legislation. Lord Colville reports the firm view of the Scottish and English Associaton of Chief Police Officers and all senior police officers to whom he spoke, who believe that it is essential to retain the exclusion powers. They believe that, without that power, effective surveillance of Irish terrorists could not be maintained. The right hon. and learned Member for Warley, West believes that that evidence is lacking, but I believe that it has been provided by the police officers—there can be no more authoritative evidence than that.

In an earlier part of his report Lord Colville made the general observation that the Prevention of Terrorism (Temporary Provisions) Act 1984

"is basically a deterrent, something very hard to prove or disprove."

I believe that that observation is right. I believe that the exclusion provisions, although the most exceptional and unattractive provisions of the 1984 Act, are the most difficult to dispense with. Therefore, I cannot take issue with the Home Secretary's judgment about their necessity at this stage.

It has been satisfactory that the provisions of the 1984 Act have, hitherto, not been held to be inconsistent with the European convention on human rights. It is intrinsically important that, even in the extremely dangerous circumstances of Northern Ireland, this country has striven to adhere to the standards set for the protection of fundamental rights and freedoms in that convention. It has been a shield against charges of inhumanity and it has helped to sustain our cause in other countries. Therefore, the decision of the European Court on Human Rights on the Brogan case is one to which the Government must respond with great care.

The Democrats urge upon the Government the overwhelmingly strong case for seeking to reconcile the detention procedures with the requirements of article 5(3) of the convention that an arrested or detained person

"be brought promptly before a judge."

If the Government seek, instead, to derogate from the convention under article 15, following the example of the Labour Government in 1978, they risk bringing this necessary legislation into obloquy. It will also greatly increase our difficulties in sustaining support abroad. I believe that the Government should provide arrangements to bring those arrested or detained under the provisions of the Act before a judge. In an earlier speech the hon. and learned Member for Burton (Mr. Lawrence) made a number of suggestions as to how that might best be done. I hope that those parts of his speech will be closely considered by the Government before the Minister makes a statement in the House about the judgment of the European Court. I agree with the right hon. Member for Birmingham, Sparkbrook (Mr. Hattersley) that that statement should be made in this House before this Bill goes into Committee, but, unlike the right hon. Gentleman, I do not believe that it would have been reasonable to expect the Government to come up with a practical response to the judgment of the European Court

before this debate. There is no doubt that many practical considerations must be borne in mind, but the principle of seeking to adhere to the operation of the convention should not be in any doubt.

The hon. Member for Newry and Armagh (Mr. Mallon) made one of the most powerful speeches of this debate. He speaks with personal experience of the horrors of terrorism in Northern Ireland, which few in the House can share. For that we thank God. He asks us to judge this Bill by considering whether it will create peace or whether it will defeat terrorism, but those are the wrong questions. The Bill, of itself, cannot do either.

The provisions of the Bill may assist to remove the sense of powerlessness that many in Northern Ireland feel against the ever-present threat to life, limb, happiness, family unity, safe travel and the security normally enjoyed by others in the realm.

The Bill may—it is impossible to demonstrate—make it easier to prevent the commission of acts that, were we to rely upon the normal provisions of the law, would be carried out. Then, it would be too late to do anything but offer our sympathies in this House to those who have suffered and have been bereaved. Because the Bill seeks to ward off such atrocities and because law enforcement officers believe that it will have a material role in achieving that aim, we accept its unattractive provisions, which we can regard only as temporary.

Parliament must review the provisions annually and reconsider their effectiveness and the manner in which they are carried out. Given the provisions in the Bill, the Democrats accept the Government's view that it is a necessary part of their armoury to defeat terrorism in this country.

8.27 pm

Mr. Andrew Hunter (Basingstoke): I shall be brief, Mr. Deputy Speaker, as other hon. Members wish to catch your eye.

I applaud and endorse the sentiments expressed by my hon. and learned Friend the Member for Burton (Mr. Lawrence), not least because he drew the House's attention to the remarkable and disgraceful remarks of the right hon. Member for Birmingham, Sparkbrook (Mr. Hattersley) who said that the IRA does not constitute a threat to our national security. I hope that those words receive due attention and condemnation.

Ms. Short: That point has already been made by a number of Conservative Back Benchers. The hon. Gentleman does not understand that, to derogate from the convention, we must tell the world that the security of the United Kingdom is endangered by the IRA. That gives the IRA more status than my right hon. Friend and many of his hon. Friends believe is due to it. That is my right hon. Friend's argument.

Mr. Hunter: I am well aware that that is the right hon. Gentleman's argument, but I entirely reject it. The hon. Lady's intervention has given me the opportunity to do so once again.

The hon. Member for Newry and Armagh (Mr. Mallon) said that the Government can never defeat terrorism, but I agree with the comments that the hon. Member for Caithness and Sutherland (Mr. Maclennan) made about that. I believe that the hon. Member for Newry and Armagh has missed the essential point—that this measure is not the sum total of the campaign against the IRA. It is one particular, important measure. Past anti-terrorism legislation has played a significant part in controlling the curse of terrorism.

I believe that the Bill should be greatly welcomed. It is another stage in the intensification of the process against terrorism that started with the Prevention of Terrorism Act 1974, and continued with the Prevention of Terrorism (Temporary Provisions) Act 1984.

We have listened to counter arguments from Opposition Members. I am inclined to give credence to their former colleague Lord Mason, who was recorded in *The Times* as saying:

> "There is no telling how many lives the legislation has saved."

It is right and proper that the provisions of the 1984 Act should be re-enacted.

We note Lord Colville's apprehension about part I of the Bill, which deals with proscribed organisations, but the Government rightly accepted his conclusion that it would be wrong to deproscribe.

Lord Colville rejected the proposal for exclusion orders under part II, as did Sir Cyril Philips in an earlier appraisal of existing legislation. That was not the conclusion of Lord Jellicoe when he reviewed the legislation in 1983. He said that exclusion orders had

> "materially contributed to public safety in the United Kingdom."

I was intrigued by the argument of the right hon. and learned Member for Warley, West (Mr. Archer) against exclusion orders, because without them surely there would be a greater flow of international terrorists into Britain. I was bewildered by my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary's reply to Lord Colville on that point. He wrote:

> "The power to exclude someone from all or part of the United Kingdom is one of the most important powers in the prevention of terrorism legislation . . . I believe it is right only to employ this power in cases where I am sure that excluding a person will prevent acts of terrorism."

My right hon. Friend's letter is ambiguous. I understand that paragraph to mean that he is referring only to terrorists connected with Northern Ireland and that he is not thinking of applying it generally to terrorists of other countries. Perhaps that point could be clarified in Committee.

The hon. Member for Newry and Armagh gave credit for part III—which deals with financial assistance for terrorism—to a journalist. There can be only an indirect connection because the recommendation first came from the Hodgson committee and it was also included in Lord Colville's report. It is basically the application of the powers in the Drug Trafficking Offences Act 1986 to terrorism and terrorist organisations.

Part IV, which deals with arrest, detention and control of entry, tackles a delicate and serious problem. However, when dealing with the exceptional circumstances of terrorism, exceptional powers must be taken. Although we note and respect the judgment of the European Court of Human Rights, arguably it has overlooked the human right of the individual to look to the state for protection against terrorism.

I support virtually everything in the Bill, but I have one misgiving—the Bill's response to the increasing phenomenon of international terrorism. International co-operation exists between the anarchist and Communist cells in Europe. The Red Brigade, the Red Army Faction,

[Mr. Hunter]

Action Direct, INLA, the CCC in Belgium and the IRA meet, conspire and co-operate; they use the same weaponry and armaments.

I have taken advice about the relevant clauses of the Bill and I understand that they do not preclude terrorists from other countries meeting in the United Kingdom to plot to carry out an act of terrorism in another country or to encourage others to do so—provided that they do not commit an act of terrorism or any triable offence in the United Kingdom. If that is correct, there is a serious loophole in the legislation that would allow the United Kingdom to be used as a base for the planning of terrorism in other countries by foreign terrorists.

That loophole could also be used by another form of international terrorism—the liberation movements, many of which have the backing of the Soviet Union and are a manifestation and an adjunct of Soviet policy. When those liberation movements commit acts of terrorism they cease to be liberation movements and instead become terrorist organisations. Some of them have offices in London. It is questionable whether the Bill gives the Government the power to prevent acts of terrorism being planned in this country by so-called liberation movements.

I welcome the Bill, although I have my doubts about whether it sufficiently tackles the phenomenon of international terrorism. I hope that some of the matters that I have raised will be discussed in greater detail in Committee.

8.35 pm

Ms. Clare Short (Birmingham, Ladywood): We have experienced the working of the Prevention of Terrorism Act since 1974, and it does not prevent terrorism. It has led to the arrest and detention of literally thousands of people who subsequently have not been charged with any offence. Since 1977, 4,358 people have been detained, of whom 3,701 have not been charged with any offence. The details of the minority who were charged show them to have been charged with offences for which they could have been arrested and charged under other legislation.

The very existence of the legislation and the way in which Irish people are harassed under it and the fear that when they travel to Ireland they might be stopped and detained causes an enormous sense of injustice, alienation and anger. I seriously believe that it enlarges the sense of grievance that the system is unfair and that there is some justification for paramilitary activity. It broadens the group of those willing to advance those arguments. There is a sense of injustice and alienation under the system.

As I have said previously in the Chamber, I was working in the Home Office when the first Bill was introduced. Indeed, on the night that it was first debated I sat in the Civil Service Box under the Gallery. The last time I said that, *Hansard* deleted it from the report of my speech. I should be grateful if it would leave it in this time. I do not understand why we should not refer to the fact that civil servants sit in the Box under the Gallery.

I remember that night well, because it followed the Birmingham pub bombings. I well remember those, too, because I was in Birmingham that weekend and one of the pubs bombed was used regularly by one of my brothers. When the radio reported the bombings we thought that he had been blown to bits. There was tragedy for others, but luck for us because that did not happen to my brother. I well remember the way that the atmosphere in Birmingham turned and Irish people were blamed and attacked. As was said by my hon. Friend the Member for Sunderland, South (Mr. Mullin), who wrote a book about the miscarriage of justice for the Birmingham Six, it was the worst mass murder in British history.

The sense of anger both in this House and in the country led to an enormous demand for the restoration of capital punishment. The then Home Office Ministers feared that mood and a Bill was cobbled together, at short notice and in a short time, to appease that mood. I sat in the Box that night next to the man who had cobbled it together and we talked about it. He said that he had slung in as many ideas as he could come up with. That is the true origin of the legislation. The reasons for wanting to appease the mood and the reasons for the anger about the Birmingham pub bombings are understandable. Brian Walden, at that time the hon. Member for Birmingham, Ladywood, was asked by Home Office Ministers to make a fervent speech against capital punishment in that debate, as his speeches in this place were so famous. He made a fine speech that night, and in that case, too, the speech was set up, such was the degree of fear. That was the Bill's origin; that was why the Labour Government put it together. It was drafted at enormous speed to appease justified anger and to buy off a demand for the return of capital punishment.

Then the legislation started to operate and we started to learn about its operation. Year after year the statistics came in showing hundreds of arrests—but no charges. The Labour party was big enough to learn from that and to realise that the Act was malfunctioning, was unnecessary and was generating injustice and a sense of injustice. My party was big enough to admit that the Act had failed and should be repealed. The Labour party is entitled to be proud of that. It is not honourable to go on doing something wrong merely because it was done before. That is dishonourable for any party or political person.

Conservative Members say that if the prevention of terrorism legislation were not in place things that we do not know about would have happened and more terrorism would have taken place. That is what they assert: we can never know it. The horrible path down which that leads is the erosion of more and more civil liberties and the use of the emotions that people feel against terrorism to justify a continuing invasion of those liberties.

I remember going to Turkey in 1983. There, members of trade unions and other political activists, such as people in the peace movement, had been arrested and beaten up in police stations. Confessions had been beaten out of them. I remember the sense of grievance and injustice in that society; and it is to those things that this sort of argument points. These arguments are dangerous. Conservative Members—and the Home Secretary tonight—continually tell us that there would be more terrorism without this legislation. That is a circular argument of which there is no proof.

The paramilitary activity in Northern Ireland is a dreadful tragedy. I feel deeply about all the bombs and all the innocent people who are slaughtered because I feel strongly about the politics of Northern Ireland and the need for a peaceful settlement there. My father came from Northern Ireland and that was part of my route into politics. I believe that, especially now, the IRA's activities are absolutely counter-productive to achieving its declared

aim—the reunification of Ireland. Its members should stop their campaign, go for political activity and seek unity with the Unionist community in Northern Ireland—because all the people who live in Ireland must share. The IRA is wrong. I want a united Ireland because I want peace and justice in Ireland. But I also understand why mostly young men—and some young women—in Northern Ireland are willing to join paramilitary organisations. Their sense of grievance and injustice and their belief that Britain will not listen, so there is no political route to justice, makes them willing to engage in paramilitary violence.

This violence comes from both sides of the community. The figures quoted by the hon. Member for Antrim, North (Rev. Ian Paisley) showed that about 64 per cent. of the deaths are the responsibility of Republican organisations and 27 per cent. that of Loyalist paramilitary organisations. The hon. Gentleman would not allow me to intervene in his speech. I wanted to ask why he was willing to parade with members of Loyalist paramilitary organisations while denouncing violence. But it is all a tragedy that must be brought to an end.

When I was in Northern Ireland a couple of months ago I found that people who would count themselves as firm Republicans were criticising the tactics, strategies and activities of the IRA more severely than ever before. That gave me great hope. Anyone who follows these matters and reads the literature knows that a debate has been growing up within Sinn Fein. I am sure that it was hastened by the SDLP talks with Sinn Fein; I honour the SDLP for having gone into those talks to determine whether the violence could be brought to an end. This growing debate has concerned whether Sinn Fein should stop what it calls the offensive use of force. I desperately want that to be encouraged. I want people in Northern Ireland who feel aggrieved and who want a united Ireland to work politically for that aim and to believe that it is possible.

The sort of measures that the Government have brought in in recent months weaken the argument for political action. The broadcasting ban, the ending of the right to silence, and so on, make those who oppose political campaigning tell the others not to be silly, because the British Government will not allow them to be politically active. They will tell them to look at the new oath that must be taken and at all the other changes, concluding that the Brits understand only one thing: soldiers going home in coffins. That is a nasty argument, but it is the one used. Decent people put forward such arguments.

If we want to stop violence and terrorism, we have to try to understand why people engage in it. We must win people over to politics within which there is space for them to express their views fairly. Legislation such as this leads to all sorts of young people being picked up, interrogated and unjustly detained, and that makes them angry and willing to support, vote for and, in some cases, join and be active in paramilitary organisations.

The series of measures introduced in recent weeks by the Government is a package that has been cobbled together in the same way as was the Prevention of Terrorism Act 1974, which was brought forward to appease the public mood after the Birmingham pub bombings, after which the Prime Minister asked for political initiatives of any kind. It is highly likely that this package and the anger about it will lead to an escalation of violence in Northern Ireland. I fear and expect that more people will die as a consequence of these measures. Most politicians rarely visit Northern Ireland and do not care a damn about the violence there—as long as it is contained there. It is almost useful to be able to pontificate about terrorism and to denounce it. I regret to say that I sincerely believe that most politicians in the House do not care about Northern Ireland or about the dreadful fact that these measures are likely to lead to more violence there.

The Home Secretary, who is unlike most other members of the Government, gave a fair presentation of the case for his Bill this evening. But it is usual Tory tactics to try to smear the Labour party. Tory Members continually smear those of us who honestly believe that this sort of legislation is counter-productive; so does the nasty press, which supports them and is owned by their friends. The argument runs that if we are against a measure entitled "The Prevention of Terrorism Act" we must be in favour of terrorism. That is a lie, but Tories deliberately use it all the time for political ends. Given all that, I cannot and will not back off and lend my support to these indefensible and counter-productive measures which are likely to lead to an increase in terrorism and paramilitary violence. I am unlikely to be swayed by the threat of this sort of smear argument.

My right hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Sparkbrook (Mr. Hattersley) made a superb speech in which he put the case against the Bill extremely well. Indeed, his speech could not have been bettered, but I believe that my party's tactics tonight are extremely foolish and will send out a muddled message from the House about the Labour party's position on the prevention of terrorism. I, like others, am not in principle against action to take away the property of paramilitary organisations that has been improperly obtained. I am worried about the provisions in the Bill which say that someone has to prove that he did not come across property illicitly.

Not long ago a woman whose husband's shop went bust came to my advice bureau. Her husband had engaged in some drug selling and was arrested and imprisoned. The authorities threatened to take away her house in which she lived with her children. I am not in favour of that sort of thing. I am perfectly willing to look at the principle, but we must also look at the details. As my right hon. Friend the Member for Sparkbrook said, putting the onus of proof on the person whose property is to be confiscated is wrong.

The Labour party's decision on the Bill was caused by Tory smears and lies and I am afraid that the Labour party gave in to that. We should not give in on such serious matters because of smears and attacks made in the press, or we will end up going ever backwards and defending the indefensible. I deeply regret that my party gave in to that. I respect the speech made by my right hon. Friend the Member for Sparkbrook, but I shall vote against the Bill, as will many of my hon. Friends. The measure is counter-productive.

Rev. William McCrea (Mid-Ulster): Before the hon. Lady finishes her speech, perhaps she could address her mind to a problem that I face. I walked behind a policeman's coffin the other day. The brother of that policeman's widow was murdered a few years ago as well. The hon. Lady has said much about her worries about persons being harassed. Will she tell the House and my constituents what she would deliver to the widow and the

[Rev. William McCrea]

orphans? Other hon. Members are trying to raise other matters, but I am asking a straightforward question and I am sure that I will get a straightforward answer.

Ms. Short: I apologise to hon. Members who are waiting to take part in the debate. If the hon. Member for Mid-Ulster (Rev. William McCrea) had been listening to my speech he would know my answer. Those deaths are tragedies and each one is a personal tragedy in whichever community it occurs. I desperately want to see peace for all the people of Northern Ireland. The Bill will escalate the violence and will not bring peace. That is my sincerely held view. As I say, I shall vote against Second Reading.

8.52 pm

Mr. Kenneth Hind (Lancashire, West): I admire the determination of the hon. Member for Birmingham, Ladywood (Ms. Short). We appreciate her point of view and her determination to put it forward, and we respect her conviction. However, like many of my hon. Friends, I disagree with what she said. She was correct to say that probably many people outside will interpret the stand taken by Labour Front-Bench Members as being the result of pressure from Conservatives. I would put it further. It is the result of public opinion and the real horrors of terrorism which, I accept, all hon. Members reject. The difference between the hon. Lady and many of her hon. Friends and Conservative Members is that we feel that we have to give the police the tools to deal with terrorism. That is why the Bill is necessary.

I am afraid that the Labour party shows a cavalier attitude to the safety of the British people and an inability ever to unite to formulate a coherent and strong anti-terrorist policy. Every Government must be prepared to have a policy to protect its citizens. Many Northern Ireland Members have spoken from the bottom of their hearts and have almost pleaded with the House to ensure that the security forces in Northern Ireland have the tools to do the job. We must give the police the powers that they need to fight terrorism. The fig leaf offered by the Opposition of partial agreement to the Bill is not enough.

We have to look at the nature of terrorism. The right hon. Member for Birmingham, Sparkbrook (Mr. Hattersley) advised us that we could use the Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984 to deal with detentions so that the police could inquire into terrorist activities. We are not dealing with ordinary crime. There is a fundamental difference between criminals who commit offences for personal gain and terrorists who commit acts of violence to perpetuate a cause. The terrorist is blind to reason or compassion and sees the gun and the bomb as his only way to overcome constitutional law and achieve his ends. The ordinary criminal is out for personal gain and, as I say, the difference between the two is fundamental.

We have to look at the people we are dealing with when we talk about interviewing terrorist suspects. Many terrorists, and especially those in the IRA, are trained in Northern Ireland and some of them have experience of camps in Syria and the Lebanon. They are trained by the PLO or by other Palestinian organisations. One of the fundamental parts of their training is the ability to resist interrogation by the security forces, police or military. We are dealing with an extraordinary type of person, and that requires extraordinary measures.

Opposition Front-Bench spokesmen are not listening. Perhaps if they did they might learn something. They advocate the use of the normal courts to deal with persons charged with terrorist offences. They say that we should forget the Diplock courts and that if we do not have the evidence we should not use the exclusion orders which are a fundamental part of the Bill. The Opposition forget, but I am sure that my friends from Northern Ireland will remind them, that in Northern Ireland witnesses will not come to court to give evidence in the way that witnesses do in the rest of the United Kingdom in the normal course of judicial proceedings. That is because of intimidation and the threats of violence towards the families of witnesses. We are not dealing with normal judicial proceedings, and that is why extraordinary measures have to be used. The Bill is one such measure.

My right hon. and hon. Friends who will take the Bill through Committee will have a major problem in dealing with the decision by the European Court of Human Rights. Before I deal with that, it is worth mentioning that in a way the decision of that court is typical of the problem facing the forces of law and order in dealing with terrorism in the United Kingdom. Four men applied for judgment, first by the European Commission and then by the European Court. Terence Brogan was suspected of killing two police officers. Dermot Coyle was responsible for bomb attacks, especially in Tyrone. William McFadden was suspected of murdering two soldiers. Michael Tracey was involved in several armed robbery offences.

The fifth man who went with them was called Charles English. His case was withdrawn fron the European Court after he was killed when a rifle-launched grenade exploded prematurely. The newspaper of the Republican movement described him as an active service volunteer in the Derry brigade with 21 years' experience. The problem for the forces of law and order was that witnesses would not come forward to give evidence in such cases.

My right hon. Friend the Home Secretary has two options. He could introduce judicial intervention to get round the problems posed by article 5(3), which sets out the need to get a suspect before a court as promptly as possible. My right hon. Friend should remember that, before the Police and Criminal Evidence Act, suspects being interviewed at length by the police were regularly taken before magistrates when requests for detention for further investigation were made. That procedure could be restored. My right hon. Friend will have my support if he introduces that or some alternative to derogation.

We should remember that the British Government have twice asked for derogation from decisions of the European Court of Human Rights. In 1971, the Conservative Government asked for a derogation on internment. In December 1978, the Labour Government asked for a derogation in relation to the powers that were included in the Suppression of Terrorism Act 1978. That Act would not have got through the House had it not been for the support of the Conservative Opposition, because 35 Labour Members voted against it. Tonight many Labour Members will vote against this Bill. Their opposition is nothing recent. It goes back over 10 years.

My right hon. Friend has no guidance from the European Commission or from the court. The Commission said that four days' detention without coming before a court is perfectly all right, but that five days is not. The case was taken to the full court. Although it agreed with the Commission, it gave no reasons for its

decision. So there is no guidance on how long the court believes a suspect may be held before being taken before a court. But my right hon. and hon. Friends will have my full support in dealing with the problems posed by article 5(3). We must provide protection for the British public.

The powers of exclusion have also attracted much opposition. I endorse the Home Secretary's views. If a prisoner deliberately tells the inmates of that prison, whether it be the Maze or anywhere else, that on his release he intends to bomb and kill, what are the forces of law and order expected to do? Should they ignore that? Are they supposed to allow him free access into the country so that he may form part of a cell, bury himself in a city here and slowly plan a bombing campaign?

Some hon. Members have said that no European country has similar legislation. In France, a convicted terrorist is required to reside in a special place for between two and 10 years. There is a similar restriction in Italy, with the added requirement of reporting to the police regularly. There is a great need for such protection. We should be able to know that terrorists, whether they be Libyans, Iranians, Iraqis or members of the IRA, can be excluded from Britain.

The fact that we need such a Bill is borne out by the events concerning my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, whose life was threatened by an IRA cell, by the 1981 bombing campaign in seaside resorts, which was foiled, by the Arab who tried to blow up an El Al jet at Heathrow airport and by the murders of WPC Yvonne Fletcher outside the Libyan embassy and the Israeli ambassador.

No one knows better than Conservative Members that extraordinary measures are needed to deal with an extraordinary problem. I am afraid that the official Opposition are offering nothing to the public tonight. We offer the police of this country the tools to combat terrorism. I have no doubt that my right hon. and hon. Friends are pursuing the right course in bringing the Bill before the House.

9.4 pm

Mr. Martin Flannery (Sheffield, Hillsborough): Time is short and I will try to restrict my remarks so that someone else may speak.

The prevention of terrorism legislation has been utterly useless. It has not prevented any terrorism. It has deepened the intensity of feeling in Ireland generally and in Northern Ireland in the minority community in particular. The legislation was born in the political climate of fear with a determination to wreak vengeance against someone.

I was in the Chamber that night when the first Prevention of Terrorism Bill was introduced. To its shame, the original Bill was a Labour Bill and it pandered to the hysteria at the time. Some Labour Members were completely against it. Indeed, one or two Labour Members from the midlands were physically frightened to oppose the legislation because they had to go back to their constituencies. They were afraid to vote against it although many of us wanted to do that.

Not only has this legislation failed to stem terrorism, it has increased it. Ordinary criminal law can handle those cases. It is well known in this place that the Government are now deeply committed to what the Labour Government realised was an error on their part. I share the view expressed by my hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Ladywood (Ms. Short) about what is happening in the Labour party.

This appalling Bill is pregnant with injustice and vendetta. It first appeared in 1974 when, as I have said, many hon. Members were afraid to express their views about it, although some did. They were not simply afraid to do that in the party; they were afraid of the reaction in their constituencies. Some hon. Members were frightened about what their management committees might say—*[Interruption.]* It is rude to interrupt when I have only a few minutes to speak. I have argued against people like the hon. Member for Londonderry, East (Mr. Ross) for years because they are responsible for all this.

The lack of democracy in Northern Ireland spawned the IRA. The deadly enemy of terrorism is not security measures, although they are important. The deadly enemy is democracy. The lack of democracy in Northern Ireland was caused by people like the right hon. Member for Strangford (Mr. Taylor) and his colleagues and the hon. Member for Antrim, North (Rev. Ian Paisley) and his friends. They still want to return to that situation which spawned the IRA when they attacked the march against the lack of justice and democracy in Northern Ireland. Those people know that as well as I do. The powers of arrest and detention were described by the former right hon. Member for Glasgow, Hillhead, now Lord Jenkins, as draconian.

I want to give my view about what my party has just done. I am at a total loss to understand how anyone could table a reasoned amendment—God knows what an unreasoned amendment might be—which justifies not voting against the Bill. Reasoned amendments like that to the Elected Authorities (Northern Ireland) Bill yesterday and the one tonight should really cause us to vote against the Bill. I will be voting for the reasoned amendment, as I have done over the past 14 or 15 years, and I will vote against Second Reading because the Bill is draconian and causes terror and misery to many honest Irish people. That misery is caused by the people who want to go back to Stormont and the old policies which caused all the trouble.

9.10 pm

Mr. Jeremy Hanley (Richmond and Barnes): I am grateful to the hon. Member for Sheffield, Hillsborough (Mr. Flannery) and others who have spoken briefly. I know that there is great passion among many hon. Members and they could have spoken for longer

There is always great sadness in the House when we discuss matters similar to this. We remember atrocities, murders and mourning and we even remember murders at times of mourning, at funerals and on Remembrance day. Those of us who know Ulster—and it is a part of the world that I love—know how terrorism is a cancer that infects an otherwise beautiful country. It is a disease, but it surprises many people who visit Ulster that they do not find everywhere they look evidence of atrocities. However, they know, as we do, that those atrocities and the danger of terrorism is never far away. On top of death and destruction, the threat scares away investors and employers, reduces the already poor employment opportunities and decreases the ability of the country to recover economically.

Yet Opposition Members have said that the Prevention of Terrorism (Temporary Provisions) Act has failed

[Mr. Jeremy Hanley]

because terrorism continues. That is madness. That is the type of argument that seeks to ban preventive medicine because disease has not been fully conquered, or ridicules home security because burglaries are still perpetrated, or bans prisons because they do not eradicate crime completely.

Those whose madness stretches to their tragic and pointless suicides in the hunger strike or leads to their self-humiliation in the dirty protest cannot be stopped completely by anything. Their belief and passion are fuelled by actions against them and they believe that they are right. Those who are dedicated to their cause believe that they are right, but I do not include here those who exploit that cause through fraud, theft, protection rackets and the like for personal greed. Those who have that passion for their cause will, of course, react against this Bill and against anything that tries to stop them and keep them within the law. Is that a reason for us not to introduce such legislation?

Our democracy allows for disparate views. What distances these people, and why we must do all that we can to counter them, is that they do not accept democracy and will not wait for a majority view in Northern Ireland, which might unite North and South. They will murder and maim to exercise a warped demonstration of their power —the power of the gunman over the unarmed and of the bomber over the school child, grandfather or farmer. Is that the way to gain respect or to win men's minds?

At least the Bill is a genuine and decent attempt to try to prevent terrorism and has not been introduced by skulking in bushes or with the benefit of hundreds of yards of wire. It has been introduced not in a cowardly or secretive way but in the full glare of parliamentary publicity and in open debate. That is democracy at work and it is anathema to terrorists. I welcome the Bill and I accept that limitations on liberty, such as the exclusion order, have not been taken lightly. We consider infringements of human rights carefully, but I know that many hon. Members would rather consider the human rights of those who have been killed or maimed horribly in the streets, in shops, in pubs, discotheques and even in public places such as the London streets during Christmas shopping.

The Association of Chief Police Officers of England, Wales and Northern Ireland, the Association of Chief Police Officers (Scotland) and the great majority of senior police officers are said by Lord Colville to support the continued use of exclusion powers. Without exclusion powers, they would not have the physical resources to provide surveillance for all suspected Irish terrorists who might arrive. The retention of powers is regrettable, but essential.

The hon. Member for Birmingham, Ladywood (Ms. Short) talked about the inconvenience, anger and bitterness felt by those who are stopped when travelling, those who are searched and who feel fear. I was stopped and searched once, not long ago, and I felt fear. Yet I was on the side of the security forces. I can understand what people must feel if they harbour republican views in their hearts. But we are implementing this legislation not because we like it or out of a sense of strange or quirky authoritarianism. We are implementing it because we have a responsibility for all the people of the United Kingdom, including the peaceful people in Ulster.

There was a streak of remarkable honesty in the speech made by the hon. Member for Ladywood. There was a most impressive speech from the hon. Member for Antrim, North (Rev. Ian Paisley)—one of the most impressive that I have heard from him. There was also a moving speech from the hon. Member for Newry and Armagh (Mr. Mallon). A debate of this sort is capable of lifting people to heights that we sometimes do not recognise.

This new Bill and its new powers will make a contribution towards peace and will at least stop us from apparent sterility in the battle against terrorism. I thoroughly approve of the financial assistance powers included in it. The onus of proof against those who are suspected of having collected money for terrorism is absolutely vital. It has been shown to work in the Drug Trafficking Offences Act 1986. When I served on the Select Committee on Home Affairs, I recommended the measure and I am pleased that it has been such a success. If such measures help to stop the money flowing in from Noraid —with its misguided loyalty from those of Irish origins who wallow in the nostalgia of an Ireland long past, and for whom the details of death are dulled by distance—and if we can manage to stop other collections for terrorist purposes, we will have made a contribution in this battle.

I end by saying that terrorists are not freedom fighters. They have, if they want, freedom to act within the law, as we all do. Terrorists are anti-freedom fighters. They are anti-democratic. I hope that the Bill will help to preserve the freedoms that we hold dear and that we wish to protect for all the people of the United Kingdom.

9.15 pm

Mr. Bruce George (Walsall, South): I am grateful to my hon. Friend the Member for Sheffield, Hillsborough (Mr. Flannery) and to the hon. Member for Richmond and Barnes (Mr. Hanley) for making much shorter speeches than they had planned, which has allowed me to be the last Back Bencher to have five minutes in which to make his speech, thus discarding nine tenths of the speech that I had intended to make.

As a west midlands Member, I can remember vividly the events of 21 November 1974—those horrendous events that precipitated the Prevention of Terrorism Act 1974. It is true that it was hastily conceived, but it was greatly demanded and supported. I feel no sense of guilt at having supported it.

However, having heard the debate and listened and read a great deal over the years, I feel that the Prevention of Terrorism Act has been nowhere near as central in the fight against terrorism or as positive as some Conservative Members have argued, nor, conversely, has it been as dangerous and superfluous as some of its critics have maintained. I have been reading carefully a book on the law and the prevention of terrorism by Clive Walker, which largely comes to the same conclusion.

Terrorism will increase, new groups will emerge and the fight against terrorism will become even more difficult in the future. Those who, in the dim and distant days of the early 1970s, hoped that the legislation would need to be merely temporary have had their naivety ruthlessly exposed.

We will never defeat terrorism. However successful we are in fighting it nationally and internationally, it will be with us for decades, or for as long as the human race exists. In our fight against terrorism it is vital that we pursue democratic means and maintain international co-operation, despite the many stresses. Whatever the criticism of Belgium, I do not think that any Prime Minister should receive such a public dressing down as Mr. Martens received. When Queen Victoria said of Gladstone,

"He addresses me as though I were a public meeting"

perhaps she had a foretaste of things to come.

Despite the crises and pressures, we must co-operate internationally because that is the only way to minimise terrorism. That is why we should comply with the decision of the European Court of Human Rights. We cannot expect co-operation on some issues if we deny it on others. Other countries have complied. Spain had far more draconian laws regarding the powers of arrest than we have. Indeed, until last year it was possible to hold a suspect incommunicado for 10 days. That period is now five days, and the suspect must then appear before an examining magistrate. I believe that we should comply also.

I spoke today to Professor Paul Wilkinson, who is probably the leading academic expert on terrorism in this country. He takes a sane view on the problems of dealing with terrorism and suggested a way in which we might comply, which I hope will be considered carefully. He proposes a prevention of terrorism tribunal, with three senior judges who have great experience in dealing with terrorism. That would introduce a judicial element into the process. The tribunal could advise the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland and the Home Secretary on reviewing legislation regarding the prevention of terrorism. It would provide a more regularised and systematic method of monitoring than we have at present. Above all, it would allow the police to go to the tribunal to request an increase in the number of days for which they could hold a suspect without formally charging him. That is possible, if the Home Secretary is prepared to be flexible.

I endorse those clauses that deal with the financing of terrorism. I had hoped that James Adams' book on the financing of terrorism would be reflected in the Bill. Some of these organisations are similar to multinational corporations. There is robbery, extortion, gambling, drinking, ripping off the state and setting up companies such as taxi firms and security firms. It is wrong to argue that Noraid and Gaddafi are the paymasters of the IRA. Infinitely more money is generated by the methods that I have mentioned.

The PLO is top of the league. Its assets are reputed to be in excess of $15 billion, with investments in property and impressive investment portfolios. It has property and farms and it is involved in all sorts of enterprises, which proves that the enterprise spirit has perhaps infected that organisation. We should hit them where it hurts. Clausewitz said that moneys are the sinews of war. If we use the experience of the USA and its experience in dealing with the mob and apply the techniques that are included in the Bill, despite its defects, we shall be more successful.

In his book James Adams said:

"As much effort should be devoted to tracing the sources of money—the bank accounts and the investments of terrorist organisations—as is spent on countering the bomber and the assassin."

The old Chinese proverb,

"Kill one and frighten 10,000,"

is regrettably valid. The costs of terrorism are high, but the costs of not getting the fight against terrorism right are even higher.

9.21 pm

Mr. Barry Sheerman (Huddersfield): There can be few more important debates than the one we are conducting today. It has been a thoroughly good debate. I have learnt a great deal from it. The Bill penetrates to the heart of our constitution—how we conduct and maintain our democratic system in the face of threats, bombs and bullets, which are the methods of the terrorists, whom all hon. Members despise.

How, then, shall we be able to preserve our historic and hard-won rights and freedoms while at the same time successfully confronting and overcoming those who would use violence as a political weapon? Many of these rights and liberties have become the hallmark of decent, civilised and democratic societies. They include the right to freedom from arbitrary arrest and from detention without trial, the right to freedom of speech and assembly and free political activities under the law—the freedom under the law, of which my right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Warley, West (Mr. Archer) reminded the House.

These core freedoms and liberties of citizens are more important than any of the other matters that we discuss in this place. They are more vital than any of the other items in the Gracious Speech. Without them, we cease to be capable of controlling our political destiny. We shall be unable to speak freely, to organise ourselves politically or to advance our political arguments openly, and thereby persuade our people that we are worthy of their trust, hope and support.

In all democracies the threat to those core freedoms often comes from the direction of a restrictive executive power that believes that liberty means licence, that free expression breeds disorder and, above all, that individual rights and liberties can be sacrificed for some greater good —some desirable goal that the nation must achieve at whatever cost, whatever price. Too often such Governments promise that the loss of rights and liberties will be only for the short term, for emergency periods only, or just as an interim measure until the national goal has been achieved. The lessons of history teach us that for power-hungry executives "temporary" becomes "permanent" and that Governments rarely willingly give back to Parliaments and people what they have taken away. Normally those rights and liberties have to be campaigned for with the utmost vigour if they are ever to be genuinely restored to the people.

We on this side of the House view with dismay the Government's decision to give the prevention of terrorism provisions a permanent place on the statute book. That is clear from our reasoned amendment. First, it represents a further encroachment on the rights and liberties of all the people of our country. It is a further step down a tragic path to a less democratic and a less free society.

Secondly, we see it as the sign of a Government who have, perhaps inadvertently, given in to terrorism. I do not say that in a petty or particularly partisan fashion because, by and large, the debate has tried to steer away from that level. Former Governments, both Labour and Conservative, have introduced and perpetuated preventive

[Mr. Barry Sheerman]

measures to counter terrorism because they genuinely believed that they were the correct and appropriate responses at that time.

Most of us still remember that ghastly night of the Birmingham pub bombings that my hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Ladywood (Ms. Short) described with such poignancy. We remember the outcry for action that was part of the aftermath and horror felt when so many innocent men and women were cruelly slain. Year after year we have seen similar cowardly attacks that have wrecked innocent lives.

As I have said, we can understand why some Governments acted in that way. However, time goes on and the world has changed in many respects since the draconian powers of the Prevention of Terrorism Act 1974 were passed through the House as a temporary measure. That was 14 years ago and surely it is now time for a proper re-evaluation.

The Opposition believe that the time is right for a dramatic change in the way in which we combat and defeat terrorism. The way in which the Government now orchestrate their policies is profoundly counter-productive. I do not doubt that the Home Secretary genuinely believes—as do many Conservative Members—that passing the Bill through the House will do something to prevent terrorism. The Opposition do not agree. Time has not stood still, and we have argued that our knowledge of and capacity to combat terrorism has improved dramatically over those 14 years.

At the time of the Birmingham pub bombings the police were relatively inexperienced compared to their proficiency today. It is now a very different ball game. Not only has the professionalism of the police and the armed forces in Northern Ireland improved, but criminal law has altered quite dramatically under the Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984. Those two factors alone are crucial in the case for ridding ourselves of the prevention of terrorism provisions.

Perhaps more significant than the practical differences is the fact that we have now learnt much more about the terrorist mind. Several hon. Members have referred to that. Most significantly, we have discovered that it is the repressive counter measures introduced by the Government and the reduction and curtailment of ordinary people's rights that the terrorist sees and celebrates as a sign of his success. The more repressive and draconian the measure and the legislative and Executive response, the better the terrorist likes it. That is the truth, and many hon. Members on both sides of the House will agree with that.

The hon. Member for North Down (Mr. Kilfedder) talked about wanting tough, resolute and determined measures. The Opposition want them too. However, we profoundly disagree about the way in which to achieve them. The oxygen of repressive legislation, not the oxygen of publicity, is what terrorists crave and that is what they get from the Government in increasingly large doses.

We believe that it is time to stop feeding the terrorist habit, to cut off the supply of oxygen and steadily to return to the relative normality of combating terrorism vigorously using the weapons available under the normal criminal law—not a special law for terrorists, but that which applies to every man and woman in the land. To do so would be a far more effective way of fighting terrorism and it would simultaneously arrest the increasing pressures on the rights and liberties of our people. We would have two for the price of one. Those pressures apply not just to the rights directly affected by the powers granted under such Bills. The rights affected are not merely the direct rights in Northern Ireland. The restriction of the rights and freedoms of some of our people cannot be isolated and contained in one part of the United Kingdom.

Time and again restrictions have been introduced initially in Northern Ireland and then spread to the rest of the United Kingdom. The removal of the right to silence is a case in point. It was removed in the House almost by stealth at night a few weeks ago. A few days later the Home Secretary was reviewing and looking favourably on removing the right to silence in the rest of the United Kingdom. The right to trial by jury was replaced by the Diplock courts in Northern Ireland. We heard on the radio only this morning that it finds favour with the Home Secretary in certain cases in British courts.

Finally, the censorship of the media, so arrogantly imposed by the Government on Northern Ireland, has distinct parallels with the insidious developments in the media in the rest of the country. At times it would appear that Northern Ireland is used as a test bed for legislation that the Government hanker to apply more widely to the rest of the United Kingdom.

The Bill shows the Government at their very worst. It shows us a Government no longer able to think clearly about the problems they seek to confront, a Government reduced to what Simon Jenkins in *The Sunday Times* last Sunday described as:

> "Blitzing the political agenda with an array of anti-IRA measures which seem wholly unjustified by any new public terror or threat thereof."

Mr. Jenkins seems to understand, and the Government fail to comprehend, that so much of this activity may produce the opposite effects to those intended and desired. As Mr. Jenkins notes:

> "One last push against terrorism may be a good slogan . . . but hurling more money and more laws at the IRA graces it with a mantle of aspiring tyranny which it ill-deserves."

We do not anticipate the Government changing their mind this evening. We do not anticipate a Pauline conversion. However, the Government have been given a very interesting opportunity. Before they use their majority to bludgeon the Bill through the House and through Committee, we appeal to them to seize the opportunity uniquely presented by two occurrences.

First, the judgment of the European Court of Human Rights gives them perfectly good justification for ditching a whole section of the Bill that the Opposition find so regrettable. The European Court of Human Rights has given the Home Secretary the opportunity to say, "We will obey and we will conform. We will not dodge, we will not fudge; we will change the British law." One section of the Bill would be removed and that would give us far greater respect and co-operation internationally.

The Home Secretary knows that such a sign of international co-operation in Europe will do a great deal to mend the fences that have been torn down by the behaviour of the Prime Minister recently. We will get far greater respect if we conform to the European Court. That would also restore the fundamental right of our people not to be put into detention without being charged. The Government have failed to comply with the recommendations of two—not just one—independent assessors of the

working of the former Acts. The Home Secretary was partial in his quotations from Lord Colville's strong recommendation. Lord Colville is not exactly a radical figure. He is a former Conservative Minister of State. On exclusion powers, he found on two occasions that the right thing to say was

"I review my recommendation made in the annual report on the Act for 1986 that part II of the Act should not be renewed in 1988 or not replaced in the new Bill".

The Home Secretary appears to be a liberal Home Secretary. In the salons and exclusive dining rooms of London he is regarded as one of the remaining civilised members of the Conservative Cabinet. But, for all the image that he may project, he is presiding over the whittling away of and damage to rights and civil rights in this country—the worst that has occurred under any Home Secretary this century.

If the Government bow to the judgment of the European Court on the requirement that anyone arrested on suspicion of terrorist acts must be taken promptly before a court, and if they bow to their own independent assessor, Lord Colville, on the iniquitous power to exclude United Kingdom citizens from certain parts of their own country—part of the United Kingdom—what point would there be in the Bill with the heart ripped out of it? We would be able to cover the other aspects of the Bill in a quite different way.

Opposition Members support powers to confiscate terrorist funds of those who are likely to provide help and sustenance to the IRA and other terrorist organisations, whether they be in Northern Ireland or anywhere else in the world. We want to look closely at the fine detail of how the Government intend to proceed, because there are some real difficulties in the way in which that can be carried out.

We also oppose the proposal to grant terrorists the very separate status that the Prime Minister has so many times said that she wishes to avoid giving members of the IRA, whether or not they are convicted members. We will oppose a separate status under a new system of remission on prison sentences. Such matters will be debated in Committee.

Having been closely involved in it, Mr. Speaker, you will know that we are in the last three weeks of our celebration of the Glorious Revolution of 1688.

Mr. Lawrence: Before the hon. Gentleman leaves the subject of the Glorious Revolution of 1688, will he give way?

Mr. Sheerman: No, I shall not give way. I want to finish this part of my speech.

Mr. Lawrence *rose*——

Mr. Sheerman: I shall not give way.

We are in the last three weeks of the celebration of the Glorious Revolution of 1688, which produced the Bill of Rights. We must remember that that event was directed against the executive tyranny of James II. Surely in this tercentenary year we cannot repudiate our long-cherished rights of citizens against star chambers and autocratic Governments. We hear much from the Government about individual freedom. They talk of lifting Government restrictions on liberty. However, such talk is always limited to economic life. We owe it to those who, for 300 years, have been committed to individual freedom and rights in political life to be true to that heritage. We, the first nation to recognise the basic rights of citizens—men and women—must not after 300 years repudiate those fundamental principles. Our reasoned amendment gives Conservative Members the opportunity to vote against the Bill and to join Opposition Members in the Lobby this evening.

9.39 pm

The Minister of State, Northern Ireland Office (Mr. Ian Stewart): I have pages and pages of detailed notes about many of the technical aspects of the Bill, but I assure the House that I do not propose to read through them.

None of us who has taken part in this debate has perhaps had as much time as we might have chosen, but at least that makes us concentrate on the essence of the question that the House is considering. If the hon. Member for Birmingham, Ladywood (Ms. Short) were present, I should like to say to her that neither my right hon. Friend nor I have made any smear about the Labour party supporting terrorism. Our criticism, which is entirely valid, as this debate has shown, is that, although we have spent another day on the whole question of the prevention of terrorism legislation, we have not heard from Labour Front-Bench or Back-Bench Members any serious arguments to counter the points made by my right hon. Friend today and all Ministers who have ever spoken on this legislation over the past 14 years about the need for special legislation to deal with the special circumstances caused by the campaign of terrorism in Northern Ireland and elsewhere.

Last night the Opposition acted in three different ways on the Elected Authorities (Northern Ireland) Bill. Some voted for a reasoned amendment, others voted against the Bill, and some abstained from voting on Second Reading. I have listened to almost everything said during this debate and it sounds as though much the same sort of performance will take place tonight. The reason is not that these matters have not been fully aired during our debates, but that Opposition Members seem to have been addressing the wrong question. They have argued that this or that part of the prevention of terrorism legislation has caused this or that difficulty in certain respects, but they have systematically failed to deploy any case against the overwhelming arguments in favour of having special provisions to deal with the unusual and unwelcome circumstances in Northern Ireland and of terrorism generally. I wish that that were not so and that we had a much more united House on this subject. To the world outside and to the men of violence, a much more unanimous approach would convey a stronger message, particularly as many Opposition Members supported legislation of this kind when they were in government.

It is no good the right hon. Member for Birmingham, Sparkbrook (Mr. Hattersley) or the hon. Member for Ladywood saying that the whole of the prevention of terrorism legislation was some sort of instantaneous response to the Birmingham pub bombing, that it was spatchcocked at the last minute and so, by implication, the Labour Government gave no serious thought to what it contained. Of course they did. They would not have re-enacted it in 1976 if they had not given serious thought to what it contained. Naturally some aspects of the original legislation may have been put together in a hurry, but I do not blame them for that. Under the pressure of public opinion and the practical need to do something to deal with the terrorist threat at that time they had to accept that legislation of an exceptional character had to be

[Mr. Ian Stewart]

introduced. They did that and they should be given credit for having done so. But after a year of so they reappraised the matter and brought forward a more considered Bill, which they tidied up, and that is the legislation that has been on the statute book in substantially similar terms ever since. They cannot get away from that.

Mr. Lawrence: Unfortunately, I could not be present throughout the debate. Did my hon. Friend, who has valiantly been here throughout, hear any Opposition Front-Bench spokesman pledge to repeal the legislation, because I think that they have undertaken to do so in their manifesto?

Mr. Stewart: I shall have to look in *Hansard* tomorrow to see whether any such passage appears in the speeches. The important point is not so much what the Opposition might do in office, but that, if they treat legislation in the way that they are treating this legislation, they will have no right ever to hold office again. It is an important test of a responsible Opposition that they should look at the central purpose of legislation before deciding to vote against it or to produce what is called a reasoned amendment.

The hon. Member for Newry and Armagh (Mr. Mallon) rehearsed in slightly different terms some comments that he has made from time to time about security measures not solving the problems of Northern Ireland. Of course, security measures alone will not solve the problems of Northern Ireland, but that is an entirely different argument from saying that we do not need security measures at all. If we were to abandon the sort of security measures that are represented by this legislation, there would be an immediate and uncontrollable situation which at present is substantially contained by the powers that are available to the Government.

I want to emphasise something that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland has said on a number of occasions: that our approach to the future of Northern Ireland and the situation there does not simply include security. Of course, security matters dominate the headlines. I am afraid that that is inevitable. But we should not overlook the fact that Northern Ireland's future depends on economic, social and political progress and on elected representatives taking a more direct part in Northern Ireland's political life. All those things we want to see, but to suggest that merely because security measures alone will not solve all those problems security measures by definition are not needed is a travesty.

The British people, and the people of Northern Ireland in particular, owe the security forces a tremendous debt of gratitude. Every day, members of the RUC and the UDR, in addition to the regular British armed forces, put their lives at risk to protect the community, and the threat against them does not end when they go off duty. They face constant danger, and we ask them to risk their lives on our behalf so that the cycle of violence may be broken.

I am sure that the House will join me in paying tribute to the brave men and women of the Northern Ireland security forces, especially those who have died or been injured in the course of their work or the duties that they perform.

The aim of the Bill is to give those to whom we entrust the rule of law in Northern Ireland the powers that they need to defend society from the brutality of the terrorist. Nowhere is it more important for us to do that than in Northern Ireland.

We should not doubt the scale and nature of the terrorist threat. There have been substantial finds since the beginning of this year. The RUC has so far recovered 500 weapons, nearly 90,000 rounds of ammunition and more than 9,000 lb. of explosives. In the south, the Garda has found nearly 300 weapons, 140,000 rounds of ammunition and 1,100 lb. of explosives. I pay tribute to the work of the Garda Commissioner and his force, as well as to the RUC, for their success this year in seizing terrorist munitions. These are good finds, but the serious threat remains. That is why we need to review the prevention of terrorism provisions. They are not permanent, as has been suggested by some Opposition Members during this debate.

Mr. Maginnis *rose*——

Mr. Stewart: I am short of time, so I shall not give way.

The provisions will be renewable in whole or in part each year and any part which is not renewed will then fall. The need for regular scrutiny has been accepted by my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary. There has recently been a major review by Lord Colville, which has been much quoted in this debate and has been of great value.

The effectiveness of such measures cannot be proved or disproved by statistics of either incidents or convictions. The hon. Member for Antrim, North (Rev. Ian Paisley) suggested that the Anglo-Irish Agreement had led to a significant increase in violence. If he wants to talk in statistics, I must tell him that in 1986, the year after the Anglo-Irish Agreement was signed, in Northern Ireland there were 61 deaths from terrorism and 172 explosions. In 1984, the year before the Anglo-Irish Agreement, there were 64 deaths from terrorism and 193 explosions—higher by about 10 per cent.

Mr. Maginnis *rose*——

Mr. Stewart: I am quoting those figures only because I do not believe that the effectiveness of any measures or legislation——

Mr. Maginnis: If the hon. Gentleman wishes to quote statistics, will he listen to someone who knows those statistics off by heart? Does he realise that the year before the Anglo-Irish Agreement was not 1984, but 1985, and that there were 47 terrorist killings in that year? There had been a constant decrease in terrorist killings from 1981, when there were 101. In every year since the Anglo-Irish Agreement was signed, the death toll has risen—from 47 in 1985, to 59 in 1986, to 80 in 1987 and to 84 up to 15 November of this year. The hon. Gentleman should be accurate if he quotes statistics.

Mr. Stewart: I said that the statistics for deaths from terrorism and for explosions in 1986, which was the year after the Anglo-Irish Agreement was signed, were both lower than the figures for 1984, which was the year before the agreement was signed. I merely say that because it is a fact, and I believe that it shows that statistics cannot be used to demonstrate such trends. I say, too, that the exact number of incidents, convictions or explosions from year to year cannot in any sense represent the effectiveness of the prevention of terrorism legislation, because the most important, continuing factor in the level of terrorism is the capability and the determination of the terrorists together

with the level of resources acquired. We all know that in recent years the terrorists have received substantial supplies of arms and explosives from Libya and elsewhere, which is a major part of the threat faced by the security forces.

Remission is a new element in the Bill, which especially relates to Northern Ireland. Under the current arrangements, a person serving a fixed sentence in Northern Ireland for a terrorist offence would, as a matter of course, be released earlier than if he had committed the same offence and received the same sentence elsewhere in the United Kingdom. In the light of experience of reinvolvement, we do not believe that that should be allowed to continue. The changes in remission are being made against a background of increasing terrorist violence. We have found that a significant proportion of people released from prison on remission have become reinvolved. However, I emphasise that, unless they commit a new scheduled offence after release, none of the existing prison population and no one awaiting trial in Northern Ireland will be affected by the new provisions, because the one third remission and the new rules of reactivated remission will apply only for scheduled offences committed after the Bill is enacted. As I have heard suggestions to the contrary, I should also add that the changes will have no effect on prisoners held at the Secretary of State's pleasure or on lifers. They apply only to determinate sentences, and so they should.

The measures on finance that have been included in the Bill have been generally welcomed on both sides of the House. I am glad about that, because I believe that they have a particularly important part to play in cutting off resources to terrorists and so making it much more difficult for them to finance their campaigns of violence.

There will be new offences set out in the Bill and new powers of investigation. We have improved our machinery for co-ordinating the various agencies that are involved. Such measures have worked well in the case of drug trafficking, and I am glad that we are able to extend them to apply more widely to terrorism and violence.

Much of today's debate has focused on the question of exclusion. The right hon. Member for Sparkbrook asked about the criteria for exclusion. The Bill states that the Secretary of State must be satisfied that a person

"is or has been concerned in the commission, preparation or instigation of acts of terrorism"

or is attempting to enter the country with the intention of becoming so involved. I can tell the right hon. Gentleman and the House that my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary would not make an order unless he was convinced that the individual concerned had been actively involved in or preparing for terrorism, either because of conviction for terrorist offences or because of reliable intelligence.

A great deal of interest, of course, has also been expressed about detention. I should tell the right hon. Member for Sparkbrook that he confuses detention with trial. Detention is used as a preliminary to trial. People are not tried for offences under the prevention of terrorism legislation; they are detained with the intention of charges being made and brought forward under the ordinary criminal law. Throughout the debate the Labour party has failed to establish any means by which those who have been brought to justice as a result of the detention and arrest powers in the prevention of terrorism legislation could have been dealt with by using the ordinary process of the law. The Labour party has simply not addressed itself to that question and therefore it is not surprising that it has not come up with a coherent attitude to the Bill.

During the 21 months from the beginning of last year until the end of September this year the statistics show that, of those detained for less than 48 hours, 17·5 per cent. were eventually charged; of those detained for more than four days, 35 per cent., or double the proportion, were charged. That is a measure of the practical value of such provisions in the fight against terrorism.

The question before the House is why the prevention of terrorism legislation is needed. We face a continuing large-scale campaign of systematically organised murder and violence. To do nothing to deal specifically with such crimes would be to neglect our duty to society. Whatever the Opposition may say about their intentions, the practical consequences of the Labour party's objections to the Bill would be to make a decisive shift away from the needs of the forces of law in favour of the men of violence.

Not to have the powers contained in the Bill would enlarge the opportunities for terrorists, increase the risks to members of the public as well as to the police and the Army, put more lives in jeopardy, hamper the efforts of the security forces to tackle terrorism and make it more difficult for the communities of Northern Ireland to achieve the necessary economic and political progress to grow out of the tensions and troubles that have beset them for so long.

For all those reasons I ask the House to give the Bill its overwhelming support.

Question put, That the amendment be made:—

The House divided: Ayes 199, Noes 311.

Division No. 9] **[9.59 pm**

AYES

Abbott, Ms Diane
Adams, Allen *(Paisley N)*
Allen, Graham
Anderson, Donald
Archer, Rt Hon Peter
Armstrong, Hilary
Ashley, Rt Hon Jack
Ashton, Joe
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnes, Harry *(Derbyshire NE)*
Barron, Kevin
Battle, John
Beckett, Margaret
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bennett, A. F. *(D'nt'n & R'dish)*
Bermingham, Gerald
Bidwell, Sydney
Blair, Tony
Boateng, Paul
Boyes, Roland
Bradley, Keith
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, Gordon *(D'mline E)*
Brown, Nicholas *(Newcastle E)*
Brown, Ron *(Edinburgh Leith)*
Buchan, Norman
Buckley, George J.
Caborn, Richard
Callaghan, Jim
Campbell, Ron *(Blyth Valley)*
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Canavan, Dennis
Clark, Dr David *(S Shields)*
Clarke, Tom *(Monklands W)*
Clay, Bob
Clelland, David
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Cohen, Harry
Corbett, Robin
Corbyn, Jeremy
Cousins, Jim
Crowther, Stan
Cryer, Bob
Cummings, John
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Cunningham, Dr John
Dalyell, Tam
Darling, Alistair
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(Llanelli)*
Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham Hodge H'l)*
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Don
Dobson, Frank
Doran, Frank
Dunnachie, Jimmy
Eadie, Alexander
Eastham, Ken
Evans, John *(St Helens N)*
Ewing, Mrs Margaret *(Moray)*
Fatchett, Derek
Fisher, Mark
Flannery, Martin
Flynn, Paul
Foot, Rt Hon Michael
Foster, Derek
Foulkes, George
Fraser, John
Fyfe, Maria
Galbraith, Sam
Galloway, George
Garrett, John *(Norwich South)*
George, Bruce
Gilbert, Rt Hon Dr John
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Golding, Mrs Llin

Gordon, Mildred
Graham, Thomas
Grant, Bernie *(Tottenham)*
Griffiths, Nigel *(Edinburgh S)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Grocott, Bruce
Hattersley, Rt Hon Roy
Healey, Rt Hon Denis
Heffer, Eric S.
Henderson, Doug
Hinchliffe, David
Hogg, N. *(C'nauld & Kilsyth)*
Home Robertson, John
Hood, Jimmy
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Howell, Rt Hon D. *(S'heath)*
Hoyle, Doug
Hughes, John *(Coventry NE)*
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport E)*
Hughes, Sean *(Knowsley S)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Hume, John
Illsley, Eric
Ingram, Adam
Janner, Greville
John, Brynmor
Jones, Barry *(Alyn & Deeside)*
Jones, Ieuan *(Ynys Môn)*
Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd S W)*
Kinnock, Rt Hon Neil
Lamond, James
Leadbitter, Ted
Lestor, Joan *(Eccles)*
Lewis, Terry
Livingstone, Ken
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Lofthouse, Geoffrey
Loyden, Eddie
McAllion, John
McAvoy, Thomas
McCartney, Ian
Macdonald, Calum A.
McFall, John
McGrady, Eddie
McKay, Allen *(Barnsley West)*
McKelvey, William
McLeish, Henry
McNamara, Kevin
McTaggart, Bob
McWilliam, John
Madden, Max
Mahon, Mrs Alice
Mallon, Seamus
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Martin, Michael J. *(Springburn)*
Martlew, Eric
Meale, Alan
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Mitchell, Austin *(G't Grimsby)*
Moonie, Dr Lewis
Morgan, Rhodri
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(W'shawe)*
Morris, Rt Hon J. *(Aberavon)*
Mowlam, Marjorie
Mullin, Chris
Murphy, Paul
Nellist, Dave
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Brien, William
O'Neill, Martin
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Patchett, Terry
Pendry, Tom
Pike, Peter L.
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Prescott, John
Primarolo, Dawn
Quin, Ms Joyce
Radice, Giles
Randall, Stuart
Rees, Rt Hon Merlyn
Reid, Dr John
Richardson, Jo
Roberts, Allan *(Bootle)*
Robinson, Geoffrey
Rogers, Allan
Rooker, Jeff
Ross, Ernie *(Dundee W)*
Salmond, Alex
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheerman, Barry
Sheldon, Rt Hon Robert
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Short, Clare
Sillars, Jim
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton & F'bury)*
Snape, Peter
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Steinberg, Gerry
Stott, Roger
Strang, Gavin
Straw, Jack
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Turner, Dennis
Vaz, Keith
Wall, Pat
Walley, Joan
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wareing, Robert N.
Welsh, Andrew *(Angus E)*
Welsh, Michael *(Doncaster N)*
Williams, Rt Hon Alan
Williams, Alan W. *(Carm'then)*
Wilson, Brian
Winnick, David
Worthington, Tony
Wray, Jimmy
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Frank Haynes and
Mr. Frank Cook.

NOES

Adley, Robert
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael
Allason, Rupert
Amess, David
Amos, Alan
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Ashby, David
Atkins, Robert
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Valley)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Barnes, Mrs Rosie *(Greenwich)*
Batiste, Spencer
Beggs, Roy
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Bennett, Nicholas *(Pembroke)*
Benyon, W.
Bevan, David Gilroy
Blaker, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Body, Sir Richard
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Boscawen, Hon Robert
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter
Bottomley, Mrs Virginia
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Bowis, John
Boyson, Rt Hon Dr Sir Rhodes
Braine, Rt Hon Sir Bernard
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brittan, Rt Hon Leon
Brown, Michael *(Brigg & Cl't's)*
Browne, John *(Winchester)*
Bruce, Ian *(Dorset South)*
Bruce, Malcolm *(Gordon)*
Buck, Sir Antony
Budgen, Nicholas
Burt, Alistair
Butcher, John
Butler, Chris
Butterfill, John
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Carlile, Alex *(Mont'g)*
Carlisle, John, *(Luton N)*
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Cartwright, John
Cash, William
Chalker, Rt Hon Mrs Lynda
Chapman, Sydney
Chope, Christopher
Churchill, Mr
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clark, Sir W. *(Croydon S)*
Clarke, Rt Hon K. *(Rushcliffe)*
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre F'rest)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, Rt Hon John
Cormack, Patrick
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Critchley, Julian
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Curry, David
Davies, Q. *(Stamf'd & Spald'g)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Devlin, Tim
Dickens, Geoffrey
Dicks, Terry
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Tony
Dykes, Hugh
Emery, Sir Peter
Evennett, David
Fallon, Michael
Favell, Tony
Fearn, Ronald
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Fookes, Miss Janet
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forsythe, Clifford *(Antrim S)*
Fox, Sir Marcus
Franks, Cecil
Gardiner, George
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Gill, Christopher
Gilmour, Rt Hon Sir Ian
Glyn, Dr Alan
Goodhart, Sir Philip
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Gower, Sir Raymond
Grant, Sir Anthony *(CambsSW)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Gregory, Conal
Grist, Ian
Grylls, Michael
Gummer, Rt Hon John Selwyn
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, John
Hargreaves, Ken *(Hyndburn)*
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, Christopher
Hayhoe, Rt Hon Sir Barney
Hayward, Robert
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Heddle, John
Heseltine, Rt Hon Michael
Hicks, Robert *(Cornwall SE)*
Higgins, Rt Hon Terence L.
Hind, Kenneth
Hogg, Hon Douglas *(Gr'th'm)*
Holt, Richard
Hordern, Sir Peter
Howard, Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'd-on-A)*
Howarth, G. *(Cannock & B'wd)*
Howe, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Howell, Rt Hon David *(G'dford)*
Hughes, Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, David *(Wirral W)*
Hunter, Andrew
Hurd, Rt Hon Douglas
Irvine, Michael
Irving, Charles
Jack, Michael
Jackson, Robert
Janman, Tim
Jones, Robert B *(Herts W)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Kennedy, Charles
Key, Robert
Kilfedder, James
King, Roger *(B'ham N'thfield)*
Kirkhope, Timothy
Kirkwood, Archy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Greg *(Derby North)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Edgbaston)*
Knowles, Michael
Knox, David
Lamont, Rt Hon Norman
Lang, Ian
Latham, Michael
Lawrence, Ivan
Leigh, Edward *(Gainsbor'gh)*
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Peter
Livsey, Richard
Lloyd, Sir Ian *(Havant)*
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Luce, Rt Hon Richard
Lyell, Sir Nicholas
McCrea, Rev William
McCrindle, Robert
Macfarlane, Sir Neil
MacKay, Andrew *(E Berkshire)*
Maclennan, Robert
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, Sir Michael
McNair-Wilson, P. *(New Forest)*
Madel, David
Maginnis, Ken
Malins, Humfrey
Mans, Keith
Maples, John
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Marshall, Michael *(Arundel)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Mates, Michael
Maude, Hon Francis
Mawhinney, Dr Brian

Maxwell-Hyslop, Robin
Mayhew, Rt Hon Sir Patrick
Mellor, David
Meyer, Sir Anthony
Michie, Mrs Ray *(Arg'l & Bute)*
Miller, Sir Hal
Mills, Iain
Miscampbell, Norman
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, Sir David
Molyneaux, Rt Hon James
Monro, Sir Hector
Morrison, Sir Charles
Morrison, Rt Hon P *(Chester)*
Moss, Malcolm
Moynihan, Hon Colin
Mudd, David
Neale, Gerrard
Needham, Richard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Michael
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Onslow, Rt Hon Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Owen, Rt Hon Dr David
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Paisley, Rev Ian
Patnick, Irvine
Patten, John *(Oxford W)*
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Price, Sir David
Raffan, Keith
Raison, Rt Hon Timothy
Redwood, John
Renton, Tim
Rhodes James, Robert
Riddick, Graham
Ridley, Rt Hon Nicholas
Ridsdale, Sir Julian
Roberts, Wyn *(Conwy)*
Robinson, Peter *(Belfast E)*
Ross, William *(Londonderry E)*
Rost, Peter
Rowe, Andrew
Ryder, Richard
Sackville, Hon Tom
Sayeed, Jonathan
Scott, Nicholas
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Shephard, Mrs G. *(Norfolk SW)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shersby, Michael
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Sir Cyril *(Rochdale)*
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Hon Nicholas
Speller, Tony
Spicer, Sir Jim *(Dorset W)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Squire, Robin
Stanbrook, Ivor
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Steel, Rt Hon David
Steen, Anthony
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis
Stewart, Andy *(Sherwood)*
Stewart, Ian *(Hertfordshire N)*
Stradling Thomas, Sir John
Sumberg, David
Summerson, Hugo
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
Taylor, Teddy *(S'end E)*
Tebbit, Rt Hon Norman
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thatcher, Rt Hon Margaret
Thompson, D. *(Calder Valley)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thorne, Neil
Thornton, Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Townsend, Cyril D. *(B'heath)*
Tracey, Richard
Tredinnick, David
Trippier, David
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Waddington, Rt Hon David
Wakeham, Rt Hon John
Walden, George
Walker, Bill *(T'side North)*
Wallace, James
Waller, Gary
Walters, Sir Dennis
Ward, John
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Warren, Kenneth
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Wheeler, John
Whitney, Ray
Widdecombe, Ann
Wiggin, Jerry
Wilshire, David
Winterton, Mrs Ann
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Woodcock, Mike
Yeo, Tim
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Kenneth Carlisle and
Mr. David Maclean.

Question accordingly negatived.

Main Question put forthwith, pursuant to Standing Order No. 60 (Amendment on Second or Third Reading):—

The House divided: Ayes 305, Noes 45.

Division No. 10] **[10.14 pm**

AYES

Adley, Robert
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael
Allason, Rupert
Amess, David
Amos, Alan
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Ashby, David
Atkins, Robert
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Valley)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Barnes, Mrs Rosie *(Greenwich)*
Batiste, Spencer
Beaumont-Dark, Anthony
Beggs, Roy
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Bennett, Nicholas *(Pembroke)*
Benyon, W.
Bevan, David Gilroy
Blaker, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Body, Sir Richard
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Boscawen, Hon Robert
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter
Bottomley, Mrs Virginia
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Bowis, John
Boyson, Rt Hon Dr Sir Rhodes
Braine, Rt Hon Sir Bernard
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brittan, Rt Hon Leon
Brown, Michael *(Brigg & Cl't's)*
Browne, John *(Winchester)*
Bruce, Ian *(Dorset South)*
Bruce, Malcolm *(Gordon)*
Buck, Sir Antony
Budgen, Nicholas
Burt, Alistair
Butcher, John
Butler, Chris
Butterfill, John
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Carlile, Alex *(Mont'g)*
Carlisle, John, *(Luton N)*
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Cartwright, John
Cash, William
Chalker, Rt Hon Mrs Lynda
Chapman, Sydney
Chope, Christopher
Churchill, Mr
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clark, Sir W. *(Croydon S)*
Clarke, Rt Hon K. *(Rushcliffe)*
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre F'rest)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, Rt Hon John
Cormack, Patrick
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Curry, David
Davies, Q. *(Stamf'd & Spald'g)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Devlin, Tim
Dickens, Geoffrey
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Tony
Dykes, Hugh
Emery, Sir Peter
Evennett, David
Fallon, Michael
Favell, Tony
Fearn, Ronald
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Fookes, Miss Janet
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forsythe, Clifford *(Antrim S)*
Fox, Sir Marcus
Franks, Cecil
Gardiner, George
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Gill, Christopher
Glyn, Dr Alan
Goodhart, Sir Philip
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Gower, Sir Raymond
Grant, Sir Anthony *(CambsSW)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Gregory, Conal
Grist, Ian
Grylls, Michael
Gummer, Rt Hon John Selwyn
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, John
Hargreaves, Ken *(Hyndburn)*
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, Christopher
Hayhoe, Rt Hon Sir Barney
Hayward, Robert
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Heddle, John
Hicks, Robert *(Cornwall SE)*
Higgins, Rt Hon Terence L.
Hind, Kenneth
Hogg, Hon Douglas *(Gr'th'm)*
Holt, Richard
Hordern, Sir Peter
Howard, Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'd-on-A)*
Howarth, G. *(Cannock & B'wd)*
Howe, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Hughes, Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, David *(Wirral W)*
Hunter, Andrew
Hurd, Rt Hon Douglas
Irvine, Michael
Irving, Charles
Jack, Michael
Jackson, Robert
Janman, Tim
Jones, Robert B *(Herts W)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Kennedy, Charles
Key, Robert
Kilfedder, James
King, Roger *(B'ham N'thfield)*
Kirkhope, Timothy
Kirkwood, Archy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Greg *(Derby North)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Edgbaston)*
Knowles, Michael
Knox, David
Lamont, Rt Hon Norman
Lang, Ian
Latham, Michael
Lawrence, Ivan
Leigh, Edward *(Gainsbor'gh)*
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Peter
Livsey, Richard
Lloyd, Sir Ian *(Havant)*
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Luce, Rt Hon Richard
Lyell, Sir Nicholas
McCrea, Rev William
McCrindle, Robert
McCusker, Harold
Macfarlane, Sir Neil
MacKay, Andrew *(E Berkshire)*
Maclennan, Robert
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, Sir Michael
McNair-Wilson, P. *(New Forest)*

Madel, David
Maginnis, Ken
Malins, Humfrey
Mans, Keith
Maples, John
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Marshall, Michael *(Arundel)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Mates, Michael
Maude, Hon Francis
Mawhinney, Dr Brian
Maxwell-Hyslop, Robin
Mayhew, Rt Hon Sir Patrick
Mellor, David
Meyer, Sir Anthony
Michie, Mrs Ray *(Arg'l & Bute)*
Miller, Sir Hal
Mills, Iain
Miscampbell, Norman
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, Sir David
Molyneaux, Rt Hon James
Monro, Sir Hector
Morrison, Sir Charles
Morrison, Rt Hon P *(Chester)*
Moss, Malcolm
Moynihan, Hon Colin
Mudd, David
Neale, Gerrard
Needham, Richard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Michael
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Onslow, Rt Hon Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Owen, Rt Hon Dr David
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Paisley, Rev Ian
Patnick, Irvine
Patten, John *(Oxford W)*
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Price, Sir David
Raffan, Keith
Raison, Rt Hon Timothy
Redwood, John
Renton, Tim
Rhodes James, Robert
Riddick, Graham
Ridley, Rt Hon Nicholas
Ridsdale, Sir Julian
Roberts, Wyn *(Conwy)*
Robinson, Geoffrey
Ross, William *(Londonderry E)*
Rost, Peter
Rowe, Andrew
Ryder, Richard
Sackville, Hon Tom
Sayeed, Jonathan
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Shephard, Mrs G. *(Norfolk SW)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shersby, Michael
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Sir Cyril *(Rochdale)*
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Hon Nicholas
Speller, Tony
Spicer, Sir Jim *(Dorset W)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Squire, Robin
Stanbrook, Ivor
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Steel, Rt Hon David
Steen, Anthony
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis
Stewart, Andy *(Sherwood)*
Stewart, Ian *(Hertfordshire N)*
Stradling Thomas, Sir John
Sumberg, David
Summerson, Hugo
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
Taylor, Teddy *(S'end E)*
Tebbit, Rt Hon Norman
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thatcher, Rt Hon Margaret
Thompson, D. *(Calder Valley)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thorne, Neil
Thornton, Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Townsend, Cyril D. *(B'heath)*
Tracey, Richard
Tredinnick, David
Trippier, David
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Waddington, Rt Hon David
Wakeham, Rt Hon John
Walden, George
Walker, Bill *(T'side North)*
Wallace, James
Waller, Gary
Ward, John
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Warren, Kenneth
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Wheeler, John
Whitney, Ray
Widdecombe, Ann
Wiggin, Jerry
Winterton, Mrs Ann
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Woodcock, Mike
Yeo, Tim
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Kenneth Carlisle and
Mr. David Maclean.

NOES

Abbott, Ms Diane
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnes, Harry *(Derbyshire NE)*
Battle, John
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bennett, A. F. *(D'nt'n & R'dish)*
Boateng, Paul
Bradley, Keith
Brown, Ron *(Edinburgh Leith)*
Buchan, Norman
Canavan, Dennis
Clay, Bob
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Cohen, Harry
Corbyn, Jeremy
Cryer, Bob
Davis, Terry *(B'ham Hodge H'l)*
Flannery, Martin
Galloway, George
Gordon, Mildred
Grant, Bernie *(Tottenham)*
Heffer, Eric S.
Hoyle, Doug
Hughes, John *(Coventry NE)*
Hume, John
Lamond, James
Lewis, Terry
Livingstone, Ken
McAllion, John
McCartney, Ian
Madden, Max
Mahon, Mrs Alice
Malion, Seamus
Meale, Alan
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Mullin, Chris
Nellist, Dave
Pike, Peter L.
Primarolo, Dawn
Sedgemore, Brian
Short, Clare
Skinner, Dennis
Wall, Pat
Welsh, Michael *(Doncaster N)*
Wray, Jimmy

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Eddie McGrady and
Mr. Eddie Loyden.

Question accordingly agreed to.

Bill read a Second time, and committed to a Standing Committee pursuant to Standing Order No. 61 (Committal of Bills).

Prevention of Terrorism (Temporary Provisions) Bill *[Money]*

Queen's Recommendation having been signified—

Motion made, and Question proposed,

That, for the purposes of any Act resulting from the Prevention of Terrorism (Temporary Provisions) Bill, it is expedient to authorise—

(a) the payment out of money provided by Parliament of—

(i) any expenses incurred under that Act by the Secretary of State or the Lord Advocate; and

(ii) any increase attributable to that Act in the sums payable out of such money under any other Act; and

(b) payments into the Consolidated Fund.—*[Mr. Alan Howarth.]*

10.26 pm

Mr. Bob Cryer (Bradford, South): I do not think that the money resolution should go through without comment. As I understand it, we have 45 minutes in which to examine the pros and cons of the money resolution and I have always understood that that is one of the jobs of the House. It is clear that many Conservative Members are not interested in this because they are chatting. The hon. Members who are chatting by the Bar do not seem to be interested in one of the basic functions of the House—the scrutiny of expenditure.

The financial effects of the Bill are described on page V of the explanatory and financial memorandum. I should like to raise a few questions that, no doubt— *[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. Before the hon. Gentleman does that, will hon. Members who are not staying for the debate kindly leave quietly?

Mr. Frank Haynes (Ashfield): Buzz off.

Mr. Cryer: I am most grateful. I would not use words like "buzz off", which my hon. Friend the Member for Ashfield (Mr. Haynes) said most clearly, but I am grateful for your efforts, Mr. Speaker, and his. I realise that my hon. Friend wanted to be helpful in exercising some scrutiny.

Everyone treats money resolutions as some sort of joke and the House passes through hundreds, thousands or millions of pounds on the nod. If we were discussing a Bill that concerned social security, Conservative Members would not take that view. They would try to screw every last penny from the poorest in the country. If they can do that with Department of Social Security legislation, they can look at all the other legislation that goes through the House. Although I suspect that this legislation does not involve large expenditure, the paragraph in the explanatory and financial memorandum is so vague that it behoves Ministers to provide some more detailed information.

Page v of the introduction states, in connection with terrorist finances:

"there are likely to be some additional investigation and prosecution costs for the police and the prosecution services; additional costs arising out of the provision of court services; extra legal aid; the costs of the receivers appointed to realise land subject to forfeiture orders; and possibly some limited expenditure on compensation."

The introduction then states that it is difficult to make such calculations. I cannot believe that the Home Office has not calculated an amount of money that would give some idea of the level of public expenditure.

I wonder what sort of compensation is envisaged in the paragraphs dealing with finance—possibly some limited expenditure on compensation. We need to ask what sort of compensation it is because the legislation envisages that some land or property might be seized in error and compensation will therefore have to be paid. The House should know.

Mr. Dave Nellist (Coventry, South-East): Will my hon. Friend advise me as to whether in the financial effects of the Bill, as determined on page v of the introduction to which he is referring, there is likely to be scope for compensation for those thousands of people who during the previous enactments of this legislation—when the provisions were annually re-enacted—were falsely and wrongly detained and who perhaps lost money from employment or from other arrangements such as holidays or other commitments? We know that 90 per cent. of the people who have been detained under the provisions of the previous enactments of the Bill have been wrongly and incorrectly detained. Is there scope in the money resolution for compensation for those who have been affected in that way?

Mr Cryer: My hon. Friend makes an interesting point and I shall seek that information. The Under-Secretary of State for the Home Department has heard the question and I dare say that he will make the position clear. The comment on limited expenditure on compensation is limited to the clauses dealing with terrorist finances and therefore——

Mr. David Ashby (Leicestershire, North-West) *rose——*

Mr. Cryer: Perhaps I can finish this comment before the hon. Gentleman interrupts me. I should have thought that if compensation is involved for what is in effect wrongful arrest, that would be a general term and, indeed, there is a paragraph on exclusion orders, to which I shall come. I shall be interested in the Minister's reply.

Mr. Ashby: Do I understand the hon. Gentleman to be saying that he does not think that it is right that money should be set aside for a fair hearing in a court and for legal aid for people who might be arrested under the prevention of terrorism legislation? Is that what the hon. Gentleman is saying? Is he denying such people justice?

Mr. Cryer: I wish that the hon. Gentleman had listened to what I have been saying instead of blurting out figments of his imagination which have no connection with my comments. Of course, I am not denying anybody any justice. Indeed I shall come to a point about injustice shortly.

What I am asking for is information about the expenditure. Since the Bill is being put forward by a Government who continually talk about the need for controlling, scrutinising and limiting public expenditure, it seems not unreasonable that I should use the opportunity specially provided by the Standing Orders of this House to raise some questions about expenditure.

What is the section on compensation for? If people are dealt with unjustly, I want to them to be compensated properly. There is no question about that. What does the

[Mr. Cryer]

compensation cover? Is it for mistaken forfeiture or is it, as my hon. Friend the Member for Coventry, South-East (Mr. Nellist) has suggested, for what amounts to wrongful imprisonment? The compensation provisions do not seem to apply to the exclusion order provisions, as set out on page v in the second paragraph under the heading "Financial effects of the Bill." It says:

"Police expenditure will continue to be incurred in connection with the control of travel into and out of any part of the United Kingdom, but the Bill is not expected to lead to any significant increase in that expenditure."

We should like to know what is the present expenditure so that we can judge by how much it is likely to increase.

The exclusion order provisions are among the most objectionable in the Bill. I wonder whether the expenditure can be justified. We ought to be told what justification there is. Sir Cyril Philips and Lord Colville specifically stated in their reviews that the Home Secretary should reconsider these provisions. As my hon. Friend the Member for Coventry, South-East pointed out, Lord Colville's views are not particularly radical, but he said that he was not convinced that the ends justify the means.

What kind of expenditure do these exclusion order provisions involve? I remind the Minister of what has happened under them. A former constituent of mine was in a Belfast gaol for a criminal offence. The governor granted him home leave with his family in the Bradford metropolitan district so that he could adjust to life outside gaol as he was nearing the end of his prison sentence. That was an entirely proper and authorised procedure. He was met at Leeds-Bradford airport by armed special branch detectives and was immediately arrested and placed in Armley prison. He stayed there throughout the whole of his seven-day home leave, was served with an exclusion order at Leeds-Bradford airport when he boarded the return flight and went straight back to prison in Belfast. Such arbitrary action was entirely unjustified.

Expenditure of that kind will be involved here. More than 90 per cent. of the people who are arrested and who are made subject to exclusion orders are not charged with a criminal offence. Exclusion orders are an outrage against justice. They mean that people in one part of the United Kingdom are excluded from another part—a part that is continually described as an integral part of the United Kingdom.

The only time when that power was exercised was when people such as Willy Gallagher were excluded from Clydeside to prevent them from attending meetings and setting forth their views. It was during a most repressive time under a most repressive Government.

I should like the Minister to tell the House whether this expenditure is justified. I know that he takes a keen interest in money resolutions.

Mr. Nellist: Will my hon. Friend reflect on yet another example during the period to which he referred? During the miners' strike in 1984 and 1985 a large number of people were excluded from entering or leaving the Nottinghamshire coalfields. That was done without legislation being passed by this House, but the inspiration for it was the Prevention of Terrorism Act.

Mr. Cryer: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for providing that illustration.

The family to whom I referred had moved away from Northern Ireland so as to be out of the troubles. They did not want to be involved in the activities of the warring factions.

Mr. William Ross (Londonderry, East): What exactly was this chap in prison for? He was obviously found guilty.

Mr. Cryer: Yes, he was found guilty. He was serving a sentence for armed robbery, but he was not connected in any way with a political terrorist organisation. The governor had given him home leave as a matter of course when he was nearing the end of his sentence. Conservative Members cannot make a case about him being a dangerous terrorist because he was released shortly afterwards.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Sir Paul Dean): Order. The hon. Gentleman is being tempted away from the money resolution. I am sure that he will come back to it.

Mr. Cryer: I am grateful for your advice, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I wanted to make it clear that it was a non-political category and that the expenditure of money on the exclusion order was unjustified, even within the terms of the legislation. That is a good illustration of the way in which expenditure can be misapplied because of the terms of the legislation.

Mr. Harry Cohen (Leyton): I am listening with interest to my hon. Friend's comments. He has obviously scrutinised the financial implications of the Bill. Are there likely to be financial implications for the state if it is found guilty by the European Court of Human Rights of holding people for long periods? That could involve expenditure on legal costs——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I am sure that the hon. Member for Bradford, South (Mr. Cryer) will not be tempted away from the money resolution. Commenting on the point made by the hon. Member for Leyton (Mr. Cohen) would take him outside the resolution.

Mr. Cryer: As always, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I am grateful for your advice. However, you will have noticed that there is a reference to

"some limited expenditure on compensation."

I would be interested to hear from the Minister whether that phrase includes expenditure on claims made by people because the Government have ignored the decision of the Court of Human Rights in Strasbourg, which would place the legislation outside the normal standard of conduct on human rights.

The last paragraph on the financial effects of the Bill mentions

"the fees of persons nominated by the Secretary of State to consider representations against exclusion orders, and in connection with the removal of persons subject to exclusion orders".

You will no doubt recall vividly, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that exclusion orders can be served when there is no charge, no court hearing and no right to know why they are served, and representations are made about a charge for which no evidence is given. That is an outrage against our civil liberties.

I must make it clear that, although I am raising questions on the financial effects of the Bill, I am not making a case for acts of violence. I am opposed to acts of violence, whether they involve a British soldier serving his time in Northern Ireland who is subject to a terrible and

untimely death or spending £11 billion on Trident nuclear weapons for the purpose of mass extermination. I abhor and oppose them both. However, I will not go down that road, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I was merely using that as an illustration. I would be interested to know what the fees are for the people nominated by the Secretary of State. The last paragraph says:

"A small amount of public expenditure will continue to be incurred in meeting the fees of persons nominated by the Secretary of State".

Just for the record, it would be nice to know how much those people are paid. That will give us an idea of whether they are pillars of the establishment, earning perhaps several hundred pounds per occasion, or whether they are just humble folk, drafted in by the Government like members of a jury and paid a nominal fee to cover their expenses. For example, are the fees related to what might be received by somebody on invalidity benefit or unemployment benefit? Are they related to what the mass of ordinary folk can expect to receive from the state if they are in a position to receive money from the state. That would be interesting to know.

I suspect that the people to whom fees are paid are pillars of the establishment and that they receive establishment-type fees, which are in the astronomical category, and which help to ensure that they do not come to a conclusion that is in any way outside the establishment view of the operation of this legislation.

I hope that I have not detained the House for too long, but we cannot let such occasions go by without some scrutiny. Even some Conservative Members take that view. They have listened with interest to my comments. I look forward to the Minister's response.

10.45 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Home Department (Mr. Douglas Hogg): I am glad that the hon. Member for Bradford, South (Mr. Cryer) spoke to the money resolution. I should have been deeply disappointed had he not done so, because I told my officials that he most certainly would. I was proved to be correct in that respect.

I am always struck by the economical use that the hon. Gentleman makes of his time in this place. For example, let us consider this debate and the preceding one. He came into the Chamber to hear my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary open the debate. That was a jolly wise thing to do. He left before the right hon. Member for Birmingham, Sparkbrook (Mr. Hattersley) spoke. That, too, was a jolly wise thing to do. He then came back rather late in the speech of the hon. Member for Huddersfield (Mr. Sheerman). I imagine that he considered that he had come back rather too soon. Then he heard the speech of my hon. Friend the Minister of State, Northern Ireland Office. All in all, the hon. Member for Bradford, South makes economical—not to say sparing—use of his time in this place.

I cannot be so complimentary about the substance of the hon. Gentleman's speech on the money resolution. Perhaps it would be helpful to remind the House of the nature of the money provisions in the Bill and the money resolution. The substantive provision of the Bill is clause 25, which authorises the payment out of moneys. Those substantive powers are amplified by the money resolution which, in turn, are clarified by the explanatory memorandum.

It might be helpful if I were to demonstrate the kind of payments that fall within the scope of the money resolution before I refer to the points raised by the hon. Member for Bradford, South.

Good examples of the kind of payments that have to be made and are authorised are payments to the advisers who have been appointed to receive representations against exclusion orders, costs of removing people who are the subject of exclusion orders, necessary expenditure incurred by the courts when dealing with the powers under part III of the Bill, and the compensation provisions that are dealt with in schedule 4 of the Bill.

Mr. Nellist: I do not want to pre-empt the Minister's later remarks, but does he intend to give figures for those examples? He mentioned fees paid to people who are designated to hear representations against exclusion orders. That is one of the main matters about which my hon. Friend the Member for Bradford, South (Mr. Cryer) asked. Hon. Members are staying here tonight to hear not just the examples, but the actual amounts of money to be spent on them.

Mr. Hogg: I was coming to precisely that point.

Let me now deal with the various questions that have been raised by the hon. Member for Bradford, South. He began by criticising the compensatory payments provided for under schedule 4 of the Bill. That was a bit peculiar, because, as the House will know, the schedule 4 compensatory provisions are linked to part III of the Bill. It appears that the provisional wing of the Labour party, as represented by the hon. Member for Bradford, South, find themselves in difficulty on that point.

As to what that is paid for, I strongly recommend to the hon. Gentleman as part of his evening reading that he studies paragraphs 7(1), 7(2) and 17(3) of schedule 4. He will find the answer spelt out in considerable detail and it will keep him going for at least 20 minutes. In broad terms, it deals with loss that can be properly be attributed to abuse in the conduct of prosecutions that give rise to the forfeiture proceedings under part III. I may have spared the hon. Gentleman some 20 minutes of homework.

The hon. Member for Coventry, South-East (Mr. Nellist) asked whether the money resolution is retrospective in its effect. He knows perfectly well that both wings of the Labour party—the provisional and the official wings—are against retrospective legislation. Therefore, I feel certain that they would not wish to commend that course of action to us.

Mr. Nellist: May I remind the Minister that it was a Conservative Government who, under Lord Soames, when Rhodesia became Zimbabwe, passed through this House retrospective legislation to grant an amnesty to those who had committed murder in Rhodesia. Since that precedent was set, I am in favour, for example, of repaying the debts of those who have taken out social fund loans. If a case was made for retrospective compensation for someone who was badly dealt with in the years when this was a temporary measure reviewed every year, I would support retrospective legislation.

Mr. Hogg: The hon. Gentleman is establishing his credentials for the clay cross. That is not an award that I willingly dish out, but I shall certainly dish it out to him along with the rations, if that is what pleases him.

[Mr. Hogg]

In reply to the other questions from the provisional wing, if improper use is made of the detention powers, there are the ordinary common law remedies which are called false imprisonment and give rise to a claim for damages. Schedule 4 deals only with the powers under part III.

The hon. Member for Bradford, South waxed fulsome about actions by the police in carrying out the exclusion orders and asked how much it costs. The costs are inevitably subsumed in the general cost of police expenditure, and it is simply not possible to disaggregate one from the other. But every penny spent on combating terrorism is money well spent. I hope that the hon. Gentleman agrees with that.

On the interesting question of the advisers, there are two of them. The hon. Gentleman asked how much they cost. They are paid at a rate which is proportionate to their high professional standing and is analogous to that paid to those who serve in judicial roles on a part-time basis, such as recorders and assistant recorders.

I have answered all the questions asked of me, and, as I see that the Whip wants me to sit down, I propose to do just that.

Question put and agreed to.

Resolved.

That, for the purposes of any Act resulting from the Prevention of Terrorism (Temporary Provisions) Bill, it is expedient to authorise—

(a) the payment out of money provided by Parliament of—

(i) any expenses incurred under that Act by the Secretary of State or the Lord Advocate; and

(ii) any increase attributable to that Act in the sums payable out of such money under any other Act; and

(b) payments into the Consolidated Fund.

Home Loss Payments

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Maclean.]*

10.53 pm

Mr. Bob Dunn (Dartford): I am delighted to have the opportunity this evening to raise a constituency case, but first I should like to say how grateful I am that my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State for the Environment has come to reply to this debate tonight. I am grateful, too, for the presence of my hon. Friend the Member for Gravesham (Mr. Arnold), who I hope will catch your eye later, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and I am immensely pleased to see on the Front Bench my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State for Transport.

The House, as is its wont and tradition, each day covers a wide range of national, international and sometimes regional issues; but it is always possible for a Back Bencher to seek an opportunity to present to the House the needs of an individual and his family when events outside the control of the individual and his family threaten his peace, security and calm. This, as the House knows, is one such case which deserves the attention of the House and a radical urgent response from my hon. Friend the Minister. The case presented is as follows.

My constituents, Mr. and Mrs. Michie, have resided at their home, 7 Rose Villas, Watling street, Dartford—a quiet cul-de-sac off the old Roman road of Watling street—for many years and their house has always been their home. Now retired, Mr. and Mrs. Michie planned to see out their days in their home. I repeat that it is not a house but a home.

Some years ago, between 1984 and 1986, as a result of necessary road widening changes, part of the rear of No. 7, along with neighbouring properties, was taken over from Mr. and Mrs. Michie. As a result, the traffic noise and nuisance is now 70 ft nearer to the house than was originally the case. Authority required the land and authority took the land. Now authority requires their home as a consequential result of the construction of the new Dartford bridge.

Mr. and Mrs. Michie, through no fault or decision of theirs, are to lose their home. The severing of emotional links and the effects of anxiety and stress can never really be quantified. But under section 30 of the Land Compensation Act 1973 Mr. and Mrs. Michie will be entitled to a home loss payment. I am advised that such a payment is made in recognition of the inconvenience and personal distress undergone by people who have become closely and emotionally attached to a home and who are displaced from it at the behest of a public authority.

On 27 November 1972, on Second Reading of the Land Compensation Bill, the then Secretary of State for the Environment said:

"Home loss payments are provided for in Clauses 23 to 25 and will be made as of right to occupiers who have been living in a dwelling as their main residence for at least seven years before the date of their displacement".

He went on to say:

"In England and Wales the amount of the payment will be seven times the rateable value if the displacement occurs before 1st April next year, and three times if it occurs thereafter. In Scotland it will be six times the rateable value. In all three countries the upper limit of the payment will be £1,500."—*[Official Report,* 27 November 1972; Vol. 847, c. 45.]

The House recognised that the problem existed and it tried to find a solution. But the range of payments for those who lose their homes through no fault of their own, fixed in 1972, is neither realistic nor fair in the circumstances of 1988. I believe that I am not alone in the House or in the other place in expressing that view.

As my hon. Friend the Minister knows, Mr. Michie, along with a neighbour, petitioned the House and another place in an attempt to have their views addressed. It took them a great deal of courage to take on Parliament, and their actions should be commended.

In a debate on 10 May 1988, when considering the Dartford-Thurrock Crossing Bill, Lord Underhill said:

"I hope that there will be some quick action regarding the home loss position. I do not know whether it can be made retrospective in this case. But one must also recognise that the compulsory acquisition leaves these two individuals in a sorry situation".

The Minister, Lord Brabazon of Tara, went on to say:

"As our response says, my right honourable friend, the Secretary of State for the Environment is looking at the whole question of the home loss payments system, which has to change in accordance with the Local Government Finance Bill, which we debated yesterday."—*[Official Report, House of Lords,* 10 May 1988; Vol. 496 c. 1041-42]

I recognise that my hon. Friend the Minister may be a little reluctant to reveal how the formula for assessing the award under the home loss payment scheme might be dealt with following the abolition of the domestic rate. Of course, the formula for assessing the award currently—and this will exist for some time—is simply to apply a multiplication, by a factor of three, of the rateable value of the house concerned. Therefore, my constituents will expect to gain just over £300.

Some time ago I asked my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary what the level of award would be today if since 1972 there had been regular updating. He gave me not the answer that I wanted, but the factor that should be used taking account of inflation in that time, which was 4·5. Consequently, the level of payment today should be within a scale of £700 to £7,000, which is quite different from a level rising from a minimum of £150 to a maximum of £300.

In a letter to me on 11 November 1988, my hon. Friend said:

"As you know, the Government, in its formal response to the Lords Select Committee Special Report on the Dartford-Thurrock Crossing Bill, has already acknowledged that the value of the home loss payment has declined since its introduction in 1973."

Of course, I recognise that, and I am glad that that statement has been made.

Something needs to be done, and done quickly, because we in Kent are faced not with the case of just one family—and the case of one family is important to any hon. Member—but potentially many thousands of families, who, if a rail link is chosen to cross the county of Kent, will be affected by the loss of their homes, which will be taken from them by public authority.

I need to know from my hon. Friend the Minister why he cannot advise the House that it is possible to adjust the level of award before the introduction of the community charge. Secondly, when will he announce the formula that will take effect after the introduction of the community charge? Thirdly, will he accept a plea from me—and, indeed, from many others—that, because of the peculiar position in which my constituents find themselves, this

[Mr. Bob Dunn]

should be made retrospective, because, after all, this problem has been with his Department and the Department of Transport for some time?

I make one final plea for urgent action. In the main, hon. Members representing Kent constituencies are opposed to what may happen to our county if British Rail gets its way with the provision of a Channel tunnel fast-rail link. I am totally opposed to all four routes, but I must stress that my constituency is adamantly opposed to routes one and two. I shall not do as others have done and point to the other routes that might be acceptable. That is not the way that I go about things. However, I register my concern about the possibility of one route or another being chosen. In that context, the question of compensation must be cleared up and the home loss compensation scheme must be made clear, relevant and realistic.

I hope that my plea on behalf of Mr. and Mrs. Michie will not be in vain. They have suffered hard and long in pursuit of their case. I know that my hon. Friend the Minister, who is a personal friend as well as a parliamentary one, will do his best to ensure that matters are put right at the earliest opportunity.

11.5 pm

Mr. Jacques Arnold (Gravesham): I am most grateful to my hon. Friend the Member for Dartford (Mr. Dunn) for allowing me to participate in this debate on a subject of considerable interest to my constituents.

In our part of Kent, my hon. Friend is well known for the considerable care and interest that he takes in his constituents. That has led him to raise the case of Mr. and Mrs. Michie, which clearly exemplifies the considerable difficulties that we face. We believe that, should routes one and two of British Rail's current proposals for a high-speed rail link cross our constituencies, considerable difficulties will arise. We are vehemently opposed to those proposals.

In my constituency, hundreds of households face the prospect of demolition or being affected by the passage of such a high-speed train. The villages of Istead Rise and New Barn in my constituency would like to be reassured that the House and the Government have paid attention to updating the home loss payments scheme.

Not much time is left and our constituents are extremely worried about their future environment and, above all, the value of their homes should they have to leave their villages.

I warmly support my hon. Friend's plea and hope that the Minister will offer the prospect of early progress in this matter.

11.7 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Environment (Mr. Christopher Chope): It is one of the most important responsibilities of a Member of this House to promote fearlessly the cases of individual constituents. My hon. Friend the Member for Dartford (Mr. Dunn) has a fine reputation for speaking up on behalf of his constituents. Tonight is another example of that put into practice.

I congratulate my hon. Friend on securing this debate and also on ensuring the attendance of my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State for Transport, whose attendance demonstrates his interest in the matter. My hon. Friends the Members for Loughborough (Mr. Dorrell), for Gravesham (Mr. Arnold) and for Maidstone (Miss Widdecombe) are also here to listen to this important debate. More hon. Members are present than one might expect at this time.

This debate is about one individual couple, Mr. and Mrs. Michie, but it also has a wider application. Mr. and Mrs. Michie are unhappy about the amount of home loss payment that they will receive when their house is compulsorily purchased by the Department of Transport. That compulsory purchase is necessary for road widening in connection with the new Dartford-Thurrock crossing.

It is correct to say that Mr. and Mrs. Michie are among the better-known constituents of my hon. Friend the Member for Dartford. They certainly left a lasting impression upon the Select Committees in both Houses when they petitioned against the Bill authorising the construction of the crossing. My hon. Friend has also kept up steady pressure on their behalf through correspondence and questions in an effort to seek to resolve the issue of compensation.

Before I deal with the details of the case, I shall outline a home owner's entitlement under the land compensation Acts when a home is subject to compulsory purchase. First, the law provides that the owner should receive the full market value of his or her property, disregarding the effects of the proposals that necessitate the compulsory purchase. The market value is assessed by the district valuer. If there is a dispute about the valuation, the owner may take the matter to the Lands Tribunal, which decides the matter.

Secondly, the owner is reimbursed costs incurred because of the necessity of having to move to another property. For example, he may have to pay for altering carpets and curtains. The acquiring authority also meets legal and other fees incurred in connection with the move.

An owner receives the full market value of his home, plus actual costs of disturbance. In addition, if he has lived in the house for at least five years he is entitled to receive a home loss payment. That payment is made in recognition of the personal distress and inconvenience suffered by people who have been forced to move out of their homes. The payment is three times the rateable value of the property, subject to a minimum payment of £150 and a maximum payment of £1,500. It is the adequacy of that payment that my hon. Friend has raised tonight and that Mr. Michie raised in his petitions about the Dartford-Thurrock Crossing Bill.

The Dartford-Thurrock Crossing Bill received Royal Assent on 28 June. Construction of a new bridge across the Thames to relieve the traffic congestion, which has become a serious problem at the Dartford tunnels, has already started. The tunnels are a vital link on the London orbital motorway. I do not think that my hon. Friend's constituents question the necessity of that link; they are concerned about the amount of compensation to which they may be entitled.

It is important to recognise that the bridge and tunnels will together provide a great improvement in traffic flow. On the Kent side of the river, the A282 passes through the town of Dartford. It was inevitable that, in the construction of the crossing, the widening of the road in that corridor would be necessary and that nearby properties would be affected. I am pleased to inform the House that, in fact, it will be necessary to acquire only nine

properties—far fewer than is often the case, and certainly far fewer than would need to be acquired if there were a new rail link for the Channel tunnel. However, that is obviously not much consolation to Mr. and Mrs. Michie.

The properties and other land will be acquired using the established compulsory purchase powers under section 2 of the Dartford-Thurrock Crossing Act. Among the nine properties to be acquired are two pairs of semi-detached houses known as Rose Villas, and it is in one of those houses that Mr. and Mrs. Michie have made their home for many years.

Shortly after the proposals for the approach road widening works were made public at exhibitions early in 1987, the occupiers of one of the properties at Rose Villas served a blight notice on the Department of Transport. The effect of a blight notice is to require the Department to buy any property that will be required for future road works and which, for that reason, cannot be sold on the open market. The blight notice was accepted and the occupants received compensation for the purchase of their property by the Department based on its open market value as assessed by the district valuer at that time. They were also reimbursed their expenses incurred in moving to a new property. They moved out in October 1987.

Mr. Michie and his two other neighbours decided that they would petition against the Bill when it came before the House of Commons Select Committee at the end of October 1987. Mr. Michie presented their case in person. He made it clear to the Select Committee that he and his neighbours accepted that it was impracticable to change the proposed widening works so as not to affect Rose Villas, but said that they were concerned about the arrangements for the award of compensation.

In its report in December 1987, the Select Committee recognised that there was an established system for the award of compensation in which it could not properly intervene, but it expressed the hope that the system would acknowledge and provide compensation for such disruption and anxiety as had been caused to Mr. Michie and his neighbours. In January 1988, one of Mr. Michie's co-petitioners decided to serve a blight notice on the Department of Transport to acquire his property at Rose Villas. That was accepted and the family finally moved out in August. Again, he received compensation under the established arrangements.

Mr. Michie and his remaining fellow neighbour Mr. Waddington decided that they would petition against the Bill before the Select Committee in another place, which they did in April. Again, Mr. Michie and his neighbour made the same points as before. At the same time, Mr. Michie disputed the informal valuation of his house which the local district valuer had recently given at a meeting arranged by the Department of Transport.

The Committee noted that under the Bill compensation would be payable in accordance with the land compensation code and that Mr. Michie would be entitled to a home loss payment under section 30. The Select Committee acknowledged that the amounts payable under the 1973 Act are relatively small and noted that they had not been increased since the Act was passed. My hon. Friend stressed that point. The Committee drew the attention of the Secretary of State for the Environment to the apparent inadequacy of the maximum amounts payable under the home loss payment scheme. The Committee noted that under the terms of the Land Compensation Act 1973 the maximum figures payable generally can be increased by an order made by the Secretary of State and subject to annulment by resolution of either House of Parliament.

The Committee recognised the disruption and distress which had been caused, but took the view that it could not intervene in the well established procedures for the award of compensation. The Committee expressed the hope that, when the district valuer came to a final valuation of the property of Mr. Michie and his fellow petitioner, full account would be taken of the current escalation in the price of property, particularly in the south-east. My hon. Friend did not make an issue of that.

In its response to the Lords Select Committee, the Department of Transport noted that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment had the system of home loss payments under active consideration in connection with the community charge proposals, but that the Government were not yet ready to announce their proposals. It recognised that the real value of home loss payments had declined since they were first introduced. My hon. Friend has elicited, through a question that I answered, that the extent of that loss of value amounts to about four and a half times the value that would have applied in 1973.

Since the Act was passed, formal notices to treat for the acquisition of their properties have been served on Mr. Michie and Mr. Waddington and negotiations between the district valuer and the agent acting for Mr. Waddington have reached a successful conclusion. The Waddingtons moved out of their house and received a home loss payment of about £390 as a result.

Assuming that the outcome of the negotiations between Mr. Mitchie and the district valuer are satisfactory, it is likely that Mr. Michie will have his property possessed by the end of February next year. The home loss payments were introduced in 1973 as a solace for the distress and upset experienced by people who have formed an attachment to their homes and are displaced. They are paid over and above compensation for property and for disturbance.

The statutory provisions for home loss, both as to who qualifies and to the sum payable, are very clear and there is no room for argument, but Mr. Mitchie has argued that the home loss payment is too small to recompense him for his loss. That is the main issue that my hon. Friend has asked me to deal with this evening. I cannot dispute that the level of home loss payments today is far lower than it was in 1973. There has been a substantial decline in real terms. My hon. Friend says that the levels are neither realistic nor fair. There is no such thing as a right level of home loss payment, however. It is an additional solace rather than a reimbursement of financial loss.

The Government are actively considering this issue. I know it will be extremely frustrating for my hon. Friend to learn—although he may not be surprised to hear it—that I cannot announce the Government's final conclusions about this. It will be a little while yet before we can announce the changes we have in mind as a result of the abolition of domestic rates and the consequent abolition of domestic rateable values. My hon. Friend makes the fair point that it would be possible to adjust the rates before those changes come into effect. That point is well taken by the Government and is being considered. It would be wrong of me to say to my hon. Friend that that has been excluded by the Government as a possible interim solution.

[Mr. Christopher Chope]

My hon. Friend asked whether it would be possible to backdate any award as soon as the Government make an announcement about the proposed change. Although the power contained in section 30 of the 1973 Act enables my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment to prescribe by order different multipliers and a different minimum or maximum payment from time to time, like most other order-making powers it cannot be applied retrospectively. It is a legal principle that subordinate legislation cannot be applied retrospectively unless express powers are given. Parliament is loth to give Ministers such a wide discretion except in exceptional cases, and the 1973 Act contains no such express power. Therefore, it would not be possible legally to make any order retrospective.

It is for the Government to reach a conclusion, and I know that my hon. Friend hopes that we will do that as soon as possible. I am sorry that I cannot announce anything now, but I am grateful to my hon. Friend for raising the issue in the way that he has and for drawing the attention of the House to an anomaly that must be resolved. I am also grateful to my hon. Friend the Member for Gravesham for pointing out that this matter has implications for other people whose properties are subject to compulsory purchase. That is another good reason for the Government to reach a conclusion at the earliest possible opportunity.

Question put and agreed to.

Adjourned accordingly at twenty-one minutes past Eleven o'clock.

House of Commons

Wednesday 7 December 1988

The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

PRIVATE BUSINESS

NEWCASTLE UPON TYNE TOWN MOOR BILL *[Lords]*
Considered; to be read the Third time.

AVON LIGHT RAIL TRANSIT BILL *[Lords]*
Order for Second reading read.
To be read a Second time on Thursday 8 December.

CITY OF GLASGOW DISTRICT COUNCIL ORDER CONFIRMATION BILL
Considered; to be read the Third time.

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Return ordered,
for Session 1987-88 of—

(1) the total number of Questions to Ministers or other Members which stood on the Order Paper, distinguishing those set down for oral, written answer priority and written respectively, the number of days upon which replies to Questions for oral answers were given in the House; and the total number of Questions for oral answer to which such answers were given in the House;

(2) the total number of Notices of Motions given for an early day;

(3) the number of Members ordered to withdraw from the House under Standing Order No. 42 (Disorderly conduct) showing separately the orders given in the House and those given in Committee; and the Members suspended from the service of the House under Standing Order No. 43 (Order in debate) or otherwise, distinguishing whether the offence was committed in the House or in Committee, the period of such suspension, the number of occasions on which more than one Member was so suspended having jointly disregarded the authority of the chair, and the number of occasions on which the attention of the House was called to the need for recourse to force to compel obedience to Mr. Speaker's direction; and

(4) the number of public petitions presented to the House distinguishing separately those brought to the Table at the times specified by Standing Order No. 133 (No debate on presentation of petition).—*[The First Deputy Chairman of Ways and Means.]*

CLOSURE AND ALLOCATION OF TIME

Return ordered,
Respecting—

(a) applications of Standing Order No. 35 (Closure of debate) during Session 1987-88:

(1) in the House and in Committee of the whole House, under the following heads:

1	*2*	*3*	*4*	*5*	*6*
Date when Closure claimed, and by whom	*Question before House or Committee when claimed*	*Whether in House or Committee*	*Whether assent given to Motion or withheld by the Chair*	*Assent withheld because, in the opinion of the Chair, a decision would shortly be arrived at without that Motion*	*Result of Motion and, if a Division, Numbers for and against*

and

(2) in the Standing Committees under the following heads:

1	*2*	*3*	*4*	*5*
Date when Closure claimed, and by whom	*Question before Committee when claimed*	*Whether assent given to Motion or withheld by the Chair*	*Assent withheld because, in the opinion of the Chair, a decision would shortly be arrived at without that Motion*	*Result of Motion and, if a Division, Numbers for and against*

and

(b) applications of Standing Order No. 28 (Powers of Chair to propose question) during Session 1987-88:

(1) in the House and in Committee of the whole House, under the following heads:

1	*2*	*3*	*4*	*5*
Date when Closure claimed, and by whom	*Whether in House or Committee*	*Whether claimed in respect of Motion or Amendment*	*Whether assent given to Motion or withheld by the Chair*	*Result of Motion, and, if a Division, Numbers for and against*

and

(2) in the Standing Commitees under the following heads:

1	2	3	4
Date when Closure claimed, and by whom	*Whether claimed in respect of Motion or Amendment*	*Whether assent given to Motion or withheld by the Chair*	*Result of Motion, and, if a Division, Numbers for and against*

—[The First Deputy Chairman of Ways and Means.]

and

(c) the number of Bills in respect of which allocation of time orders (distinguishing where appropriate orders supplementary to a previous order) were made under Standing Order No. 81 (Allocation of time to bills), showing in respect of each bill—

(i) the number of sittings allotted to the consideration of the Bill in Standing Committee by any report of a Business Sub-Committee under Standing Order No. 103 (Business sub-committees) agreed to by the Standing Committee, and the number of sittings of the Standing Committee pursuant thereto; and

(ii) the number of days or portions of days allotted by the allocation of time order and any supplementary order to the consideration of the Bill at any stage in the House or in committee, together with the number of days upon which proceedings were so taken in the House or in committee.—*[The First Deputy Chairman of Ways and Means.]*

Delegated Legislation

Return ordered,

Of the number of Instruments considered in Session 1987-88 by the Joint Committee and the Select Committee on Statutory Instruments respectively pursuant to their orders of reference, showing in each case the numbers of Instruments subject to the different forms of parliamentary procedure and of those within the Committees' orders of reference for which no parliamentary procedure is prescribed by statute; setting out the grounds on which Instruments may be drawn to the special attention of the House under Standing Order No. 124 (Statutory Instruments (Joint Committee)) and specifying the number of Instruments so reported under each of these grounds; and of the numbers of Instruments considered by a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c., and by the House respectively, in Session 1987-88, showing the number where the Question on the proceedings relating thereto was put forthwith under Standing Order No. 101(5). —*[The First Deputy Chairman of Ways and Means.]*

Private Bills and Private Business

Return ordered,

Of the Number of Private Bills, Hybrid Bills, Bills for the confirmation of Orders under the Private Legislation Procedure (Scotland), Act 1936, and Bills for confirming Provisional Orders introduced into this House, and brought from the House of Lords, and of Acts passed in Session 1987-88, specifying also the dates of the House's consideration of the several stages of such Bills;

Of all Private Bills, Hybrid Bills and Bills for confirming Provisional Orders which in Session 1987-88 were reported on by Committees on Opposed Bills or by Committees nominated by the House or partly by the House and partly by the Committee of Selection, together with the names of the selected Members who served on each Committee; the first and also tne last day of the sitting of each Committee; the number of days on which each Committee sat; the number of days on which each selected Member served; the number of days occupied by each Bill in Committee; the Bills of which the Preambles were reported to have been proved; the Bills of which the Preambles were reported to have been not proved; and in the case of Bills for confirming Provisional Orders, whether the Provisional Order ought or ought not to be confirmed;

Of all Private Bills and Bills for confirming Provisional Orders which in Session 1987-88 were referred by the Committee of Selection to the Committee on Unopposed Bills, together with the names of the Members who served on the Committee; the number of days on which the Committee sat; and the number of days on which each Member attended;

Of the number of Bills to confirm Orders under the Private Legislation Procedure (Scotland) Act 1936, distinguishing those proceeded with under section 7 and under section 9 respectively; specifying, in the case of Bills proceeded with under section 9 against which petitions were deposited, whether a motion was made to refer the Bill to a joint committee, and if so whether such motion was agreed to, withdrawn, negatived or otherwise disposed of; and stating for each joint committee to which a Bill was referred the names of the Members of this House nominated thereto, the first and last day of the committee's sitting, the number of days on which each joint committee sat for the consideration of the Bill referred to it, the number of days on which each Member of the committee served, and whether the committee reported that the Order ought or ought not to be confirmed.

And of the number of Private Bills, Hybrid Bills, Bills for the confirmation of Orders under the Private Legislation Procedure (Scotland) Act 1936, and Bills for confirming Provisional Orders withdrawn or not proceeded with by the parties, those Bills being specified which were referred to Committees and dropped during the sittings of the Committee.—*[The First Deputy Chairman of Ways and Means.]*

Public Bills

Return ordered,

Of the number of Public Bills (other than Bills to confirm Provisional Orders and Bills to confirm Orders under the Private Legislation Procedure (Scotland) Act 1936) distinguishing Government from other Bills, introduced into this House, or brought from the House of Lords, during Session 1987-88, showing: (1) the number which received the Royal Assent, and (2) the number which did not receive the Royal Assent, indicating those which were introduced into but not passed by this House, those passed by this House but not by the House of Lords, those passed by the House of Lords but not by this House, those passed by both Houses but Amendments not agreed to; and distinguishing the stages at which such Bills were dropped, postponed or rejected in either House of Parliament, or the stages which such Bills had reached by the time of Prorogation.—*[The First Deputy Chairman of Ways and Means.]*

Sittings of the House

Return ordered,

Of the days on which the House sat in Session 1987-88, stating for each day the day of the month and day of the week, the hour of the meeting, and the hour of the adjournment; the total numbers of hours occupied in the sittings of the House; and the average time; showing the number of hours on which the House sat each day, and the number of hours after the time appointed for the interruption of business and specifying, for each principal type of business before the House, how much time was spent thereon, distinguishing from the total the time spent after the hour appointed for the interruption of business.—*[The First Deputy Chairman of Ways and Means.]*

Special Procedure Orders

Return ordered,

Of the number of Special Procedure Orders presented in Session 1987-88, the number withdrawn; the number annulled; the number against which Petitions or copies of Petitions were deposited; the number of Petitions of General Objection and for Amendment respectively considered by the Chairmen; the number of such petitions certified by the Chairmen as proper to be received, and the number certified by them as being Petitions of General Objection and for Amendment respectively; the number referred to a Joint Committee of both Houses; the number reported with Amendments by a Joint Committee, and the number in relation to which a Joint Committee reported that the Order be not approved and be amended respectively; and the number of Bills introduced for the confirmation of Special Procedure Orders:

Of Special Procedure Orders which, in Session 1987-88, were referred to a Joint Committee, together with the names of the Commons Members who served on each Committee; the number of days on which each Committee sat; and the number of days on which each such Member attended.—*[The First Deputy Chairman of Ways and Means.]*

Standing Committees

Return ordered,

For Session 1987-88 of (1) the total number and the names of all Members (including and distinguishing Chairmen) who have been appointed to serve on one or more of the Standing Committees showing, with regard to each of such Members, the number of sittings to which he was summoned and at which he was present; (2) the number of Bills, Estimates, Matters and other items referred to Standing Committees pursuant to Standing Order No. 102 (Standing Committees on Statutory Instruments, &c.), or Standing Order No. 103 (Standing Committees on European Community Documents) considered by all and by each of the Standing Committees, the number of sittings of each Committee and the titles of all Bills, Estimates, Matters and other items as above considered by a Committee, distinguishing where a Bill was a Government Bill or was brought from the House of Lords, and showing in the case of each Bill, Estimate, Matter and other item, the particular Committee by which it was considered, the number of sittings at which it was considered (including, in the case of the Scottish Grand Committee, the number of meetings held in Edinburgh, pursuant to a motion made under Standing Order No. 95(3) (Scottish Grand Committee)) and the number of Members present at each of those sittings.—*[The First Deputy Chairman of Ways and Means.]*

Select Committees

Return ordered,

For Session 1987-88 of statistics relating to the membership, work costs and staff of Select Committees with so much of the same information as is relevant to the Chairmen's Panel and the Court of Referees.—*[The First Deputy Chairman of Ways and Means.]*

Oral Answers to Questions

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Household Domestic Appliances

2. **Mr. Sumberg:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what action has been taken by his Department over the past two years to ensure greater safety in the use of domestic household electrical appliances.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Industry and Consumer Affairs (Mr. Eric Forth): Effort has been directed to two main sectors.

First, regulations have been prepared which set constructional requirements aimed at ensuring the intrinsic electrical safety of household appliances and accessories. Last year, the Plugs and Safety Sockets etc. (Safety) Regulations 1987 were introduced to improve the safety of those items. Consultation has also been carried out on the Low Voltage Electrical Equipment (Safety) Regulations, intended to implement the low voltage directive, which I expect to lay before the House early in the new year. More generally, the Consumer Protection Act 1987 also introduced a new general safety requirement for all consumer goods not covered by specific regulations to be reasonably safe.

Secondly, promotional campaigns have been undertaken, in conjunction with industry, to heighten awareness of the hazards associated with the use of certain electrical equipment and the ways to minimise those risks. Particular examples have concerned the proper use and maintenance of electric blankets and the enhanced protection against electric shock provided by residual current devices.

Mr. Sumberg: Does my hon. Friend agree that it is hardly helpful to safety in the home to oblige the disabled, the elderly and the plain incompetent, among whom I number myself, to fit plugs to electrical appliances? Is it not time that we followed the practice on continental Europe and obliged manufacturers to fit moulded plugs on all electrical appliances?

Mr. Forth: I am charmed, if not seduced, by my hon. Friend's confession of weakness. There is no evidence that safety problems arise in domestic use from plugs not being attached to flexes by manufacturers, so I should be reluctant to make that compulsory. I remind my hon. Friend that 5 to 10 per cent. of households still use the old round-pin plugs, which could give rise to problems.

Mr. Thurnham: Is my hon. Friend aware that Britain is one of the few countries in the world in which any Tom, Dick or Harry can set up as an electrician? No doubt any Frank, Fritz or Sebastian will soon be able to do so as well. Will my hon. Friend encourage householders to use only qualified electricians? Will he acknowledge the work done by the Electrical Contractors Association in setting high standards of training and encouraging the installation of residual current breakers in every house?

Mr. Forth: I welcome what my hon. Friend has said. It is of the greatest importance that consumers generally—certainly in the sector that we are discussing—should always try to ensure the competence of a contractor. I

encourage the industry to go further in its efforts to ensure that potential users of its services use only the competent and qualified.

Mr. Kennedy: I listened with interest to the Minister's first response, but something was lacking. Why is he so against making the attachment of plugs compulsory?

Mr. Forth: I am sorry that I did not carry the hon. Gentleman with me. Not only are we generally against compulsion where it can be avoided, but there is no evidence that plugs not compulsorily attached to electrical flex cause any safety hazard in the home. The hon. Gentleman must concede that some housholds in his constituency may still use the old two-pin plugs. Making the use of square-pin plugs compulsory would thus give rise to problems, perhaps among people on low incomes.

Rolls-Royce 211-524L Engine

3. **Mr. Richard Page:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster when he expects to make an announcement on possible launch-aid for the Rolls-Royce 211-524L engine.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Trade and Industry (Mr. Robert Atkins): Discussions are continuing with Rolls-Royce on its launch-aid application for the RB211-524J and 524L engines. I expect the Government to be in a position to make an announcement on the application early next year.

Mr. Page: I am disappointed that an announcement will not be available today. I remind my hon. Friend that this engine application will produce the most powerful civil aviation engine in the world, one that will have considerable world markets. As our manufacturing base, although growing and expanding, is still regretfully rather small—as witnessed by our balance of payments problems—will my hon. Friend use his considerable charm, influence and persuasion to ensure that, however it is funded, the application goes ahead?

Mr. Atkins: I am delighted by my hon. Friend's question. My hon. Friend, along with me and those who appreciate the value of Rolls-Royce, recognises that the potential for this engine is not in doubt. Rolls-Royce has a deserved reputation for excellence, which this derivative will enhance. I agree that Rolls-Royce has found the right market. I hope that the engine will be successful.

Mr. Greg Knight: Will my hon. Friend confirm that, with or without launch-aid, this is an excellent engine and that Rolls-Royce has an excellent safety record?

Mr. Atkins: Of course I agree with my hon. Friend. I paid a visit to Rolls-Royce in his constituency and recognise the importance of the work force. As usual, my hon. Friend puts the case for his constituents and for Rolls-Royce with the persuasion that we have come to expect.

Employment, Training and Inner-City Policy

4. **Mr. Rowe:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what discussions he has held concerning employment and training and inner-city policy; and if he will make a statement.

The Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister of Trade and Industry (Mr. Tony Newton): The measures available under the DTI's enterprise initiative already recognise that some areas of the country require additional assistance to encourage enterprise and growth.

Mr. Rowe: My right hon. Friend will be aware of some of the evidence given recently to the Select Committee on Employment about the lack of provision for training in some of the urban development corporations. Will he give an assurance that he will take into account some of the excellent suggestions made in that evidence and elsewhere for improving the position, because the need is urgent?

Mr. Newton: My hon. Friend knows the importance that we attach to employment and training issues in relation to inner-city policy. They are the subject of frequent discussion. I shall certainly take account of my hon. Friend's comments in considering the points made.

Mr. Vaz: When the right hon. Gentleman considers future inner-city policy, will he learn from the mistakes that were made with the establishment of the inner-city task forces? Will he ensure that local authorities, such as mine in Leicester, are consulted fully before any of these policies are put into effect? Will he also consider extending the inner-city initiatives to the outer areas of cities, which suffer from similar problems to those in inner-city areas?

Mr. Newton: As it happens, I was in Leicester yesterday and visited the task force area with which the hon. Gentleman is concerned. It seems to be doing very good work. I must say gently that it takes two to achieve the degree of co-operation that the hon. Gentleman and I would like to see. I hope that it will be possible to work as co-operatively as both of us would like.

On the hon. Gentleman's other point, of course there are other places which suffer significant problems and that is one point that we shall bear in mind as we consider the deployment of the task force effort.

Investment Media

5. **Mr. Dykes:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster when he next intends to meet his European Community counterparts to discuss the equalisation of funding conditions for unit trusts and similar investment media throughout all the European Community member states.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Corporate Affairs (Mr. Francis Maude): I regularly meet my European Community counterparts to discuss matters of mutual interest and concern. These include the sorts of matters indicated by my hon. Friend.

Mr. Dykes: May I eschew the ghastly phrase "level playing fields" and ask my colleague whether he will work hard from now on to achieve the equalisation and harmonisation of conditions for these unit trust groups, both British and foreign? Does my hon. Friend agree that there should be equalisation of distribution and marketing provision in all member states as soon as possible? Does he agree also that insurance groups launching unit trusts and other similar instruments should not be able to conceal the real net charges from unit trust purchasers, but should reveal the same charges as other genuine unit trust groups?

Mr. Maude: All unit trusts, whether produced by insurance companies, specialised unit trust companies or anyone else, have to meet the same terms and conditions. I am delighted that my hon. Friend did not talk about level playing fields. In the time that I have been doing this job, I have heard a great deal about playing fields but have never come across one which people agreed was level.

We must ensure that such products are readily marketable across Europe. Under the directive that comes into force next October, it will be possible for a unit trust which is authorised in one Community country to be marketed throughout the Community, but it will have to be marketed subject to the rules of the country in which it is being marketed. There would therefore be no question of products authorised elsewhere but marketed in the United Kingdom being subject to a laxer regime.

Mr. Teddy Taylor: Is my hon. Friend aware of the very real concern for the safety of the investing public if foreign financial intermediaries can operate in this country without qualifying under the Securities and Investments Board or FIMBRA? Can he assure the investing public in Britain that any financial intermediary operating in the United Kingdom will have to meet the high qualifications and standards of FIMBRA?

Mr. Maude: Certainly. As I indicated, under the directive which covers unit trusts and collective investment schemes it will be essential for those products to be marketed in a country subject to the marketing rules of that country. There can therefore be no question of intermediaries, no matter where they are based, selling those products in the United Kingdom being subject to anything other than the United Kingdom rules.

There is a further directive which affects investment services more generally. As I understand it—it is still in an early stage of negotiation—it will have the same broad division, so that services being promoted in one country will be subject to the conduct of business rules for that country.

Regional Assistance

6. **Ms. Armstrong:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he has any plans to announce new measures to boost the economies of Britain's regions.

Mr. Newton: There is already a range of such measures which we shall continue to pursue vigorously. They are contributing to the economic revival which is clearly taking place in the regions.

Ms. Armstrong: Does the Minister recognise that there is still a great difference between regions in terms of economic prosperity and deveopment and that, in some regions, there is almost over-capacity, whereas in others we are desperately looking for ways in which we can become self-sufficient? Self-sufficiency demands productive industries, research and development and skill-based industries. What does the Minister intend to do to ensure that we have that base from which we can then properly grow?

Mr. Newton: I certainly recognise that there are still substantial differences between regions, but those regions that have had a particularly difficult time are now showing signs of a very strong revival. It is, of course, right that they should have the appropriate economic and industrial base, but the mix of that base will be different from that upon which they have traditionally depended, because the world has changed. In the case of the hon. Lady's region, the north-east, it seems to me that what is happening—notably but by no means only as a result of the arrival of Nissan—is generating exactly the sort of new skill base through its effects on training, for example, that we want to see.

Mr. Andy Stewart: Did my right hon. Friend read *The Independent* on Monday where he would have seen, listed constituency by constituency, the drop in unemployment? If he did, he would see that Sherwood, my constituency, was second from the bottom. That is due to an unprecedented reduction in manpower in the mining industry. We do not yet qualify for Government or EEC aid. Will he reconsider advising the EEC that we need such aid in the constituency of Sherwood? Better still, would he care to visit my constituency at the earliest possible opportunity to see what can be done about improving our prospects?

Mr. Newton: I did read the tables in *The Independent* on Monday and they were indeed interesting. Although I did not visit my hon. Friend's constituency yesterday, I visited Leicester and Nottingham and discussed a numbr of those problems with Nottingham city council and Nottinghamshire county council. I am very much aware of the problems being created by the decline of mining employment and the British Government have indicated their support for some of the proposals put forward in respect of the point raised by my hon. Friend.

Mr. James Lamond: Does the Minister recognise that certain industries are heavily concentrated in some regions, such as textiles in the north-west? Now that the textile industry is facing difficulties once again, does the right hon. Gentleman have any special measures that he intends to put into operation—such as additional finance to Inward, the development agency in the north-west—to enable any temporary difficulties which may arise because of the decline of certain industries to be overcome?

Mr. Newton: I have no specific additional measures in mind of the sort that the hon. Gentleman suggested. As I said in the main answer, there is a range of measures—including regional selective assistance—designed to encourage the development of new industries in the regions. Our record in attracting and encouraging new inward investment in all parts of the country is already considerable. We shall seek to build further on that.

Mr. Conway: Will my right hon. Friend take it from a former board member of the North of England Development Council that any colleague in this place who visits the assisted areas will see a marked improvement on the days when the Labour Government were implementing their broad-brush policies? Since the Government introduced their policy of targeting help, which is designed to create employment, there has been a vast improvement, as Labour Members well know.

Mr. Newton: I agree with my hon. Friend. As I have said in answering earlier questions, I have been visiting some of the regions. There is no doubt that the sense of confidence and optimism is far greater than it was even a year or two ago.

Mr. Cabom: Is the Minister aware of the report on the regional impact of the single market of 1992 which has been produced by the department of applied economics at the University of Cambridge? One of the conclusions reads:

"Regional policy needs to be significantly strengthened if 1992 is not to be disastrous for the regions".

The report's conclusions have been endorsed by the regional policy director of the Community. Is the Minister telling the House that we are leaving regional policy in 1992 to market forces?

Mr. Newton: I am not saying any such thing. We have a substantial range of measures and we shall continue to press them vigorously. There are undoubtedly implications for the regions in 1992. For example, they will need to have good transport links with the markets of Europe, and my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Transport is actively pursuing that aspect.

Mr. Batiste: Does my right hon. Friend agree that the best way to stimulate the economies of the regions is through the creation of genuinely local enterprise cultures, and that the most effective way of starting those cultures in areas of high unemployment where the economy is dominated by local authorities is for the authorities to put out to genuine tender as many of their services as possible?

Mr. Newton: I am sure that that approach could make a contribution. Also important is the work of local enterprise agencies, in many of which local authorities play an important part. I welcome the growing number of private sector initiatives which are directed at producing exactly the sort of culture that my hon. Friend rightly advocates.

British Engineering

7. **Ms. Quin:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will make a statement on the prospects for British engineering, in the light of the proposals to complete the European internal market in 1992.

Mr. Newton: The creation of the single European market is opening up opportunities for all sectors of United Kingdom industry, including engineering. Our "Europe Open for Business" campaign is designed to assist firms of all kinds to take advantage of those opportunities.

Ms. Quin: Given the importance of engineering to areas such as the north-east, and the enormous trade deficit in manufactured goods between the United Kingdom and the rest of the EEC, will the Government take every measure to ensure that British engineering derives some advantage from 1992? Or will engineering be allowed to go the way of so many other older industries, especially those in the north-east at this time?

Mr. Newton: There is no question of our allowing the engineering industry, or any other, to go into decline for want of anything that the Government can do to help it to have a competitive and viable future. The range of our policies has greatly contributed to an overall increase in the competitiveness of British industry, and the engineering industry, amongst others, is gaining from that.

Mr. Dickens: Does my right hon. Friend agree that British industry has a chance of walking tall in 1992 when we move into the single European market? Has this chance not been based on the marvellous training schemes that we have introduced? People have been given new skills that can lead towards meaningful jobs. We no longer have the stupid overmanning that was to be found under the Labour Government. Is it not a fact that industry now delivers goods on time, of the the right quality, at competitive prices, with good after-sales service?

Mr. Newton: I think that the answer to all those questions is yes. I only wish that I could imitate the style with which my hon. Friend put the points.

Mr. George Howarth: Does the Minister accept that even with expansion of opportunity in the engineering industry there will be a severe skill shortage, which will create difficulties?

Mr. Newton: There are problems of skill shortages in that and other industries, including the construction industry. The proposals put forward by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Employment earlier this week are directed at precisely such problems.

Mr. Bowis: Does my right hon. Friend agree that for engineering firms to do well in 1992 and beyond there is a great need for more young people to come into engineering? Will he encourage firms to keep close to the world of education—schools, colleges and higher education—so that, in particular, more women come into the industry and more poeple take joint courses in engineering and modern languages?

Mr. Newton: Yes, those are among the objectives of the industry education compacts, which we are taking a number of steps to encourage, and very much in line with the proposals that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Employment brought forward a couple of days ago.

Mr. Henderson: How does the Minister explain the deterioration in the trade gap with the EEC in engineering products from £350 million in 1979 to a deficit of £2 billion in 1988? What specific steps will he take to prevent a further deterioration by 1992 and beyond?

Mr. Newton: I attribute much of that problem to the economic policies that were pursued prior to 1979, and I expect there to be continuing advantage to the engineering industry, as to others, from the policies that have been pursued since then.

Mr. Riddick: Does my right hon. Friend agree that the prospects for British engineering will be further improved with the privatisation of British Steel? With a privatised steel industry, we can expect prices to be stabilised, or even reduced, as the industry becomes more efficient and competitive.

Mr. Newton: I hope that that forecast is right. I am certain that my hon. Friend's analysis that the prospects for British Steel have been improved is correct.

World Trade

8. **Mr. Robert Hughes:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster how much Britain's share of world trade has changed since 1979.

The Minister for Trade (Mr. Alan Clark): Since the beginning of the decade our share of world trade in manufactures has held steady. Our share of trade in invisibles continues to increase.

Mr. Hughes: Is not the true state of affairs that Britain's share of world trade has dropped from 9·1 per cent. in 1979 to 7·9 per cent. in the first quarter of this year? Whatever twisted logic the Minister may use, he cannot disguise his failure. What does he intend to do to improve British competitiveness?

Mr. Clark: I do not need twisted logic, because the hon. Gentleman circulated the text of the supplementary question that he has just declaimed fairly widely. It begins "Dear Bob" and is headed "Your question 11 tomorrow." It is signed by the hon. Member for Norwich, South (Mr. Garrett), and says exactly what the hon. Member for Aberdeen, North (Mr. Hughes) should do. I tried to get hold of the hon. Gentleman to help him with his figures because I did not think that the House would consider that a fall from 8·1 to 7·9 per cent. was of seismic proportions. The hon. Gentleman will be glad to know that the figure has now gone up from 7·9 to 8·2 per cent.

Mr. Robert Hughes: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. I wonder whether you can make inquiries about whether the Minister has been reading private correspondence which has not been properly handed on.

Mr. Clark: Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. The hon. Gentleman is presumably not aware that he shares both Christian name and surname with my hon. Friend the Member for Harrow, West (Mr. Hughes). Due to over-profligacy, I assume, in circulating the text, it was sent to everyone who carries his name—or was it?

Mr. Beaumont-Dark: Does my hon. Friend agree that one of the great problems that we face in world trade is the fact that the pound continues to go higher? If the pound is allowed to continue its rise against the currencies of our competitor countries, is it not possible that we may return to the position of 1979 to 1981, which would be hugely damaging to manufacturing industry? [HON. MEMBERS: "Hear, hear."]

Mr. Clark: My hon. Friend has his view, which seems to be widely shared by Opposition Members. The paradox is that Opposition Members and others declare simultaneously that the balance of payments deficit will lead to a sterling crisis, by which I assume they mean that the value of sterling will fall, not rise. That paradox may benefit from the attention of Lady Antonia Fraser's think tank.

Mr. John Garrett: Will the Minister confirm that the Chancellor's Autumn Statement forecast that this year British non-oil exports would increase by less than the growth in world trade and that we would continue to lose our market share? What representations have he or his colleagues made to the Chancellor about his policy of forcing up interest rates and thus further damaging our international competitiveness in manufacturing?

Mr. Clark: Industry is largely united in its view that it prefers increased interest rates to increased inflation. I did not know that my right hon. Friend had forecast that in his Autumn Statement, but I draw to his and to the hon. Gentleman's attention the fact that, as I told the hon. Member for Aberdeen, North, in the first six months of this year our share increased from 7·9 to 8·2 per cent.

HOTOL

9. **Mr. Jack:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what measures he has taken to promote and encourage overseas participation in the HOTOL project.

Mr. Atkins: It is for Rolls-Royce and British Aerospace to determine jointly which pattern of international collaboration they wish to explore and we will support them in that endeavour. Following a visit that I made recently to Washington, where I met Dr. Graham, the President's science adviser at the White House, I am pleased to tell the House that avenues have been established for the companies to pursue discussions with their American counterparts.

Mr. Jack: In welcoming my hon. Friend's positive statement about future developments in respect of HOTOL, may I ask him to confirm that the only real future for the project depends upon putting together international consortia with a vested interest in launching satellites? While he encourages that development, will he ensure that the companies participating in the materials development, technology and avionics associated with the project have sufficient encouragement from his Department to continue the work? We must not allow the project to wither on the vine.

Mr. Atkins: My hon. Friend is right. I can do no better than quote from a recent report in the United States by a group of people from the United States and other nations. It concluded that it was

"economically and technologically impossible for any single country or company to develop an HSCT aircraft."

Collaboration must be the order of the day.

Mr. Wood: Bearing in mind that HOTOL holds the prospect of a reduction by a factor of four in the cost of satellite launches, which would benefit broadcasters, telecommunications networks and defence departments, is it not extremely important that the industries involved should co-operate internationally in this venture?

Mr. Atkins: As my hon. Friend knows, it will cost many billions of pounds to develop HOTOL. The early stages of such activity will require relatively small sums of about £2 million to £3 million a year, which it is well within the capability of the companies involved to provide. My hon. Friend is right to say that this is an innovative project that deserves consideration, and we are doing just that.

Exporters (Support Scheme)

10. **Mr. Cran:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will report on the progress being made with his Department's review of support schemes for exporters; and when he expects the review to be completed.

Mr. Alan Clark: Good progress is being made. My right hon. and noble Friend expects to announce the results of the review in the new year.

Mr. Cran: Does my hon. Friend agree that a strong case can be made for encouraging exporting companies to use sources of market information other than those provided

under the aegis of his Department, if for no other reason than that, although companies appreciate the service, they have complained about the variability and quality of the service that they receive?

Mr. Clark: I have heard no complaints, but I hope that my hon. Friend will let me know if he does. Of course, it is open to companies to use the private sector. As part of the enterprise initiative, we are actively enrolling the private sector in a consultancy role.

Mr. Cryer: Would not any support scheme for exporters, which is vital in view of our massive balance of payments and trade deficit, be subject to Commission interference? Is it not particularly important that there should be export schemes to assist manufacturing industry in view of the £11 billion deficit with other EEC countries? Are not our membership of the EEC and high interest rates forced up by the Chancellor of the Exchequer sounding a death knell for yet more jobs in manufacturing industry, over and above the 2 million already destroyed by the Tory Government since 1979?

Mr. Clark: Straight export subsidies, as the hon. Gentleman knows, are banned under article 16 of the GATT and article 9 of the subsidies code. I admit that there is a grey area within the European Community and practices there. Right hon. and hon. Members must weigh—and this is reflected in their correspondence—the relative advantages that their constituents can sometimes derive from Community grants as producers against the threats and dangers to which they may be subjected from their Community competitors, who also benefit from them.

Mr. Ian Bruce: Will my hon. Friend comment on the way that his Department works with the Foreign and Commonwealth Office in supporting the efforts of British embassies? Does he agree that simple measures to monitor what is needed in export markets are often more cost-effective than grand dinners and soirees, where most of the money is spent rather than on practical measures?

Mr. Clark: My hon. Friend is right in his implication that the bulk of the £100 million a year spent on export promotion is disposed of by the Foreign and Commonwealth Office. The relative merits of entertaining and hard fact finding depend on one's viewpoint.

Mr. Cryer: And on one's taste buds!

Mr. Clark: On every occasion that I visit a foreign capital, I make a point of calling on our commercial section there, and I am impressed by the increasingly rising standards of service, dedication and efficiency of the commercial sections of our posts overseas.

Ms. Short: The Minister will remember the terrible effect on our exports and on manufacturing employment —which is now showing in our balance of payments problems—of the recession following 1979, largely caused by high interest rates. Is he not worried that with the high interest rates that we have now, the prospect of their increasing still higher, and 1992—when, senior British industrialists predict, one in two factories will close—we shall see another mammoth recession unless the Government act on interest rates?

Mr. Clark: Interest rates are principally a matter for my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer. Many reasons have been advanced for the 1974-75 crisis.

Ms. Short: I was speaking of 1979.

Mr. Clark: It is generally accepted that it is a matter of cause and effect and that at that time high interest rates were a consequence of developments such as high oil prices. At present, we have a fall in oil prices.

1992 Hotline

11. **Mr. Jacques Arnold:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster how many calls have been received by his Department's 1992 hotline; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Maude: DTI's 1992 hotline has received over 105,000 calls since it opened on 18 March.

Mr. Arnold: Does my hon. Friend consider that it is important that the hotline should bring to the attention of business men the significance of the enterprise initiative and of the many ways in which they can be given assistance in responding to 1992?

Mr. Maude: My hon. Friend is right. There are a number of ways in which help and advice can be given to businesses as they adapt for the changes coming with the completion of the single market. No business in the length and breadth of the United Kingdom will be wholly exempt from the changes, and every one of them needs to look to its laurels to ensure that it is able to take advantage of the opportunities that will be forthcoming.

Mr. Harry Greenway: Is my hon. Friend aware that many businesses all over the world are considering coming to this country as a means of building a bridge into Europe with 1992 in prospect? Is he in favour of that as a means of inspiring more business and more employment in this country, and if so, what is he doing about it?

Mr. Maude: We have always had an open attitude to businesses which seek to establish themselves in this country. We have welcomed that and it has been enormously beneficial to us. It is a process that works both ways. The United Kingdom is now the second largest holder of external assets in the world, second only to Japan. That is a consequence of our having that open attitude to investment flowing both into and out of the United Kingdom.

Airbus Industrie

12. **Mr. David Evans:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster when he last met representatives of Airbus Industrie.

Mr. Atkins: My right hon. and noble Friend the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry and I last met representatives of Airbus Industrie at a meeting of Airbus Ministers from the four partner countries held on 17 November 1988.

Mr. Evans: Is my hon. Friend aware that the president of Airbus Industrie is German and that the managing director is French? In an important meeting on 15

December, will he support the view that the financial director should be a British subject, in the interests of British Aerospace and the British people?

Mr. Atkins: Yes, Sir.

Mr. Hoyle: Has the Minister discussed with Airbus Industrie the disappointment over the fact that British Airways went to Boeing in America rather than to Europe and that it is now the only major national carrier not using the European Airbus to any great extent? That disappointment is felt even when taking into account the Airbus orders that it inherited from British Caledonian.

Mr. Atkins: I understand the hon. Gentleman's point. However, Rolls-Royce engines will be used on a variety of——

Mr. Hoyle: Not on 737s.

Mr. Atkins: No, not on 737s, but on a variety of the aircraft that have been purchased. In an industry that is as collaborative as the aerospace industry, a wide variety of British companies are already involved in a wide variety of Boeing aircraft, not least, for example, Shorts and Rolls-Royce. The hon. Gentleman's point is well taken.

Mr. Bill Walker: When my hon. Friend next meets the members of Airbus Industrie, will he draw to their attention the way in which Britain has brought about financial discipline in the market place by requiring companies to show clearly how they operate and how they are funded? That is important because Airbus Industrie, which is an essential part of European aircraft collaboration, must be seen in the United Kingdom and elsewhere as a company whose accounts can be noted and accounted for.

Mr. Atkins: My hon. Friend is correct in his assessment. Obviously, those in the industry know how successful the recent versions of the Airbus have been, particularly in competition with American manufacturers. It is all the more important, therefore, that we ensure that administratively and financially the company has a secure long-term future to offer customers and employees.

Mr. Stott: Further to the point raised by my hon. Friend the Member for Warrington, North (Mr. Hoyle), given the fact that the British taxpayer has paid millions of pounds in launch-aid for the Airbus A320, that many thousands of jobs in British Aerospace depend on future sales of that aircraft, and that British Aerospace has decided to buy the Boeing 737 400 series, which does not have the Rolls-Royce engine, can the Minister quantify what that purchase will mean to the balance of payments?

Mr. Atkins: The hon. Gentleman will not be surprised to know that I cannot do that off the top of my head. However, I emphasise what I said earlier. The aerospace industry is a collaborative industry involving a wide variety of manufacturers, in a wide variety of aspects, whether they be airframe, engines or avionics. In those circumstances, although I was as disappointed as many other people that British Airways felt that it could not buy the A320, the reason behind its decision was that it wanted a range that was not available by the purchase of the A320. That is a commercial matter for a company which is already involved with a variety of British companies in other aspects of Boeing aircraft, not least Rolls-Royce engines on the rest of its fleet.

Mr. Grylls: Further to the good point made by my hon. Friend the Member for Tayside, North (Mr. Walker) about the organisation of Airbus, following the report by Sir Jeffrey Sterling, when will Airbus Industrie be turned into a company that actually has a balance—that would be a step forward—and when will it have a finance director? I understand that it does not have one at present.

Mr. Atkins: In the context of Airbus ministerial meetings, we are working hard to ensure that we can achieve the ideal to which my hon. Friends have drawn the attention of the House. I hope that we can achieve it sooner rather than later.

House Prices

13. **Mr. Michael:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what assessment he has made of the impact on the housing market, and on would-be first-time housebuyers in particular, of house price rises during 1988; and what proposals he has to regulate estate agents and others involved in that market as a consequence.

Mr. Forth: I am pleased to see that home ownership in 1988 has continued to increase and that the proportion of homes in owner-occupation is at record levels. However, I am aware that some prospective home buyers experienced difficulties during the very active market conditions in July of this year and that the operation of the property transfer systems remains a matter of some public concern. Therefore, I have been conducting a wide-ranging programme of discussions with the leading estate agency bodies and other interested parties to consider the practices of estate agents in the operation of the property transfer system and the possible scope for self-regulation by estate agents.

The Government's interim conclusions on the relevant issues were outlined in a recent speech given by my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster. I have placed copies of the text of his speech in the House Library for reference.

Mr. Michael: Does the Minister accept that his tears are meaningless in the context of inactivity and that those who were hurt in the scramble of house prices earlier this year were new and would-be house buyers? Discussions with estate agents do nothing to bring in regulation of the market, which is what the Minister should do as part of the Government's acceptance of their responsibilities.

Mr. Forth: I am not entirely sure what the operation of estate agencies has to do with any difficulties that first-time buyers might have. It is instructive to note that the ratio of average income of first-time house buyers to the average price of houses has scarcely changed over the past 10 years. We should be careful before we rush to any conclusions about regulating a market which, generally speaking, has operated successfully and brought us to a position in which over two thirds of the people of this country are proud owner-occupiers.

Mr. Andrew MacKay: Does my hon. Friend agree that there is a silver lining to the high increases in house prices in the south-east, namely, that market forces are now working? As employers cannot find labour in the south-east, they are seriously considering moving to areas

where house prices are much lower and labour is more plentiful, which will obviously help employment throughout the country.

Mr. Forth: Yes, I agree with my hon. Friend. He and I know, but I doubt whether Opposition Members will ever learn, that the operation of the market overall and in the longer term is always to the benefit of the people of this country.

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett: Does the Minister accept that there is not only a record number of home owners but a record number of repossessions? Does he accept also that there is concern that estate agents do not get the best possible prices for repossessed houses? The individual not only loses his home but ends up in debt. As repossession often occurs because of high interest rates and the problems of having to live on benefits, will the Government do something at least to make sure that estate agents get the full market value for repossessed homes?

Mr. Forth: I congratulate the hon. Gentleman on his elevation to the Back Benches. I hope that his knowledge of estate agency matters will soon match his knowledge of education. If the hon. Gentleman has any specific cases that he wants to bring to my attention I should be grateful to know about them, because I will then be able to add them to the evidence that I have been gathering about the operation of estate agents over the past few months.

CBI (Merger Policy)

14. **Mr. Ian Taylor:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what discussions he has had with the Confederation of British Industry regarding the proposed reform of the law on mergers.

Mr. Maude: I have had no such discussions recently. However, the improvements to merger control procedures that we are proposing arose from our review of mergers policy, to which the CBI submitted views.

Mr. Taylor: When my hon. Friend next has discussions with the CBI, will he remind it that many of its members are now successfully making acquisitions in other countries and that, rather than introduce protectionism in the domestic market and tinker with the takeover code, the way forward is for it to back my hon. Friend's efforts to remove restrictions in other countries, particularly within the European Community?

Mr. Maude: It is worth pointing out that for the last 12 months for which figures are available, till September of this year, the value of acquisitions by United Kingdom companies overseas was slightly more than double the value of acquisitions in the United Kingdom by overseas companies. The policy of openness that we have espoused has been beneficial for the United Kingdom. My hon. Friend is absolutely right in saying that barriers to takeovers are being mounted in other countries within the European Community. I have asked the European Commission to bring forward proposals to address some of the barriers, and I have had an encouraging response.

Mr. Austin Mitchell: Why does the Minister not admit that the Government's merger policy has been a total disaster? It has been diluted, it takes no account of jobs, industrial logic or the national interest and it has encouraged an orgy of speculation and takeover, rather than investment, which has reached record heights in the last quarter. All the research shows that there has been not overall benefit, but overall harm, from those takeovers, yet the Government have dithered on with their review of policy. Why does the Minister not come out with the truth and tell us that the Government's only mergers policy is a great big "for sale" notice over British industry?

Mr. Maude: It is difficult to know which of the hon. Gentleman's propositions is more wrong. He has got it wrong all the way down the line. We have made clear our policy. We shall refer mergers when a competition issue arises. We would not ordinarily refer mergers on any other basis, although it is not an exclusive criterion. As the figures that I have just given show, the fact is that we have been benefiting enormously from having a broadly open policy towards acquisitions. The result is that we have United Kingdom externally owned assets which are higher than those of any other country, except Japan. I should have thought that that would make the hon. Gentleman, with his well-known nationalism, rather proud.

Shorts of Belfast

15. **Mr. Cash:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what is the extent of the financial interest of the Department of Trade and Industry in Shorts of Belfast.

Mr. Atkins: I want my hon. Friend to listen carefully. The issued share capital of Short Brothers plc comprises 3,600,000 ordinary shares of £1 each, 7,710,000 A preference shares of £1 each and 79,700,000 B preference shares of £1 each. Of these, my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry holds 342,000 ordinary shares and 4,840,000 A preference shares. That adds up to about 10 per cent.

Mr. Cash: Does my hon. Friend agree that Shorts has an extremely bright future and that it is a company that some of us wish to campaign to privatise? Does he further agree that if my right hon. Friend were prepared to accept such a proposal, it would lead to Shorts having an extremely bright future in the European Community for the next 20 years?

Mr. Atkins: My hon. Friend is right. Shorts has contributed greatly to British Aerospace success. That is what it is and the House should be aware of it. Its plans for the future, which include privatisation and a new aircraft which it hopes to launch, suggest that its future will be as bright as it has reason to expect on the basis of its past achievements.

Mr. Cryer: Is not the truth that the attempt to privatise Shorts produces uncertainty, and has not our experience of privatisation shown that it always leads to sackings under the guise of slimming down and improving competitiveness? Surely, in a place like Northern Ireland, it is better to have certainty to reduce the level of unemployment, which must contribute to the sectarian strife there. The Government's recipe is a recipe for disaster.

Mr. Atkins: The main plans for privatisation will be controlled by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland. As I said, our shareholding is relatively small. I disagree with the hon. Gentleman. I believe that privatisation has proved a success story in the

aerospace industry. British Aerospace and Rolls-Royce clearly show what that success has been, and Shorts deserves the same consideration.

EC (Trade Statistics)

16. **Mr. John Marshall:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will make a statement on the growth of United Kingdom trade with the European Economic Community.

Mr. Alan Clark: We welcome the growth in trade with the European Community. Increased trade widens buyers' choice, encourages greater efficiency, and stimulates growth in the economy as a whole.

Mr. Marshall: Does my hon. Friend agree that the fact that the European Community takes 50 per cent. of our exports underlines both the potential for 1992 and the folly of those who sought at the 1983 election, and subsequently, to take Britain out of the European Community?

Mr. Clark: My hon. Friend's point is well taken. I am glad to add another statistic. The value of our exports of manufactures to the European Community is growing at an annual rate of 17 per cent.

Mr. Wilson: How does the Minister view the prospects for the Scotch whisky industry in the European Community?

Mr. Clark: Very favourably—as they are throughout the world.

Mr. Soames: With his well-known enthusiasm for the European Economic Community, does my hon. Friend agree that, although British business has done well in the Community recently, a limiting factor to developing our business is the poor language skills of British managers? Does he agree that the Government should take steps to ensure that companies are much better geared to promote their goods in the countries to which they are trying to sell them?

Mr. Clark: My hon. Friend is entirely right. One problem is that so many of our customers speak English —of a kind. That sometimes deludes British exporters into thinking that they can reply at length, deliver technical specifications and issue sales literature in English. In fact, the sooner they realise that it is essential to circulate their literature and to converse in, if possible, the language of their customers, the better their prospects.

Manufacturing Industry (Investment)

17. **Mr. Tony Lloyd:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster by what percentage in constant value terms investment in manufacturing industries has changed from 1979 to the latest date for which figures are available.

Mr. Atkins: Investment in manufacturing industry, including leased assets, in the first three quarters of 1988 is provisionally estimated to have been only 1·5 per cent. below the 1979 average level in constant value terms. However, it was 10 per cent. greater than in the same period a year earlier, and this strong growth is forecast to continue.

Mr. Lloyd: Given those rather pathetic figures, will the Minister speculate whether the failure of manufacturing industry to invest in its and our future has any relationship with the massive and growing balance of payments crisis facing this country? What do the Government intend to do to stimulate investment?

Mr. Atkins: The hon. Gentleman has been here long enough to be aware that there was a world recession in 1980-81. We were not unique in suffering from that recession. The fact is that investment is at an all-time high. The CBI forecasts a rise of 14·5 per cent. this year and a further rise of 9 per cent. next year. That appears to fly in the face of what the hon. Gentleman is suggesting.

Enterprise Initiative

18. **Mr. Harris:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster how many applications have so far been received for consultancy projects under the enterprise initiative.

Mr. Forth: My hon. Friend will be pleased to hear that a large and growing number of firms are improving their competitiveness by taking the enterprise initiative. Since January, 15,000 applications have been received for the self-help package of assistance with consultancy projects —2,500 of them in the last six weeks.

Mr. Harris: Does my hon. Friend agree that this scheme has special value for small firms? Can he give any information about the number of applications made by small firms?

Mr. Forth: My hon. Friend is right. The initiative is aimed primarily at small firms. We have been delighted with the take-up. I shall tell my hon. Friend what I probably do not need to tell him: we have already received 288 applications for consultancy projects from Cornwall, and 128 projects have been approved for assisted consultancy. I am sure he will agree that this is encouraging. We hope to see this greater progress maintained.

EH 101 Helicopter

20. **Mr. Mans:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will make a statement on progress on the development of the EH 101 helicopter.

Mr. Atkins: The Anglo-Italian EH 101 helicopter programme is approaching the end of its fifth year of full development. The flight-testing programme has been in progress for over a year and three development aircraft have now flown. Aircraft performance has generally been good, with problems no more than would usually be expected with such a development.

Mr. Mans: I thank my hon. Friend for that reply. Will he elaborate on the progress of the RTM322 engine built by Rolls-Royce, which will be put in the aircraft at a later date?

Mr. Atkins: As I have already said, the participation of Rolls-Royce in engine manufacture is proving highly successful, and the RTM322 is no exception. We hope that provision will be made for that engine to be available for the super version, but it is for customers to decide what they want.

Mr. David Winnick (Walsall, North): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Order. I shall take the statement from the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster first.

North East Shipbuilders Ltd.

3.30 pm

The Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister of Trade and Industry (Mr. Tony Newton): With permission, Mr. Speaker, I wish to make a further statement about British Shipbuilders.

In my previous statement on 14 November, I was able to report good progress towards a successful sale of most of the remaining elements of British Shipbuilders, following that of Govan earlier in the year. That progress has continued. Agreement is now close for the sale of Clark Kincaid in Greenock and of the Appledore yard in north Devon, and negotiations for the sale of the Ferguson yard at Port Glasgow are under way.

I can additionally report today that I have accepted British Shipbuilders' advice that the preferred bidder for Marine Design Consultants should be the team led by the managing director. Subject to securing further new orders, its bid envisages work being continued in both its Sunderland and Dundee offices. I have asked British Shipbuilders to press ahead with detailed negotiations.

As I said on 14 November, the yards and other facilities that I have mentioned account for five of the six owned by BS, and nearly two thirds of those employed by them, when the process of seeking private sector purchasers was started by my predecessor last April.

The remaining undertaking is, of course, North East Shipbuilders Ltd. at Sunderland.

On 14 November I told the House that, although none of the original bids for NESL had proved acceptable, BS had received three new expressions of interest. To allow time for those to be explored, I was therefore giving until the end of November to establish whether proposals could be developed that gave a firm basis for negotiation. That would entail a clear statement of the work envisaged for the yards, evidence of the technical and financial capacity of the bidder, and the prospect of arrangements likely to be compatible with the European Community sixth directive concerning state support for shipbuilding.

In the event, two of those who had expressed interest prior to 14 November did not submit proposals. The third did so, and two other new proposals also came forward. All three have been carefully considered by British Shipbuilders and its independent financial advisers, against the criteria that I set out.

As a result of that examination, British Shipbuilders' clear advice to me is that none of these proposals could form the basis of a viable future for merchant shipbuilding in the Sunderland yards. None provides evidence of sufficient financial resources, given the major uncertainties of the shipbuilding market. None gives evidence of sufficient work for the future.

Mr. Bob Clay (Sunderland, North): Nonsense.

Mr. Newton: All would entail levels of subsidy which, in one case in particular, could have faced difficulties under the sixth directive.

Mr. Clay: This is an utter disgrace.

Mr. Newton: Reluctantly, and with great regret, I therefore—*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Bob Cryer (Bradford, South): The right hon. Gentleman is sacking people. How can we remain silent?

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Newton: Reluctantly, and with great regret, I therefore have to tell the House that I see no further realistic prospect of maintaining NESL in its present form, and its shipbuilding yards will therefore progressively close as the current work load runs out. *[Interruption.]*

There remain possibilities, which I have asked— *[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. Those hon. Gentlemen who have points to make may make them from a standing position when they are called.

Mr. Newton: There remain possibilities, which I have asked BS to make every effort to explore, of selling Sunderland Forge Services, which currently employs nearly 400 people, and interest has also been expressed in one of the yards for purposes other than shipbuilding.

Both my predecessors and I have made it clear that, should it not prove possible for shipbuilding to continue on Wearside, we would bring forward a range of measures to assist those affected and to promote alternative employment in the town.

There will be three main elements. First, we propose a new enterprise zone for Sunderland. *[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. Let us have the details.

Mr. Newton: As with existing zones, this would mean relief from rates for 10 years for all new developments, a simplified planning regime to help speed up such developments, and 100 per cent. capital allowances on new industrial and commercial development. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment is urgently undertaking the necessary consultations with the European Commission and will give details as soon as possible.

Secondly, I have asked English Estates to start work immediately towards the early provision of over £7 million of advance factory space, over and above its existing commitments in the north-east. This will provide around 220,000 sq ft of high quality factory space for new or expanding businesses.

Thirdly, some £10 million will be made available over the next three years for a programme of measures to encourage new enterprise and employment opportunities in Sunderland. About half will be used to give financial support to new or expanding businesses. The other half will be used to assist the present employees of NESL to develop new skills and find new jobs. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Employment will provide services on the shipyard site to advise the work force on opportunities for jobs and training, including help for those who wish to apply for immediate retraining.

Taken together, the measures that I have announced have a total cost of some £45 million. They will significantly reinforce what is already being done to promote economic development in the area through the enterprise initiative, regional assistance, and the work of the Tyne and Wear urban development corporation, which will itself be announcing a number of new projects shortly as a result of the additional funding of £11 million

[Mr. Newton]

announced on 25 November. I hope that they will also further support and encourage the private sector initiatives that are under way or being considered.

The House will share my regret that, despite every effort, it has not proved possible to find a way forward for NESL. But it must now be right to concentrate on securing a new industrial future for the town, and I believe that we shall have the support of the House in what I have announced to that end.

Mr. John Garrett (Norwich, South): The Minister may talk about the failure of bids for NESL, but the fact is that he has just announced a devastating closure. Is the Minister aware that, for no reason other than dogma, he has just announced the destruction of the Sunderland economy and the death of British merchant shipbuilding? What does he think of his Government's Christmas present for families in Sunderland?

Does the Minister accept that this announcement is humiliating evidence of his failure to reverse the policies of his boss? Does he understand that this act of industrial vandalism not only brings to an end 600 years of shipbuilding on the Wear but destroys an essential British industry with a major contribution to make to our industrial and trading future?

Why has privatisation been given priority over the urgent practical need to secure vital orders? Why have months been wasted in finding private owners when all efforts should have been concentrated on obtaining the orders that would have safeguarded the yard's future? Why is the Government's obsession with the dogma of private ownership so much more important than the thousands of jobs on Wearside and the survival of a great British industry?

Why has the Minister ignored the incontrovertible evidence of an upturn in world shipping demand? Why has he chosen this moment to deliver the fatal blow, just when orders are becoming available and this modern and efficient yard is well placed to take advantage of the upturn?

Does the right hon. Gentleman agree—he did not mention this—that a Cuban order worth at least £110 million is available now and that it would secure the future of the yard? Does he further agree that Britain has already sacrificed more shipbuilding capacity than any other EEC country? Does he agree also that this will mean a total loss of about 5,000 jobs in an area of 20 per cent. unemployment and the loss of skills and experience that are essential to the Sunderland community and the nation?

As for the proposed grants, why is the right hon. Gentleman making unemployment worse before doing something about it? Does this event not add to the record of DTI incompetence? Is it not yet another example of a privatisation bungle, along with that of Girobank and the National Engineering Laboratory? Will he even now think again, swallow his prejudices—or rather, those of his master in another place—and concentrate on providing a future for Wearside and British merchant shipbuilding?

Will the Chancellor also reflect on the contrast between the Prime Minister's warm concern for the threatened workers at the Gdansk shipyard and the callous treatment of Sunderland—or does that explain his prevarication? Will he tell the noble Lord from us that this closure is a wilful act of destruction?

Mr. Newton: Far from dogmatically pursuing a particular policy, we have sought to overcome the problems left behind by a period in which British Shipbuilders, as a nationalised concern, has cost the taxpayer almost £2 billion, including losses of about £650 million, of which at least £100 million was lost by NESL in the past three years merely by fulfilling contracts to build ships.

Against that background, it was clear to my predecessor and to me that a solid future for the yards depended on finding new owners who could run them in a viable way. We are on the verge of succeeding in doing that, as I said in my statement, for five out of the six undertakings owned by British Shipbuilders at the outset of the process, covering about two thirds of the work force.

It is a great and genuine regret to me that we have not managed to find a comparable solution for NESL, and it would be manifestly unfair to the people of Sunderland to pretend that proposals that are manifestly not viable, are viable. I am not prepared to bank on hopes of an upturn in world shipbuilding, which are constantly being revised downwards and which have been further revised downwards in the past few months by the Association of West European Shipbuilders, which suggests that any real upturn will come at best in the latter half of the 1990s, not in the first half as it predicted before.

No one can dispute the fact that if £2 billion had been spent in the past 10 years on providing alternative employment rather than on propping up this industry to make losses we should now be in a better position. I have decided that the right thing to do is to end the uncertainty with the statement I have made this afternoon, and to get on with the job of building a new future for Sunderland.

Mr. Michael Grylls (Surrey, North-West): Does my right hon. Friend accept that his statement detailing the successful privatisation of five of the six remaining yards will bring comfort to those five yards, which will have a more secure future in the private sector? Obviously, for NESL this is a sad day, but will my right hon. Friend remind the company that Corby also had a sad day when the steelworks closed? Today, it is a thriving town with many different firms, large and small. British Steel Corporation (Industry) Ltd. the subsidiary of the then state-owned British Steel, made great efforts to bring new firms to Corby. What was done in Corby can be done in Sunderland, and I am sure that it can be with the help of the measures that my right hon. Friend has announced.

Mr. Newton: My hon. Friend speaks about what has happened in Corby. Consett is another example of a place where comparable proposals have been brought forward to seek to create secure employment for the future. They have met with immense success in recent years and I am determined that we shall have a similar success in Sunderland.

Mr. Chris Mullin (Sunderland, South): Sunderland has been murdered today, in the same way as Jarrow was murdered by a predecessor Government in 1934. Before today's announcement, male unemployment in Sunderland was running at over 20 per cent. There are whole streets where almost no one is working and generations of children are growing up who may never work. This closure was not inevitable. Orders could have been obtained—the Cuban order, for example—but no

serious effort was made to obtain them. Will the Minister tell the House why the yard could not be permitted to remain under the existing ownership and management, and why a serious attempt could not be made to obtain the work that we know is available? What will happen to the assets? This is one of the most modern shipyards in Europe. Will its assets be looted, or mothballed against the day when, perhaps, it is possible to revive shipbuilding on the Wear?

Mr. Newton: As I said in my statement, apart from the possibility, which will be pursued vigorously, of selling Sunderland Forge Services, which accounts for about 15 per cent. of the work force at Sunderland, interest has been expressed in at least one of the yards for purposes other than shipbuilding. That, too, will be explored. When those possibilities have been explored, we shall have to consider the future of the yard if it does not prove possible to find such an alternative use.

We were not prepared to do what the hon. Gentleman suggests in the second part of his question. That was because, against the background that I have described of record and persistent heavy losses on almost all shipbuilding contracts made by the yard over many years, we did not think it sensible to continue to proceed with the present structure and management.

May I also say to the hon. Gentleman, without, I hope, too much aggression, that he is doing no service to the people whom he seeks to represent by using the kind of language that he used at the outset of his question. It is no more true that my statement has, to use his words, "murdered Sunderland" than it would be true to say that the arrival of Nissan in Sunderland suddenly overcame all problems. However, it is clear from the arrival of Nissan and other firms that the prospects in the north-east are good. It is worth noting that Nissan alone expects to create 1,900 new jobs in Sunderland in the next few years.

Mr. Neville Trotter (Tynemouth): Does my right hon. Friend agree that the people who have murdered shipyards in Europe are the Koreans? They set the world prices for ships and are under-cutting the European yards by 40 per cent. While it is of little comfort to Sunderland, the same thing has happened, and is happening, all over western Europe. It is a matter of deep regret that the sincere and lengthy attempt by my right hon. Friend to save this yard and provide it with a viable future has not been successful. May I ask him for an assurance that there will be speedy action to provide alternative employment in other industries and that further funds will be made available if the initial allocation is insufficient?

Mr. Newton: I assure my hon. Friend that we shall take speedy action and keep the measures that we are taking under constant review to ensure that they are achieving the results that we want. I am grateful to my hon. Friend for what he said about what I have sought to do in the past two or three months, albeit, as things have turned out, I was unsuccessful.

I acknowledge what my hon. Friend said about Korean industry. The arrangements for subsidising European shipbuilding, which have been agreed in the Community, are in part directed at that problem. The difficulty with NESL and, more widely, with British Shipbuilders is that, even with subsidies extending up to 28 per cent. of the cost of a ship, they have still made losses over and above that permitted level of subsidy.

Mr. Clay: Is the Minister aware that four years ago, at a previous time of difficulty, one of his predecessors told shop stewards from NESL and myself that it was not his fault, but the Government's? Sadly, today's announcement is a tragedy as well as a farce. The Minister knows that the Cubans are anxious to place an order with Sunderland yards for 10 mixed-cargo ships and 10,000 containers. They are offering the yard a five-year co-operation deal to plan other work with it. How can the Minister say that no work is immediately available? The truth is that the privatisation on which the Government insisted has turned out to be a shambles.

Does the Minister recognise that it would be logical to allow the yard to take the available order, thereby securing jobs, not murdering them, tearing the heart out of the town and wrecking and frustrating any possible future for British merchant shipbuilding? He has destroyed the work of the past 600 years and any possible future for Sunderland. Shipbrokers and builders know that there will be an upturn in the market. Will he stop the murder of the yard, which is on the point of benefiting from that upturn, and prevent the murder of the town?

Mr. Newton: As to one or two of the hon. Gentleman's latter points, I cannot add to what I said earlier, except that I am told that the Japanese share our view about the diminution in the immediate prospects for an upturn in shipbuilding—a view that I reported as being held by the Association of West European Shipbuilders, which confirmed my doubts.

I hope that the hon. Gentleman will allow me to say that I have the greatest repect for the efforts that he has made in recent weeks to bring forward a package that would enable us to secure a future for the yard, which we both wanted. It is as much a matter of sadness to me as it is to him that I have not felt able to judge that the proposals that the consortium with which he was associated put forward constituted a viable basis for the future of the yards.

Part of that judgment—apart from doubts about its financial strength, based on advice that I received—rested on two facts about the Cuban order. First, there could be no certainty that the order could be secured in the face of international competition. Secondly, such indications as we had about the price that the Cubans would be likely to want to pay for those ships left it doubtful, to put it mildly, that anyone could build the ships without incurring losses. That is not a sensible basis on which to proceed.

Miss Emma Nicholson (Torridge and Devon, West): I thank my right hon. Friend for the successful conclusion of the Appledore sale. I know that that must be small comfort to Opposition Members, but to my constituents it means much. I join my right hon. Friend in what I know to be sincere sadness and regret at the failure to sell NESL. Anyone who knows and loves the north-east must regret it deeply, and anyone who knows or has worked with my right hon. Friend must know that his regret is genuine and sincere.

Does my right hon. Friend agree that it is wrong to narrow the working futures of our young men and women to declining, huge industries that are rapidly becoming more difficult to continue? We need, most honestly, to offer proper training, proper new work and fresh working

[Miss Emma Nicholson]

horizons, or those young men and women will not only not thank the Government, but will most sincerely not thank Her Majesty's Opposition.

Mr. Newton: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for her remarks. I share her pleasure at the prospect of a successful sale of the Appledore yard. I agree that we would be doing no service to anyone by pretending that something provides a future for employment when, in our judgment, it does not.

Dr. Norman A. Godman (Greenock and Port Glasgow): Speaking as a former shipwright and, more important, as a Member who represents what was once a famous shipbuilding constituency, may I say how deeply sorry I am for the people of Sunderland. Will not the effects of this closure be felt far beyond that town's confines, as much of the equipment and materials used in the construction of a new ship are produced far away from the shipbuilding community?

To be parochial for a moment, will the Minister give the House an assurance that the Government will continue to support British Shipbuilders' bid for a ferry for Mauritius, irrespective of the negotiations on the takeover of Ferguson in Port Glasgow? Many people will regard the Minister's words vis-a-vis an enterprise zone with deep suspicion, given what has happened to my community following the closure of Scott Lithgow and the sleekit words offered in so-called condolence by his predecessor.

Mr. Newton: On the last point, I cannot add to the emphasis that I have given. The number of extensions of the period for the bids to be considered, and so on, shows clearly how concerned I was to explore every realistic possibility of selling those yards successfully.

On the hon. Gentleman's more specific points, the position with Ferguson is that the bid is not dependent on our obtaining the Mauritius ferry order, but, as I made clear to the Mauritius Government when I was in Mauritius six or eight weeks ago, we would very much like to secure the contract for that ferry. Again, as with the Cubans, there is no doubt that there is intense international competition for that order, as with any other shipbuilding order, and I can make no promises that it will be secured.

Mr. Neil Hamilton (Tatton): Does my right hon. Friend accept that the Opposition do no service to the people of Wearside by trying to keep a hopelessly unviable enterprise going, any more than the right hon. Member for Chesterfield (Mr. Benn) did the workers of the Meriden motorcycle co-operative a service in trying to keep it going in the 1970s? The only result was that jobs were not secured and many workers lost a lot of money. Is it not far better to concentrate on getting jobs in the industries of the future than to be wedded to those of the past?

Mr. Newton: Over quite a period in Britain, the attempt to prop up industries that were unable to sell their products at a price which other people were prepared to pay and which guaranteed a profit has proved counter-productive to the interests of employment of many of our people. I accept that it is right now to concentrate on building secure jobs for the future, and that is what we are concentrating on.

Mr. John McAllion (Dundee, East): The Minister said that the preferred bid for Marine Design Consultants was to that by Sunderland-based management-led buy-out. The right hon. Gentleman and I know that that will eventually lead to closure of the Dundee operation. The right hon. Gentleman knows also that a buy-out plan from the Dundee workers was recently modified following discussions with British Shipbuilders and a proposal by British Shipbuilders to the workers in Dundee. That plan has been submitted to the Minister's Department. Why is he not backing it? Why is he refusing to back the workers in Dundee in trying to keep their jobs and future in the city? Is the right hon. Gentleman content to sell Dundee and Sunderland in the same afternoon?

Mr. Newton: I have agreed with the advice that I was offered by British Shipbuilders, following consultation with its advisers, Lazards, that what I have named as the preferred bidder for Marine Design Consultants offers the best prospect for the future of the operation as a whole. The alternatives appear to have been three interlinked bids, over one of which at least there was considerable doubt about finance. I accepted the advice which I was offered, which seems to make sense as the best way of securing a future for MDC.

Mr. Bowen Wells (Hertford and Stortford): Although this was obviously a painful and difficult decision for my right hon. Friend to take, may I congratulate him on concentrating first on those in Sunderland, and their families, who will lose work? Will he either go himself or send one of his colleagues to Sunderland to explain to those people the future which he hopes will be bright and will provide employment and opportunity for them and their children?

Mr. Newton: I can assure my hon. Friend that, quite apart from the visit that I specifically paid to the yards early on in assuming these responsibilities, and the more recent visit only last month to the north-east, I intend to visit the area at an appropriate time when we have had the opportunity to do the further work that will be required on the details of the package that I have announced today.

I have no doubt that we had no real alternative to what I have announced today, but, equally, I have no doubt of our determination to carry through the task of ensuring a good industrial future for Sunderland.

Mr. Charles Kennedy (Ross, Cromarty and Skye): Further to the question put by the hon. Member for Greenock and Port Glasgow (Dr. Godman), may I confirm to the Minister that Ross-shire is another example of an area where a massive closure has been followed by the creation of an enterprise zone? What proportion of the £45 million package that he has announced for Sunderland is represented by that enterprise zone? Is he aware that the lesson of other enterprise zones, certainly that at Invergordon, is that if too much time and money are devoted to set-up costs, inevitable damage is done to attracting new business? Is the right hon. Gentleman further aware that the economic experience of enterprise zones, particularly in the wake of a closure such as this, which tears the economic base out of a community, is that there is a much more substantial case for them when the local economy is flourishing than when it has suffered the hammer blow that the right hon. Gentleman has announced today?

Mr. Newton: The hon. Gentleman raises two points. First, that part of the £45 million to which I referred, which is represented by the estimated costs of the enterprise zone, is about £25 million spread over a number of years.

On his final point, he second-guessed what I was going to say in reply to him when I had heard only half of his question. Surely the point about the position in the north-east now—I believe this is incontrovertible and would be understood by anyone who has been there recently, as I have on a number of occasions—is that there is already a degree of economic expansion and a greater degree of confidence and optimism, on which the enterprise zone and the other measures that I have announced today will build.

Mr. Phillip Openheim (Amber Valley): Although no one can have anything but the deepest sympathy for the people of Sunderland because of the situation that they face, have not a large number of jobs in the shipbuilding industry been lost over a number of years and under a series of different Governments? Is it not true that, even in Japan, shipyards are closing because of the situation in the industry? Is it not further true that it is not in the long-term interests, either of the local economy in Sunderland or of our economy nationally, to keep open unviable and unprofitable industries and to try to compete with producers in the far east, who have proved that they can do the job better than we can?

Mr. Newton: My hon. Friend makes an important point in saying that these problems are by no means confined to Britiain or, indeed, to Europe. Employment in shipbuilding in Japan has fallen by very nearly half in the past 10 years, and in the past four or five years it has fallen faster in a number of European countries than in this country.

Mr. Ted Leadbitter (Hartlepool): The Minister will recognise that, after 41 years' public service in the northern region, I have some experience of what the closure of a shipbuilding yard does to a town: it literally murders it. Does he understand that, for the very first time in many years, I have come here with a real sense of anger at this calculated statement? It is convenient after the visit of the Prime Minister to Poland and Gdansk—we know the calculation.

Is the Minister aware that the £45 million package to which he referred would go a long way towards keeping the heart and soul of Sunderland alive, rather than using it to implement this deviating exercise that he has put before the House today? Does he understand that the cost of closure, or the loss of assets and the loss of labour, is sufficient for me to say to him now that if he had the will to keep this yard open he would have done it?

Mr. Newton: I have already said that far more than the £45 million to which I have referred today has been put into North East Shipbuilders, and that ten times that amount has been put into British Shipbuilders as a whole over the past 10 years without producing a situation in which ships could be profitably built and sold. Many people in the House will share my view that, with hindsight, it might have been better if some of that money had been applied to creating alternative employment much earlier.

Mr. John Marshall (Hendon, South): How does the £2,000 million that has been poured into the bottomless pit of British Shipbuilders compare with the cost of attracting Nissan to Sunderland? Will my right hon. Friend confirm that Nissan will produce, both directly and indirectly, well over 10,000 jobs? Is it not more important to attract sunrise industries than to prop up industries on which the sun set many years ago? Will he also confirm that jobs are safeguarded, not by the Government, but by industry producing the right goods, at the right time, at the right price?

Mr. Newton: I generally agree with my hon. Friend's remarks and, as I have said on several occasions, we are determined that that is precisely what will happen in Sunderland. We shall build on the north-east's success in attracting major inward investment, not only from Nissan, to ensure that jobs in the north-east and in Sunderland in particular will last and produce the goods that people want to buy, at the price they want to pay, and thus give real employment in the long term to the people whom we want to help.

Mr. Roy Beggs (Antrim, East): My sympathies go today to the work force and families in Sunderland. I must criticise the Government for the insensitive way in which they have made this announcement, two weeks before Christmas. It is absolutely ridiculous. The same thing happens time and again. The Government should set an example and give a little thought to people's feelings, especially at this time of year.

Has Sunderland been sacrificed to secure the already privatised yards? May I have an assurance that the reasons outlined for the closure of the Sunderland yard will not be parroted off within the next few days to justify the closure of Harland and Wolff in Belfast?

Mr. Newton: The hon. Gentleman will know that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland is making every effort to secure a future for Harland and Wolff. I can certainly assure him that there is no question of the proposition that he put in his question being the case or of Sunderland somehow being sacrificed for the other privatised yards. The reason for my making the announcement today, rather than at an earlier date, as some had pressed upon me, is simply that we gave a considerable extension of time because of our determination to try every possibility.

Sir Giles Shaw (Pudsey): Does my hon. Friend accept that, although I welcome the progress in the disposal of the other assets of British Shipbuilders, no one can possibly welcome the decision that he has announced in respect of NESL? I know some of the facts of the case, and I know that he has made prodigious efforts, including extending the period, not only for the offers and the statement, but to enable late-running offers to be considered, and has given every possible consideration to finding a favourable outcome.

Does my right hon. Friend accept that the consequences of the loss of NESL will be felt throughout the north-east and in Yorkshire, including Darlington and towns in the West Riding, many of which are suppliers, and that this will greatly concern many of us? Does he also accept the general feeling that, although the closure is a catastrophe, it is due to world forces very much beyond the control of the Government and has forced the

[Sir Giles Shaw]

Government to make a £45 million investment to diversify an economy in an area that sorely needs diversification to survive in the future?

Mr. Newton: I agree with my hon. Friend's concluding remaks and I am grateful to him for what he said at the outset of his question. The point that he made in the middle of his question echoed the remarks of an Opposition Member in an earlier question. I hope that Opposition Members and my hon. Friends will not exaggerate the effects of what I have had to announce today on other firms throughout the country. The work that is now going on at NESL will be sufficient in a few weeks to employ only about 100 to 150 people. It follows from that that many of the effects on other suppliers throughout the country will have been felt already.

Ms. Joyce Quin (Gateshead, East): Is the Minister aware that only this morning it was confirmed to me by the responsible official in the European Commission that the Government never reached the stage of making a final and formal presentation in support of any of the bids to keep the yards open, or in support of any rescue plan for them? Given that fact, is it not the case that the Government have failed to explore every avenue to keep the yards open, and have failed signally in the EEC to stand up for British merchant shipbuilding?

Mr. Newton: No, it is not. It would be necessary to obtain the agreement of the European Commission, under the sixth directive, to any proposal, but the first essential is to have a proposal to put to it that we believe provides a viable future for the yards. We have no such proposal, and that is what I have had to tell the House today.

Mr. Barry Field (Isle of Wight): It is not true that Conservative Members do not understand the import of my right hon. Friend's statement. When Samuel White yard shut in Cowes, 5,000 jobs went down the road. We on the Government Benches understand these matters. I understand that yesterday, despite the high level of unemployment in my constituency, at least one of the yards within it was endeavouring to recruit shipbuilding skills in the north-east. Will my right hon. Friend liaise with the Department of Employment to set up a temporary special unit to identify the shipbuilding shortage skills in yards with heavy order books and put them in touch with the men in Sunderland?

Mr. Newton: As part of the arrangements that I announced in my statement, we shall explore any means of finding alternative employment, whether in shipbuilding or in any other industries, for those who, unhappily, will become redundant at Sunderland.

Mr. Frank Doran (Aberdeen, South): It will be small comfort for workers and others in Sunderland, who will be devastated by today's news, but I am pleased to say that Hall Russell of Aberdeen received a lifeline today in the form of a short-term agreement between the yard's receiver and the Overseas Development Administration. I say to the Minister and to Conservative Members such as the hon. Member for Torridge and Devon, West (Miss Nicholson), who welcome the prospect of privatisation of the yards in their constituencies, that the history of the Hall Russell yard since privatisation has been one of lurching from crisis to crisis.

The yard has a history that goes back 125 years, the last 20 of which showed substantial profitability. It is believed in Aberdeen that the Government wish to wash their hands of shipbuilding. Will the Minister tell us which of our indigenous industries are safe and will obtain Government support? It is difficult to believe that any industry will receive support from the so-called Department of enterprise.

Mr. Newton: I note the hon. Gentleman's remarks about the latest news at Hall Russell. I share his pleasure at what he has reported. The rest of his remarks bore little relation to reality. The Government have made huge subsidies available to the shipbuilding industry and have maintained the position in which help is available under the intervention fund within the terms currently agreed. There is no suggestion that that help should be withdrawn. We want to see industries and firms, whether old or new, that can provide secure employment. That is what my statement is directed towards.

Mr. James Cran (Beverley): Does my right hon. Friend agree that his decision and the results of it will be ameliorated by the package of measures which he has announced, on which I congratulate him, and by the existence of the Northern Development Company, which is the job-attracting agency for the north of England? If Opposition Members examine the facts, they will find that the company is funded to greater extent than most of the other job-attracting agencies in the other regions of the United Kingdom. They will find also that it has been immensely successful in attracting jobs to the north of England. I want to hear my right hon. Friend say that its work will continue after the closure.

Mr. Newton: Yes. I met representatives of the Northern Development Company when I was in Newcastle last week. I discussed some of these matters with them and assured them that the Government would continue to be as helpful as they could be in respect of their activities. From what they said, I doubt whether they will share the overstated pessimism that has been expressed in some questions today. They know how much success has been achieved in attracting new jobs to the north-east in recent years and months. With their efforts, and those of others to which I have referred, I believe that there is no reason, in the longer run, for the pessimism that some Opposition Members have expressed.

Mr. Frank Cook (Stockton, North): I should be able to accept the Minister's protestations of concern and anxiety if I could see more than one of the eight Tory Members who represent north-east constituencies in their places ready to question him on his statement. I know what happens to a community when a shipyard closes. I was living in Hartlepool—it is my home town—when the Sir William Gray yard closed. The effect of that closure was drastic, but the platers, welders, burners, boilersmiths, shipwrights, electricians and fitters were able to go to the Tees. They went to Furness and Smith's dock. Since then, Furness has closed. We are awash with shipyard trades in that area. Following that, Smith's dock closed. Those closures were followed by others. Where will all the trades go? It is no good the hon. Member for Isle of Wight (Mr.

Field) telling us that someone from the Isle of Wight is trying to recruit among the trades that are represented at Sunderland. Where will the 2,000 men go? It is no good giving us promises. Give us reality.

Mr. Newton: I hope that the hon. Gentleman will refer back to what I said in my statement about the efforts that will be made to seek alternative employment where that is available and, perhaps more to the point, to offer retraining and training to assist those with particular skills to acquire new skills if their existing skills are not wanted in the future. We are aware of their considerable abilities. No one would pretend—I would not pretend to the hon. Gentleman—that the closure of the yards presents other than a significant problem. That is not to say, as he rather implied in his question, that pretending that the problem is not there is an answer in the longer run for the men who are involved. As I have said, our aim is to provide them with good and secure employment for the future.

Mr. Kenneth Hind (Lancashire, West): Does my right hon. Friend agree that this is clearly a sad day? Will he accept that many of his hon. Friends believe that no one could have tried as hard as he has to restore the yard? My right hon. Friend will no doubt agree that Conservative Members such as myself have faced similar problems to those that are now being experienced by Sunderland Members. Under the Labour Government, Dunlop, Thorn EMI and Courtauld closed in Skelmersdale, with the loss of over 7,000 jobs. We have now recovered, and as a consequence of guidelines similar to those that he is offering Sunderland, there is not an empty factory in Skelmersdale. The town is booming.

Mr. Newton: Yes. It has been an inescapable fact for many Members on both sides of the House that the decline of some older industries has presented comparable problems in many other parts of the country. The experience of many places, some of which have been mentioned this afternoon, is that of the creation of new jobs and an entirely different feeling after a relatively short time from what was understandably felt at the time when the change occurred.

Mr. Jim Cousins (Newcastle upon Tyne, Central): Will the Minister accept that what will cause continuing controversy after his statement is the fact that alternative bids which people, industry, capital and labour in the north worked hard to put together were available? It is simply not true for the Minister to say that there were no alternatives. The north has produced alternative bids for running these yards. It is the Minister's judgment of those bids that has caused the closure. Will he tell us whether the interest rate rises caused by the Chancellor of the Exchequer over the past six months have proved to be a fatal extra element in the evaluation of those bids? Will he also tell us whether the public expenditure costs of those bids were greater, or smaller, than the £45 million of public expenditure for enterprise zones and the other proposals that he has announced this afternoon?

Mr. Newton: The question whether the cost of any particular proposition is greater or smaller than £45 million does not arise in circumstances in which we did not judge that any of the bids would provide a viable future for the yards.

I have no reason to suppose that the factors that the hon. Gentleman mentioned were a significant factor in what has happened—and it is not merely a question of my judgment. I considered the advice that was given by British Shipbuilders, on the basis of independent financial advice that it had received, and it seemed clear that the proposals that had been put forward were not sufficiently strong financially to provide a secure future for NESL. There was even some doubt about where the money that was to be paid for the yards was to be found.

Mr. Peter Thurnham (Bolton, North-East): There is a long tradition of shipbuilding on the Wear. Will my right hon. Friend confirm that, if there is any prospect of its profitable continuation, there is nothing to stop a new enterprise being formed to bid for the £48 million of maintenance which he has just announced? Should the people of the north-east not take heart from the outstanding achievements of British Steel in Cleveland, which was the winner yesterday of the Institution of Mechanical Engineers Willis Faber prize for manufacturing efficiency?

Mr. Newton: In general, the turnaround in many of the areas that have been affected in previous years by substantial steel closures is certainly an encouragement to those who, understandably, will feel depressed by today's announcement.

Mr. Bill Michie (Sheffield, Heeley): May I first express my sympathy to the workers in Sunderland? I say that because I spent my working life in Sheffield in steel and engineering and saw the trauma and misery created by the demise of the steel industry there. I listened to the Minister this afternoon saying that other enterprises will come forward, other investments will take place and people will be retrained. We had skills in Sheffield and Sunderland. We shall finish up with opportunities to man turnstiles at football stadiums and to sell ice cream in the summer. The young, who should have had skilled jobs, will operate in Macdonald's, selling hamburgers. How can the Government justify the youth training scheme on the grounds that there is a shortage of skills, when the skills are there now in Sunderland? The will is there and the power is there, but the problem is that the Government do not have the guts to fight international pressure.

Mr. Newton: I do not believe that the hon. Gentleman would have put his question in that way if he had recently been to the north-east, seen the new factories going up, spoken to the people who are undergoing training for the new jobs and talked to those in the Northern Development Company or the urban development corporations, or to those who are concerned with the Newcastle initiative. They can see the effects of their efforts on the ground.

Ms. Hilary Armstrong (Durham, North-West): Many of us have personal knowledge of the skills, the development of those skills, the learning of those skills and the practice of those skills by many workers in the yards. The town of Consett is in my constituency, and it suffered a similarly devastating blow. The Minister knows that the jobs that have been created in Consett—welcome though they are—have not replaced or redeveloped a skill base, and have therefore not given the town and its surrounding area the confidence that there is skilled and productive work for the next generation. That is what the people of the north-east want and what the people of the north-east deserve. They have given their all to build this country. *[Interruption.]* The hon. Member for Stockton, South

[Ms. Hilary Armstrong]

(Mr. Devlin) may not think that they have given their all, but I know that they have and that they have the work and the skills to be proud of. What will the Government do to ensure that we receive such development? Throwing money is not enough. Proper planning and development and Government orders to that region are needed.

Mr. Newton The hon. Lady is obviously right to say that the mix of jobs that comes in the wake of changes of this kind, and the mix of skills that they require, will not be precisely the same as those of the jobs that they have replaced. That is an inescapable part of the process of change. I do not believe that the general point that she sought to make stands up against the background of experience of the north-east in attracting new industries, such as motor cars, electronics and many others. They may not be the old skills of shipbuilding, for example, but they are the skills and products that will be in demand in the future.

Mr. Elliot Morley (Glanford and Scunthorpe): Whatever new industries may be attracted, the closure of the Sunderland yard strikes at the very bedrock of our manufacturing industry and the impact goes much further than Sunderland. Towns such as mine that have steel plate mills will be affected. Now that the steel industry has been privatised, the Government appear to have washed their hands of its future role but what surprises me is that the Government can write off billions of pounds in privatisation programmes—£5 billion for British Steel alone—yet cannot find the money to protect the jobs in the important industry of shipbuilding in Sunderland.

Mr. Newton: Perhaps it tells one something about some of the economic difficulties that this country experienced, especially during the 1970s, that the hon. Gentleman can describe as the bedrock of the economy, of this or any other area, an undertaking that has persistently lost money, to the extent of hundreds of millions of pounds overall, and £100 million at NESL alone, in a short time. That is no basis for employment in an area.

Mr. Roland Boyes (Houghton and Washington): Will the Minister accept that his disgraceful statement today is a devastating blow to Sunderland? Conservative Members have demonstrated that the Government simply do not care. Several Conservative Members have made me angry by talking about it being a sad day for Sunderland. For between 2,000 and 5,000 workers, it may be a sad lifetime. Many of them will never work again.

The Minister said that a number of jobs would be created. I ask him to investigate that. Every pit in my constituency has been closed—two quite recently. How many jobs have been created in the Houghton end of my constituency by British Coal Enterprise Ltd. to absorb the jobs of people who have been made redundant and who are on the dole queue? Has the Minister any idea of the magnitude of youth unemployment in the borough of Sunderland? Month after month, 6,000 or more youngsters have no proper jobs and the three unemployment offices have had between 40 and 50 vacancies. What will happen to children in Sunderland? Where will they obtain jobs when another 2,000 jobs have been taken away?

I never expected to hear the Minister's statement today. I wrote him a letter about the matter recently. I pay tribute to my hon. Friends who have shipyards in their constituencies for their efforts in trying to retain them. They have swallowed a lot in accepting some form of privatisation, yet the Minister declares the death of the yards in Sunderland. That is unacceptable, and the Minister should be ashamed of himself.

Mr. Newton: The main thrust of the hon. Gentleman's question was about the prospect of future jobs. The best thing that I can do is to repeat that the Nissan investment alone has already created well over 1,000 jobs, with nearly 2,000 more expected during the next few years, which is roughly the number of people employed in NESL, excluding Sunderland Forge Services. I do not suggest that there is a neat equation for the people involved, but it is a good illustration of the scope for new jobs and it is only one example of the current growth in the north-east.

North East Shipbuilders Ltd.

4.30 pm

Mr. Bob Clay (Sunderland, North): I beg to ask leave to move the Adjournment of the House for the purpose of discussing a specific and important matter that should have urgent consideration, namely,

"the decision by the Government announced today to close North East Shipbuilders Ltd."

The matter is obviously specific in the light of the Minister's statement. It is urgent because, unless the House can call the Government to account within the next few hours, the orders that could come to that yard will no longer be available. The statement should not be allowed to stand. We must also try to stop the devastating demoralisation that is already flowing rapidly through the area that I and other hon. Members represent.

The House should examine carefully some of the statements made by the Minister. It is not true that the recent bids for privatisation were properly examined. I know from personal experience that one bidder was refused meetings with the Minister's financial advisers and accountants, despite the fact that for weeks previously the other bidders had plenty of opportunity to discuss the matter and plenty of information. How can he say that there was a serious assessment?

How can the Minister say that none of the bids would have been acceptable to the European Community when the Government never put a formal proposal to the EC? The House should debate the matter in detail. If, as the Minister says, the EC would have closed the yard, the Government should have told the EC that they were not prepared to close it.

Many specific matters about the conduct of this case should be discussed. For example, advice given in good faith by a civil servant to a bidder turned out to be wrong, but it was too late for the bidder seriously to revise his proposal. This afternoon the Minister rubbished British Shipbuilders and said that it was incapable of running the yard any longer, yet he relied on its judgment—rightly or wrongly—to assess whether the yard should stay open. It is nonsense.

This is a wicked decision that should be debated by the House immediately. We should not allow the Government to run away from the decision that they have made. They should be called to account, and we should be able to debate the shambles and the tragedy that they have perpetrated this afternoon.

Mr. Speaker: The hon. Gentleman asks leave to move the Adjournment of the House for the purpose of discussing a specific and important matter that he believes should have urgent consideration, namely,

"the decision by the Government announced today to close North East Shipbuilders Ltd."

I have listened with concern to what the hon. Gentleman said and to the exchanges in the House this afternoon, but, as he knows, the Standing Order prevents me from giving reasons to the House. I regret that his application does not meet the criteria laid down under Standing Order No. 20 and I cannot, therefore, submit his application to the House.

Mr. Alan Williams (Swansea, West): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. Of course, I do not challenge your ruling, but you will have heard the depth of feeling about this catastrophe for the people of the north-east. As the Leader of the House is present, and as this is a Government decision, may I prevail upon you to ask him to allow time early next week for us to have a full debate? Perhaps he can make a proper statement announcing the time of that debate in tomorrow's business statement.

The Lord President of the Council and Leader of the House of Commons (Mr. John Wakeham): Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. I recognise the importance of the issue and the strength of feeling. I undertake to have discussions, through the usual channels, to see whether we can find a way of proceeding that will be satisfactory to hon. Members on both sides of the House.

SS Mediterran Frigo

4.33 pm

Mr. Paul Flynn (Newport, West): I beg to ask leave to move the Adjournment of the House for the purpose of discussing a specific and important matter that should have urgent consideration, namely,

"the decision of the authorities to allow the vessel SS Mediterran Frigo to leave Newport docks following a drugs raid."

The matter is urgent because that vessel is now on the high seas, without a customs officer on board, after only one of its three holds was searched. About 48 hours ago, a quantity of drugs with a street value of £2 million was discovered on board the vessel. It is the third time that drugs have been discovered in Newport docks without a single arrest having been made.

The matter is specific because customs officers are inhibited by present laws from seizing any vessel with a weight of more than 250 tonnes and from conducting thorough investigations because they are liable to pay compensation for perishable cargoes that deteriorate. That ship has a cargo of bananas, which will deteriorate rapidly.

The matter is important because of the terrible damage done to many lives by those who traffic in drugs. By allowing customs officers to be inhibited in this way, we have created a position whereby the ship is heading for a port in Belgium, from which there is great difficulty in extraditing suspected offenders—we have had recent experience of that—and which is soft on drug traffickers, with a maximum sentence of two years for such an offence. Are we not encouraging drug trafficking by encouraging people to use big ships carrying perishable cargos heading for ports in Belgium and Holland?

In the Gracious Speech the Government said that they would

"continue the fight against international terrorism and against trafficking in drugs."

By allowing that vessel to leave swiftly after such a brief investigation in Newport, are we not creating a charter for drug traffickers?

Mr. Speaker: The hon. Gentleman asks leave to move the Adjournment of the House for the purpose of discussing a specific and important matter that he believes should have urgent consideration, namely,

"The decision of the authorities to allow the vessel SS Mediterran Frigo to leave Newport docks following a drugs raid."

I listened with great concern to what the hon. Gentleman said about this matter, but I do not consider that it is appropriate for discussion under Standing Order No. 20 and I cannot, therefore, submit his application to the House.

Ministerial Statements

4.36 pm

Mr. Tim Devlin (Stockton, South): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. The statement that we have just heard was timed for 3.30, and at exactly the same time the Government announced, at a press conference across the road in the Department of Health, the results of the inspection of Cleveland social services department. Members from the north such as myself and my hon. Friend the Member for Langbaurgh (Mr. Holt) would have liked to be present for both. Will you use your good offices to ask the Government not to put on important business relating to the north-east in two locations at the same time? If they do, Opposition Members will be able to raise spurious points about our absence in the House.

Mr. Speaker: I have considerable sympathy with what the hon. Gentleman has said, but it is no part of my responsibility to dictate to the Government whether they should have made two statements or one statement, or what they should do outside the House. I am sorry that I cannot help the hon. Gentleman.

Later——

Mr. Frank Cook (Stockton, North): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. You will already be aware that there was a press conference at 3.30 pm this afternoon relating to the social services inspectorate's report of the arrangements in Cleveland concerning child abuse. I am a Member of Parliament representing Cleveland constituents, yet I was informed of that press conference only at 26 minutes past three today, when I was planning to be in the Chamber for the bright and breezy announcement concerning North-East Shipbuilders. As the custodian of the proceedings of the House, are you not of the opinion that such matters should be brought to the House rather than be announced at press conferences, of which relevant Members are informed only four minutes before they begin?

Mr. Speaker: If I were drawn into giving my opinion on such issues I should be in serious trouble. I am not responsible for matters of that kind.

Civil Servant (Letter)

4.37 pm

Mr. David Winnick (Walsall, North): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. May I ask your guidance on a matter of public interest. The background to the matter is the letter that appeared in *The Guardian* today from an official in the information department of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office. I understand that that official has been suspended. As this is undoubtedly a matter of public interest, what steps can be taken to get the Prime Minister or the Foreign Secretary to answer the serious valid allegations made in that letter? Now that the official has been suspended, we should have a statement as soon as possible from the Prime Minister or the Foreign Secretary.

Mr. Speaker: That may be, but I cannot give the hon. Gentleman tactical advice on how to approach these matters. He knows the form himself.

Mr. Tam Dalyell (Linlithgow): Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. Is it entirely a question of tactical advice? Is it not more that the House of Commons should be treated properly? It is most extraordinary for a senior official—we have looked him up in the Foreign Office list and he seems to be a second secretary—to write such a letter, giving not a private address but the address of the Foreign Office information department. In the circumstances, should not the House of Commons at least be told the background before other people rush to judgment? There is also an element of urgency about this case, so why should the House wait and wait?

Mr. Speaker: It may be a matter of great public interest, but it is not a matter of order for me. I feel sure that the hon. Gentleman's comments have been heard by the Leader of the House.

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. There is another way of examining the matter. At the weekend, the press were informed of the junior Health Minister's views about eggs and salmonella poisoning. As a result, at the earliest possible opportunity on Monday the Secretary of State for Health had to come to the Dispatch Box to explain away his junior Minister's comments.

That matter may or may not be as important as the issue that has been raised in *The Guardian* today. It is true that the official concerned is not an elected Member of the House and that he is not a junior Minister. One thing is certain—he never will be now. Nevertheless, the fact remains that he is a servant of the state, working in a Government Department, and has said something of great importance regarding the Prime Minister's conduct. If it is right that a Secretary of State must be trotted out every time his junior Minister opens her gob, is it not right that a Minister should explain to the House why it is that a senior official of his Department has said important things about the way in which the Government are running their business?

Mr. Speaker: It is, as I have said, a matter of considerable interest but not a matter of order for me.

Mr. Alan Williams (Swansea, West): Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. You, Mr. Speaker, may not have a copy of the letter published in *The Guardian*, but it comes from the Ministry's information department. The Minister is responsible to the House for the activities not only of junior Ministers but the whole of his Department. When a Ministry's information department issues a statement as unusual and as important as the one in question, the Minister concerned surely has a duty to the House to explain it.

Mr. Speaker: That may be so, but it is a matter for the Leader of the House and the Government, not for the Chair.

Mr. Bob Cryer (Bradford, South): Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. On one last point——

Mr. Speaker: Order. No, not one last point.

Mr. Dalyell *rose——*

Mr. Speaker: Order. No. About 50 right hon. and hon. Members wish to take part in today's Second Reading debate, and I shall have to place a limit on the length of speeches. The hon. Member for Bradford, South (Mr. Cryer) has not put down his name for that debate, although he may hope to catch my eye, and he is therefore taking time away from his right hon. and hon. Friends. However, I shall hear his point of order if it is important and if it is a matter for me.

Mr. Cryer: You, Mr. Speaker, urged the Leader of the House to make a statement on the matter. The Leader of the House is present and could do so immediately.

Mr. Speaker: I certainly did not urge the Leader of the House to make a statement. I said that the Leader of the House will have heard what had been said.

Orders of the Day

Water Bill

Order for Second Reading read.

Mr. Speaker: I repeat that about 50 right hon. and hon. Members have asked to take part in this debate. I propose limiting speeches made between 7 and 9 o'clock to about 10 minutes, but I hope that right hon. and hon. Members called before 7 o'clock will also have regard to that time limit.

4.44 pm

The Secretary of State for the Environment (Mr. Nicholas Ridley): I beg to move, That the Bill be read a Second time.

The main purposes of the Bill are to establish a National Rivers Authority responsible for the control of water pollution, water resource management, flood defence, fisheries and navigation; to provide a new statutory framework for setting river quality objectives and other standards, and set out effective means of enforcing these standards; to transfer the utility functions of the water authorities to new limited companies, and to provide for the terms of their appointment, and for the sale of shares to the public towards the end of 1989; to provide for the appointment of the 29 statutory water companies to continue supplying water in their existing areas, and to allow them to convert to plc status if, with the support of their shareholders, they so choose; to provide a clear legal framework for the duties, functions and powers of appointed companies, updating and amending water and sewerage law; and to provide for the appointment of a director general of water services to keep the provision of water and sewerage services under review, and to protect the interests of customers.

The Bill applies to England and Wales. It is the Government's intention to introduce on Report a limited number of amendments relating to drinking water and the protection of the water environment in Scotland. The Scottish Office has consulted on those proposals. They will not change existing arrangements for the ownership and regulation of water supplies in Scotland.

Preparing for privatisation of the water industry convinced us that we needed the National Rivers Authority. There is a distinction between the utility services of the water authorities—trading activities that can be better managed in the private sector—and the need to regulate in the public interest. Regulation should not be done by those who have a financial interest in the matters to be regulated. As the Select Committee on the Environment said,

"Gamekeepers should not be poachers as well."

It has been a glaring defect hitherto that water authorities combine the regulatory and utility functions. Those responsible for the treatment and disposal of sewage effluent should not also have the task of regulating pollution and prosecuting their own customers. This major advance puts right an inherent weakness in current arrangements. In this case, public ownership has disguised the truth and failed to protect the public interest. It is another nail in the coffin of that flawed ideology of the Labour party.

[Mr. Nicholas Ridley]

There has been general welcome for our proposals for the NRA, and I will say a few words about its powers and role as set out in the Bill. The water authorities have been drawing up schemes of organisation for the regional bodies which will, with the passage of the Bill, become part of the NRA. They are well on course to set up those bodies by 1 April 1989. I congratulate the water authorities on the work that has gone into those schemes of organisation, and I am grateful for the expert advice and assessment contributed by the NRA advisory committee, under the chairmanship of my noble friend Lord Crickhowell.

The NRA will be a strong and effective body, comprehensively equipped to regulate all discharges to rivers, estuaries and coastal seas up to three miles out. The Bill provides a statutory framework for water quality objectives. The NRA will advise on statutory quality objectives that I, as Secretary of State, will set. The authority will monitor and enforce them. It will be able to grant or refuse effluent discharge consents. It will be able to set up water protection zones to protect water sources in designated areas from pollution by such substances as nitrates and pesticides. It will have powers to prevent and remedy pollution. On the "polluter pays" principle, it will be able to charge for discharge consents and to recover the costs of dealing with pollution incidents.

That regime of improved standards, which the NRA will supervise, will be transparent and public. I shall be accountable to the House and to Parliament as a whole for the standards set for the authority to achieve. For the first time, the public will have a clear measure of what those standards are.

The NRA is widely acknowledged as a major advance. Even the Opposition grudgingly support it. It is a product of our move towards privatisation. It comes as no surprise when the opponents of the Bill turn round and say: "In that case, since you've got the NRA, why privatise the water and sewerage undertakers?" I shall give the House four good, detailed reasons why that is the right thing to do.

First, private ownership has long been a feature of the water industry. The statutory water companies have been in existence for a long time. There are 29 of them, responsible for one quarter of our water supply. They are privately owned. There have been few complaints about them. If the private supply of a public utility is anathema to the Labour party, why did it not take the opportunity to nationalise it during its periods in office? I assure the hon. Member for Copeland (Dr. Cunningham) that it will not have another opportunity.

Dr. John Cunningham (Copeland): That is such a boring old canard that it is barely worth a response. The Secretary of State gave the game away in his opening comments when he described them as "statutory water companies". He knows that they are not private enterprises. They simple act as agents for the regional water authorities and their activities are heavily circumscribed in law. That is why we did not nationalise them.

Mr. Ridley: The hon. Gentleman is stretching logic too far. They are owned by private shareholders. The capital is supplied by the private sector. They are statutorily limited to the geographical areas in which they operate and they are statutorily controlled as to their dividends and the amount that they can put to reserve. In every other respect, they are totally analogous with private sector companies. They have been privately owned for a long time, so that is not much of a point.

Mr. Tim Devlin (Stockton, South): In view of the objects of the Bill, if at the end of the process we create a number of privately owned water companies which are statutorily defined, will that not be acceptable to the Opposition?

Mr. Ridley: I am sure that the hon. Member for Copeland (Dr. Cunningham) would have risen to say no if he had wanted to deny my hon. Friend's sensible proposition.

The Bill provides a procedure for statutory companies wishing to convert to plc status.

Mrs. Ann Taylor (Dewsbury): They are not ordinary private companies.

Mr. Ridley: The hon. Lady is wrong. Whether they are private companies or plcs is a separate matter.

Economic regulation based on price control, rather than dividend limits, will provide them with a stronger incentive for efficiency and a stronger basis for comparative competition. However, the statutory water companies have performed their functions in private ownership without it even being an issue hitherto.

The Government will announce later their decisions about any special shares which may be required in the water industry. However, the conditions which enable competition in management to take place must not also allow undue concentration. It is vital that people should feel that they have a local water company, with those running it living and working locally. It is also vital to maintain yardstick comparisons. If the regulator is to know the scope for efficiency improvements and the possibilities for the best management to deliver exacting environmental and water quality standards at a lower price, there must be an adequate number of independently owned and managed companies to afford a range of comparisons. That is what comparative competition means.

The water plcs will be directly comparable with each other in the services that they provide. Shareholders, financial markets, commentators, the director general of water services and the customer will be able to make comparisons between each of the companies. Privatisation will clarify the costs that each company faces in order to meet its measured objectives.

Mr. Bob Cryer (Bradford, South): What about the French?

Mr. Ridley: From those comparisons, it will be possible to judge performance and for the regulator to get his price control more accurate. Therefore, I shall later be bringing forward proposals, in conjunction with my noble Friend the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry, to ensure that our arrangements take full account of the need to preserve comparative competition.

The third reason for privatising the water authorities is to give them scope for innovation and diversification. That is exemplified by the French water companies, which the hon. Member for Bradford, South (Mr. Cryer) just mentioned and which seem to cause such alarm to Labour

Members. Why do the French want to buy our water companies? Perhaps they have been successful worldwide because they have practical experience of water supply in the private sector and have successfully diversified from that base.

Perhaps there is a lesson for the future of our water companies in that the strengths and diversity of the privately owned French companies has enabled them to dominate the world market. Some have an annual turnover as great as £5 billion. In addition to water supply and water treatment, they compete successfully, among other things, in markets for municipal services, housing, communications, construction, manufacture and cable television.

Our nationalised water authorities have not been able to develop their expertise and experience in the same way. We have missed out on that world market hitherto. No Government have ever allowed—or could allow—nationalised industries such freedoms. By providing a home base which encourages enterprise, diversity and initiative, I believe that we have the opportunity to create companies which can even outdo the French in capturing the world market in water supply.

Mr. Richard Livsey (Brecon and Radnor): The Secretary of State is making great play of the position of French water companies. Is he aware that there is huge variation in water prices throughout France? In Dax in south-west France water costs FF2·90 per cu m, in Paris it is FF5 per cu m, and in Angers it is FF10·50. Surely such an intolerable situation should not be used as an example. Does he feel that those disparities could occur in Britain with the plcs?

Mr. Ridley: I am afraid that I cannot confirm the hon. Gentleman's prices. He obviously has more opportunity to check out such matters on the ground. I cannot answer for the French system of price regulation, but what I am proposing to the House is a system of price regulation which will ensure that the prices in each area reflect the economics of supply and the need for investment in improvements. Therefore, privatisation will, for the first time, give an incentive to innovation and efficiency and a new freedom to allow companies to follow the industrial logic of their own development both vertically and horizontally and to compete overseas.

Dr. Cunningham: Is the Secretary of State happy about the depths of the penetration of French water industry companies into the British water industry in view of his hopes for the future? Is it true, as has been reported in the newspapers, that Mr. Patrick Brown of the Department of the Environment has been hinting in the City and elsewhere that further penetration by French water interests is unacceptable? If that is so, on what legal authority have such indications been based?

Mr. Ridley: That is not so.

I shall now give the fourth reason why privatisation must be right. If we are to enable our companies to innovate and diversify, they must have access to capital markets for the capital investment needed. Until this Government took office, nationalisation had constantly restricted and restrained that. Between 1974 and 1979, when the Labour Government gave up control of the economy to the International Monetary Fund, the water authorities suffered an overall reduction in capital spending of one third in real terms. Within that total, the Labour Government halved expenditure on sewerage and sewage treatment. Since then, we have conducted a considerable catching up exercise. Investment has increased by more than 50 per cent. in real terms since 1980. We have doubled the programme in cash terms to £1·2 billion this year, and will increase it to £1·43 billion next year.

The dirty man of Europe is indeed sitting on the Opposition Front Bench. To some extent, I exonerate Opposition Members. It was not deliberate—it was not because they meant to, as the hon. Member for Bootle (Mr. Roberts) admitted a few weeks ago—but because their financial incompetence prevented them from achieving even that basic water cleanliness that we all seek. The proof that public ownership cannot generate the necessary capital investment to protect the environment has been supplied in ample measure by the Labour party.

Dr. Cunningham: In view of his extraordinary claims about expenditure, how does the Secretary of State explain the fact that in 1977-78, the last full year of the Labour Government, total capital expenditure by English and Welsh water authorities was £1,064 million? On the public works deflater, a decade later—after 10 years of the present Government—it was £1,187 million, a slight increase, but in each of the intervening eight years the figure was lower than it was in the year when Labour left office. The right hon. Gentleman has got his figures very wrong.

Mr. Ridley: If the hon. Gentleman wants somebody to arbitrate between us about figures, I suggest that it be the hon. Member for Bootle, who was a member of the Select Committee on the Environment which published the figures in its report and showed quite clearly—*[Interruption.]* My hon. Friend the Member for Hornsey and Wood Green (Sir H. Rossi) has a copy. If the hon. Gentleman disputes the figures, I inform him that I am only quoting them.

Sir Hugh Rossi (Hornsey and Wood Green): As attention has been drawn to the Select Committee's report——

Dr. Cunningham: I did not mention the Select Committee's report.

Sir Hugh Rossi: My right hon. Friend did. It might be awkward for the hon. Gentleman to be referred to it, but the peak year on the chart is 1970. Until then, the decline occurred during the hon. Gentleman's term in office, and the figure did not begin to climb until 1980.

Mr. Ridley: Perhaps it would be a help if we were to have visual aids in the Chamber. Opposition Members clearly do not understand figures, and they cannot read them.

Mr. Peter L. Pike (Burnley): If the Secretary of State reads the chart in the Select Committee report, he will recognise that, although the figure dropped during the period stated, it is still only two thirds of the peak figure of 1974. After nine years of Tory Government, that is appalling.

Mr. Ridley: That is not correct. It is an interesting admission that the two periods of highest water investment

[Mr. Ridley]

in the hon. Gentleman's history are 1974 and 1988—both under Tory Governments. That rather bears out what I said.

Mr. A. E. P. Duffy (Sheffield, Attercliffe): Will the Minister give way on that point?

Mr. Ridley: Although Mr. Speaker appealed for brevity, I shall give way to the hon. Gentleman, but then I must make progress.

Mr. Duffy: If we may refer to water authorities such as the Yorkshire water authority, does the Secretary of State recall that in recent years his Department squeezed the borrowing rules for water authorities to such an extent that, although investment has taken place as he has stated, it has had to be borne by water charges? The chairman of the Yorkshire water authority is recorded as saying in recent weeks that even before privatisation he may have to consider a water charge increase of 27 per cent. next year, which is three and a half times the present level.

Mr. Ridley: If the hon. Gentleman believes that there has been a shortage of capital, I am sure that he will join the Government in the Lobby tomorrow night to support the privatisation of authorities so that they can get access to capital markets.

The forward financial planning of the privatised industry will not be affected by any future Labour Government having to make their usual cuts, or bound by the yearly limits of public expenditure planning. The industry will have free access to capital markets, to raise the finance that is essential to investment in higher standards, to diversify, or to compete overseas. The investment programmes will indeed be large. They will start from a raised base, the 20 per cent. increase in investment in the water industry next year, which brings it to £1·43 billion, which was announced in the autumn statement. The privatised industry will have to sustain and increase those levels of investment.

To demonstrate the scale of the environmental improvements that we are planning, I will go through the investment plans for the three main clean-up programmes.

First, water authorities are already planning accelerated capital programmes over the next four years. The programmes will bring almost all sewage treatment works into full compliance with their consent limits by March 1992. We should make the fastest practical progress to getting all treatment works to meet the standards for sewage effluent already laid down in United Kingdom law. At each plant which is prone to failure there will be a costed timetable leading to compliance. As the Government confirmed in response to a question from my hon. Friend the Member for Richmond and Barnes (Mr. Hanley) earlier this afternoon, the total cost of those remedial programmes will be between £900 million and £1,000 million over the four years to March 1992.

Secondly, the industry is also spending £70 million each year on improving bathing waters in areas where they do not come up to standard. About 400 bathing waters are within the scope of the European Community bathing water directive, and 60 per cent. of them already meet the quality standards on coliform bacteria. We are discussing with water authorities a substantial acceleration of that programme, targeted to bring the remainder up to scratch by 1995. The estimated total cost is in excess of £1 billion over the seven years, which represents more than a doubling of the present rate of spend.

Thirdly, the Bill provides a new and greatly strengthened legal framework for setting standards for drinking water quality. For the first time, exact and numerical standards for drinking water quality will be set down in United Kingdom law and approved by Parliament. Those standards will include all those in the European Community drinking water directive, including that for pesticides. All water undertakers will have a duty to comply with the standards and to undertake specific sampling and monitoring procedures. Standards apply to private as well as public supplies. In addition, there will be a new criminal offence of supplying drinking water unfit for human consumption, punishable by fines or imprisonment.

As part of my powers to assess compliance with the standards, I shall be able to require information to be published. This will help to make the new companies more accountable. I will also appoint technical assessors to monitor drinking water quality. As in other areas, water authorities and water companies are preparing programmes of improvement where existing water supplies do not meet one or more of the exacting standards in the European Community drinking water directive. It will be one of the main tasks of my technical team to ensure that the programmes progress satisfactorily.

All the programmes for improving water supplies will be agreed with the Government before privatisation. Investors will have to know, and will know, the extent of financial commitment involved, and the work that I have described will enable that to be spelled out. Our provisional estimate is that additional expenditure on drinking water quality over the next 15 years or so will be about £1·5 billion. That is on top of existing capital expenditure levels and plans on water supplies.

The three clean-up programmes, taken together, come to £2·4 billion on top of existing plans. They are only an estimate of the extra funds necessary to achieve the three known requirements going beyond present plans. They can be only broad-brush estimates, and I give them merely to show the magnitude of the cost increases involved. Without prejudice to decisions yet to be taken on the RPI-related price control formula, increased capital expenditure of the order of £2·4 billion to the end of the century would indicate costs in real terms of 7·5 to 12·5 per cent. higher than they would otherwise have been. That shows how wide of the mark the hon. Gentleman is in talking of doubling or trebling water charges.

The water companies will also be investing in other activities and diversifying, just as the French have done so successfully. There has been talk of price increases to meet taxation and pay dividends. Like any other private company, the water service will be subject to corporation tax and will be eligible for capital allowances. The effect of clause 88 is to enable the regional water businesses to benefit significantly from these allowances.

As for dividends, the companies will face the normal choices whether to finance particular activities by borrowing, by increases in equity, from profits or from cash flows. How they decide to finance particular investment will affect their costs. But, as things are now, the water authorities, as well as paying interest on their borrowing, are required by annual orders to earn a rate of return on their assets, which is reflected in their current

charges. What will change when they become public limited companies is that they will substitute for these capital finance costs, the costs of remunerating equity and debt in a new capital structure.

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett (Denton and Reddish): There is a great deal of concern about clause 7 and the prospect of the water bodies charging for access to the countryside. It has been suggested that there may be charges for rock climbing and getting on to countryside that has open access. Does the Secretary of State expect much money to be raised from that? Can he set people's minds at rest that he does not envisage a new policy of charging for the recreational uses that are at present provided free?

Mr. Ridley: I do not envisage any such policy, and the matter can be pursued to better advantage in Committee. For many years, water authorities have been asked to sell land and they are selling surplus land all the time. Any land which remains and which their successors want to sell will be subject to the strict planning controls which exist particularly in national parks and areas of outstanding natural beauty. We shall go into the question of access in great detail, but I see no reason why the water companies which retain land would want to change rights of access, nor why they should want to charge for right of access. They charge for many facilities, such as car parking, fishing and yachting.

Mr. Devlin: Where there is a common law right of way over a piece of land, is it not right that that right of way should continue to exist whether or not ownership changes?

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Harold Walker): Before the Secretary of State replies, I wish to point out that many right hon. and hon. Members wish to take part in the debate and, the frequency of interventions will have to be taken into account in determining who shall catch the eye of the Chair.

Mr. Ridley: My hon. Friend is right. Where there is a right of way it is impossible to charge for access. Where there is not a right of way and it is technically a trespass, it is not possible to charge for access. Access can be charged only where facilities are provided specially.

The water companies' core activities will be regulated. Regulators will be under a duty to ensure that they can finance their core functions, including a reasonable rate of return on capital. Their ability to pay a reasonable return will depend on their efficiency. The regulator will not ensure rewards for any inefficient company.

There is much more work to be done before we can take a view on the initial price formula. I have spent some time on cost increases to show why the figures that the hon. Member for Copeland was parading are absolute rubbish. These increases are entirely due to environmental improvements which the Bill facilitates and are in no sense due to privatisation.

The hon. Member for Dewsbury (Mrs. Taylor) seemed to be getting the wrong end of the stick again in her comments on the statutory water companies in the newspapers this morning. First, they are privately owned and, secondly, their prices are not controlled by the Government. Thirdly, their dividends and reserves are controlled by the Government and, fourthly, the Government have told them that they must stay with the present law and we intend to make no changes. The improvements which this Bill brings will be that these privately owned companies are brought within the price control formula which they are not at present.

Although the environmental improvements represent extra cost, they are good value for money for the customer. He will be compensated through the benefits of privatisation, the possible lower cost of finance and the greater efficiency which we expect private ownership to deliver.

In addition, the customer will benefit from higher standards of service and improved safeguards in the delivery of those services. To ensure that customers can rely on the maintenance and improvement of service standards once the industry is privatised, the director general will monitor each company's overall performance against standard indicators of service. As a condition of their appointment companies will be required to set targets for at least three key performance indicators—water pressure, interruptions of supply and foul flooding.

If the director general thinks that a company is not doing well enough, and cannot agree the necessary improvements, he will be able to ask the Secretary of State at the time to make regulations to specify mandatory performance requirements and a timetable for their achievement. That will ensure that investment is well directed to the localities and aspects of performance which most need attention, and that companies give value for the charges that customers pay. This is a good Bill for consumers, for future shareholders, for taxpayers, for workers in the industry; above all, it is a good Bill for the environment. I commend it to the House.

5.17 pm

Dr. John Cunningham (Copeland): Water is our country's largest natural monopoly. It is the people's most fundamental resource on which their health and well-being depends. We in the Labour party believe that this natural resource and the water industry's assets should be publicly owned and controlled. They should be managed openly and efficiently in the public interest, and the management should be democratically accountable at regional and national levels. Unlike the Tories, we do not believe that an essential resource such as water should be managed and sold for private gain. For us public health and hygiene are not matters to be dealt with by market forces.

We know that the overwhelming majority of British people share our values on these matters. That was confirmed as recently as last weekend when *The Sunday Times* recorded the results of a MORI poll, which showed that, by 5:1, people are opposed to the sale of their water to private ownership, with only 15 per cent. supporting Government policy. We know that Ministers take that information seriously, because they have just engaged MORI to advise them on public attitudes to water privatisation.

Try as he may, the Secretary of State cannot disguise his real motive for this Bill. It is to prepare the nation's water resources for sale and to create circumstances in which water will be sold to every household in England and Wales for private profit. People will have no choice about from whom they must buy their water. Some 99 per cent. of all households will be connected to private monopoly suppliers. Some 94 per cent. of all households are connected to the present public sewerage system. There will be no competition.

[Dr. John Cunningham]

The Bill sets out to create the most far-reaching private monopoly powers ever conceived by a Government. I make it clear that a Labour Government will not hesitate to eliminate private monopolies to ensure that essential fundamental services are controlled and managed in the national interest—balancing the powers among consumers, employers, Ministers and Parliament. That is the only way to ensure that national interests are served and developed and that consumers have a real voice, real powers and effective protection against natural monopolies.

Mr. John Maples (Lewisham, West) *rose*——

Dr. Cunningham: I shall give way in a moment.

The Secretary of State lamely excuses private monopoly powers under the Bill by saying that water supply and sewerage disposal will be subject to the disciplines of the private sector—comparative competition, I believe, is the euphemism for that.

Everyone in the House knows that such disciplines in the private sector exist only where there is competition. They come from the working of market forces. However, under these proposals, there will be no market, no choice and no option. For consumers, no market forces will exist in the supply of domestic tap water or sewerage services. The Secretary of State's argument is built on a transparently false premise. His ridiculous answer to this is, "Let people buy Perrier," which is another sign of his failure to understand the reality of the lives and circumstances of millions of our fellow citizens. Indeed, we understand that Perrier is ideologically unsound in 10 Downing street.

Mr. Maples: The hon. Gentleman said that it would be inappropriate for the water industry to be under private ownership. He started a paragraph with the phrase, "A future Labour Government would not hesitate", but then he waffled a bit. Is he saying that a future Labour Government would renationalise this industry and, if so, on what basis?

Dr. Cunningham: I say, without any hesitation, that a Labour Government would not allow private monopolies in water to exist—and we shall take them into public ownership.

Sir Anthony Grant (Cambridgeshire, South-West): *rose*——

Dr. Cunningham: No, I shall not give way.

These proposals are a betrayal of the consumer and of every household in England and Wales.

Sir Anthony Grant *rose*——

Dr. Cunningham: I shall not give way.

Under this Government, average domestic water bills have already increased by 150 per cent.

Sir Anthony Grant: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Dr. Cunningham: I have said no.

That is according to the water industry's own publication, "Water facts".

Mr. Ridley *rose*——

Dr. Cunningham: I am dealing with the point made about prices by the hon. Member for Lewisham, West (Mr. Maples). I shall give way in a moment. I am reminding the hon. Gentleman that prices have already gone up by 150 per cent. as this Government fatten up water for privatisation.

Even more revealing is the fact that, since the Government made the decision in principle to sell off the water resources, there has been a deliberate policy of increasing water charges well above the rate of inflation. Between 1983 and now, the index of water price charges has increased by more than 20 per cent. above the retail price index. The consumer, indeed, has already been made to pay for Tory dogma and will be forced to do so again.

Mr. Ridley: I believe that I can stand proxy for my hon. Friend the Member for Cambridgeshire, South-West (Sir Anthony Grant), who was trying to ask the hon. Gentleman whether his recent pledge means that he will nationalise for the first time the statutory water companies which have always been in private ownership. Perhaps the hon. Gentleman could help my hon. Friend, as he did not have the courage to give way to him.

Dr. Cunningham: As the Secretary of State well knows, it is unlikely that those private statutory water undertakings will even be in existence in a few years' time. It is likely that there will be seven or eight major conglomerates owning and controlling our water resources. Far from there being more competition, there will be even less than there is now—if that is possible.

Sir Anthony Grant *rose*——

Dr. Cunningham: No. I shall not give way.

Prices will again rise sharply even before privatisation, as a major act of Government policy. We know this from a leaked letter from Ernst and Whinney, the accountants advising the water companies and the Department of the Environment. It was writen on 1 December, marked "Urgent—for immediate attention", and was addressed to the general managers of the water companies. It points out that tariff increases should be planned immediately to the maximum possible level. It says:

"under the existing regulatory formula prior to the introduction of price cap control"—

that is prior to that which the right hon. Gentleman proposes—

"as envisaged by the draft licence. Companies should therefore ensure that the next tariff setting process takes full account of the consequences of future asset management plans and the costs of these, which we envisage may well mean each company raising its tariffs to the maximum permitted under the existing regulatory formula."

On page 2 it goes on to say:

"Companies are strongly advised not to suggest that privatisation as such makes these tariff increases necessary."

That is what is happening in the right hon. Gentleman's Department. That is what he is trying to hide from the public about prices.

Mr. Ridley *rose*——

Dr. Cunningham: I shall give way in a moment.

I read that from an authentic copy of the letter from the right hon. Gentleman's own advisers.

Mr. Ridley: The hon. Gentleman does not understand. The private water companies are not allowed to increase their prices for any other purpose than investment. That letter is not a leak. It is from the water companies'

accountants and not mine. The water companies have been to my Department and they have been told that they are not allowed to increase their reserves or their dividends. That letter is asking them, therefore, to increase the prices by the maximum possible to finance the investment in environmental improvements. The hon. Gentleman is wrong again. Now he wants to nationalise them, and they will not be able to get the capital from the private sector.

Dr. Cunningham: The right hon. Gentleman reminds me of a character in Chaucer's "The Canterbury Tales" —the Fraudulent Alchemist.

This letter says:

"Following a meeting arranged by The Water Companies' Association today with the Department of the Environment". It is following the meeting that they are advised. The right hon. Gentleman is now suggesting that somehow all this has nothing to do with privatisation. Frankly, we do not believe him. The letter makes it clear that water charges must increase because the privatisation proposals demand it.

The preferred method for charging consumers under the Government's proposals appears to be water metering. The full consequences for people involved in water metering trials were revealed to me this morning in a letter from a consumer—or perhaps I should say, a victim—of the proposals who is a resident of Brookmans park in Hertfordshire, which is a metering trial area. He said:

"I am part of the water meter trials in the Lee Valley area. From next April my water will be metered on a two part tariff basis. Peak rates will occur at 7 am-10 am and 6 pm-9 pm, exactly the time when one uses water for personal hygiene . . .

Lee Valley have admitted to me . . . that because people use less water when metered, they have already raised the charges between 10 and 15 per cent. They also admit that if people are very frugal with their water consumption, prices will be increased further to maintain an 'adequate' revenue.

By next April I will be paying between 15 per cent.—20 per cent. more for my water and the overall water bill will probably increase by 25 per cent. All this before privatisation. What will the charges be after? Frankly I can only agree with you and say that it will be a 'huge rip-off'."

Presently, the industry makes negligible real profit. There is almost no scope to reduce operating costs. Water supply and sewage disposal offer only low growth prospects in most areas. The bulk of investment will not be revenue-earning. Privatisation will increase the buyers' indebtedness. Companies will be liable to corporation tax, top salaries will rocket, as will management costs and expenses. Shareholders demand dividends, but who foots the bill? The consumer, of course.

Even water industry chairmen—it is significant that the Government have not appointed a single woman to one of those posts—admit to charges increasing in the range of 50 to 80 per cent. In view of all that has already happened and all the evidence, we stand by our claim that, if this squalid Bill proceeds, domestic water charges will, effectively, at least have doubled as a result of Government policies and almost certainly risen much higher than that.

The Secretary of State has made another bogus claim by suggesting that the reason for past price increases has been the need, not contested by us, to increase investment in the water industry. But what does the record show? As I said in an intervention, if we compare 1977-78—the last full year of the Labour Government—with the expenditure for 1987-88 and using the water authorities' own figures and the GDP deflator on a 1987-88 price basis, we see that total capital expenditure by English and Welsh water authorities was £1·164 billion in 1978 and £1·187 billion in 1988. In every one of the intervening years, however, under this Government, investment was lower than in 1977-78. So much for the boastful record that the Secretary of State mentioned. If the comparison is done using the public works deflator as an alternative, the result is effectively the same.

Huge conflicts of interest run right through the Bill. The positions of the Government's dogma and of private profit are elevated above the interests of the consumer and the environment. The National Consumer Council shares our view that the arrangements for the protection of consumers in the Bill are "inadequate".

What of the interests of the taxpayer? The public water authorities are holders of massive assets of buildings and land. Often those public assets are in prime town and city centre sites. We, the people, own an estimated 500,000 acres of land, much of it in national parks and areas of special interest or outstanding natural beauty. Under this Bill, it is all to be sold. What is its cash value? No one knows. I shall come to the incalculable heritage and environmental values later.

We are aware that the Secretary of State has appointed, at public expense, Schroder Wagg to quantify those public assets, yet he denies Parliament and the people that information. So much for his claim that he puts "evidence before emotion" when deciding policy.

With the scandal of the Royal Ordnance losses to the taxpayer fresh in our minds, the House is asked to approve proposals to rip off the taxpayer yet again by approving the Bill in complete ignorance of the capital value of our own assets that are to be sold. We simply should not do so.

Our water industry assets are many times greater than those involved in the Royal Ordnance sale, of which the Public Accounts Committee of this House said:

"In any similar sales in the future, any feasible planning permissions likely to increase property values should be obtained before offers are invited."

The Government intend to ignore that advice. Why? How does that decision fit with the Tory claims to protect the taxpayer? If fits like the glass slipper on the Ugly Sisters —it does not fit at all. Of course Ministers know that their defence of all this is simply a fairy story. They intend the public assets to be the prize to induce buyers in the first place.

Asset-stripping——

Mr. Ridley: Will I turn into a pumpkin?

Dr. Cunningham: Wicked Uncle Ebenezer, more like.

Asset-stripping will be the name of the game. It has been tacitly agreed, and it is inherent in the Bill. Small wonder that the French are falling over themselves to buy into British water along with other predators such as the apparently Australian Mr. Duncan Saville. He has been doing deals with Southern Water and we have discovered that his company, Associated Insurance Pension Fund, is registered, not in Australia, but in the Cook Islands in the Pacific.

In some places asset-stripping is already taking place. The Countryside Commission, the Council for the Protection of Rural England, the Ramblers Association, the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds, the Royal Society of Chemistry, the National Anglers Council, the National Trust and dozens of other sporting and leisure organisations have all expressed their deep concern, if not open hostility, to the plans. They are rightly alarmed.

[Dr. Cunningham]

Of the land held by North-West Water, 53 per cent. of it is in a national park or areas of outstanding natural beauty. Northumbria Water holds 37 per cent. of such land, Severn-Trent Water holds 64 per cent. of such land and 30 per cent. of South-West Water land is in a national park or an area of outstanding natural beauty.

In many cases public access to water authority land has been extended beyond the legal rights of way. That has been achieved through the establishment of permissive paths or access agreements with local authorities. In the Peak District, for example, where 15 per cent. of the land is owned by water authorities, more than 40 miles of permissive paths have been created. In another area, owned by Severn-Trent, more than 50 miles of footpaths run through it, of which only one third are public rights of way.

Mr. Frank Dobson (Holborn and St. Pancras): Bryngwyn.

Dr. Cunningham: Yes, my hon. Friend is correct.

Mr. Edward Leigh (Gainsborough and Horncastle) *rose*——

Dr. Cunningham: I shall give way in a moment.

After privatisation, the majority of the water authority estate will be transferred to the new private water companies, which may in turn transfer it to subsidiary companies with responsibilities for leisure and recreation or land development. Alternatively, land surplus to requirements may simply be sold of. Both possibilities could jeopardise the continuation of public access and conservation on water authority land.

Mr. Leigh: In view of the hon. Gentleman's comments about the National Anglers Council expressing its concern about the Government's proposals, it is important to set the record straight. If that is true, why, in a brief to hon. Members, does that organisation say:

"The National Anglers Council welcomes the proposals to establish a National Rivers Authority".

Dr. Cunningham: Of course I accept what the hon. Gentleman says. It is true that that council says that, but it goes on to say that it is deeply concerned about access and asset-stripping opportunities in the Bill.

Specific threats include the intensification of agriculture, afforestation, the establishment of inappropriate recreation developments, the curtailment of existing access provisions and the withdrawal of conservation management.

The Secretary of State proposes the incredible and bizarre theory that to protect the Lake District we must sell it, to safeguard the Peak District we must "flog it off" and to enhance Dartmoor, we should hand it over to private enterprise.

That stupefying nonsense undermines national policy to protect our heritage and environment pursued by successive Governments and their agencies throughout the past 50 years. The thought horrifies millions of people of all political persuasions. The results will be to reduce access to the countryside, to increase charges for leisure, recreation and sporting activities and to remove environmental safeguards.

The Minister of State bleats like a herdwick about the planning system, but areas such as the Lake District are already under tremendous pressure, and last year 45 per cent. of planning appeals there were successful—higher than the national average for appeals at 38 per cent.

The planning system, even in designated areas, will not on its own be adequate to guard against those threats. Agricultural improvements, afforestation and some recreational developments are already outside the planning system, as the Minister should know. Similarly, the curtailment of existing access provision and the removal of positive management by new owners fall outside the scope of development control.

The Water Bill sets out the environmental duties of the water industry after privatisation. Both the National Rivers Authority and water plcs will have a duty to further conservation and have regard to public access in carrying out their functions, as the Secretary of State says. But there are no safeguards covering the activities of subsidiaries —those companies outside the core activities of water supply and pollution control. The Bill provides an open invitation to developers to exploit those assets—our countryside and our green spaces.

Speaking on "London Plus" on 26 October Michael Carney, secretary of the Water Authorities Association, said it all when he said:

"If there's something surplus it will be got rid of."

That sums it up. Private companies will go all-out to ensure the quickest possible return and the taxpayer, the water consumer and the environment will pay the price.

South-West Water has already sold Brent moor in Devon to a private developer. Planning applications followed. The site was resold and planning appeals are likely to persist. The National Trust offered to buy the land to save it for those who enjoy it at present, but it has simply been priced out of the market.

In Hertfordshire, Thames Water is cashing in on land at Hemel Hempstead near a reservoir where housing is planned. In the Peak District national park, North-West Water has been disposing of land without any discussion or consultation with the planning board.

In his vision of the future for privately owned water supplies, Mr. Roy Watts of Thames Water gives the game away. No doubt with the track record of privatised industry bosses in mind—a 160 per cent. wage increase bonanza—he looked into his crystal ball and said:

"I see a lot of fun—playing hard, working hard—I see a sports ground—I see a training centre—I even see an executive helicopter."

In other words, he sees large rewards at the taxpayers' and consumers' expense for less responsibility than he has now.

The most incredible of all the Secretary of State's claims for the Bill is his apparent discovery that the best possible reason to sell off the nation's water and land assets is to protect the environment. The claim is based primarily on the establishment of a National Rivers Authority. The creation of a powerful environmental protection agency, which has long been Labour party policy, would have our support, but like many other of the Government's proposals, something with more appropriate powers could and should be established. It is simply not necessary to sell off the water industry to achieve those objectives. To facilitate the privatisation of water the Secretary of State is proposing an act of nationalisation—the establishment of a National Rivers Authority—the equivalent of a water

Property Services Agency, the kind of organisation that all his Back Benchers have been pressing him to get rid of ever since he came to office.

The National Rivers Authority proposal is a means of taking away from the 10 water authorities their non-profit-making, environmentally necessary functions which, if they had remained with the water authorities, would have deterred investors and prevented a successful flotation.

Having removed non-profit-making environmental concerns from the sale—destroying in the process the important environmental concept of river basin management—so as to make the sell-off more attractive, the Secretary of State now expects us to believe that he will re-impose those environmental concerns on private owners by regulation. The Blue Book that the Secretary of State has published on the new authority makes it clear that it will be heavily funded—yes, by the taxpayer. So much for freeing essential environmental expenditure from the confines of the PSBR.

First, the Secretary of State looked for an experienced independent chairman for his powerful new body. He found none other than Lord Crickhowell, an "indepedent" friend of the Prime Minister and former Tory Cabinet Minister. The latter quickly described the existing levels of staff and obligations as "a problem". He confirmed the Government's intention to slim down the authority and contract out much essential work. In other words, redundancies already loom in an area where oversight, scrutiny and control of pollution is woefully inadequate.

The claims for a powerful new agency are further undermined by the reality that the National Rivers Authority will contract services back to the privately owned water companies. As the very effective report "Liquid Assets" from the Council for the Protection of Rural England and the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds makes clear, private water companies would then be monitoring and analysing their own effluents—the very situation that the National Rivers Authority is said to be intended to avoid.

The report concludes that the safeguards written into the Bill are not adequate to counter potential threats to the environment. We agree with that. A Greenpeace report entitled "Poisoning the System" demonstrates convincingly that, far from improving the law on pollution control, the Bill is a step backwards. Once the water industry is in private control it will be able to use the same legal loopholes as industry currently uses to avoid detection let alone prosecution. The transfer of sections of the Control of Pollution Act in the Bill ensures that outcome.

The public register system provides information on all consents to discharge effluent from sewage works and on direct industrial discharges. Data from the public register may well show an industry to be consistently acting illegally, yet the public would be unable to prosecute on that evidence alone. Private water companies would be subject to the same legal loopholes that currently protect industry from prosecution. The Bill will make it almost impossible for an individual to bring a private prosecution against a private water company.

Throughout the 1980s we have been witnessing a rapid decline in the quality of the United Kingdom's rivers for the first time since national records began being kept in the 1950s. More of our rivers than ever before are simply dead. Yet the Government and the water authorities have a lamentable record on prosecuting in the event of any of those offences. The number of reported pollution incidents on rivers in England and Wales rose from 12,500 in 1980 to 23,000 last year. Yet in 1986 only 254 prosecutions were taken out by water authorities out of a total of more than 20,000 pollution incidents—an enforcement rate of 1 per cent.

In 1985, too, water authorities acting in concert with the Department of the Environment and the Secretary of State, relaxed many of the existing consent conditions. The Secretary of State revealed that 1,800 sewage treatement works discharge consents were relaxed between 1984 and 1986. The water authorities were thus legally allowed to discharge higher levels of effluent. That, in turn, led to pressure from industrial dischargers to have their consents revised—as happened in the North-West Water area. And in the run-up to privatisation the Government are considering requests known as variation orders which would relax consents for about 300 sewage works in which water authorities are breaking the law.

The Select Committee on the Environment recommended in 1987 in its report on pollution of rivers and estuaries that subsections of the Control of Pollution Act 1974, dealing with the protection of rivers' flora and fauna from polluting discharge, be implemented. The Government refused to implement that section of the Act.

There are no integrated proposals in the Bill to deal with the problem of deteriorating water control in England and Wales, and the Secretary of State has no clear national objectives. The Bill contains no river and drinking water quality standards, nor any commitment, in the near term at least, to meet European Community standards.

Faced as they are with the priority of making profits, it is extremely unlikely that the vigorous policy of environmental improvement that is urgently required will appeal to privately owned water industries. It is also unlikely that a Secretary of State for the Environment who said in a recent "Panorama" programme that it was not worth prosecuting water companies will take the tough stance that is required.

Nor is it likely that a Secretary of State who has stood by in the face of all the evidence of more than 20,000 people being poisoned by their water supply at Camelford in the south-west—and who has done nothing when he should have set up a public inquiry—is a person who will safeguard, let alone enhance, the environment. That is an appalling omission——

Mr. Nicholas Baker (Dorset, North): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I have the greatest respect for the hon. Member for Copeland (Dr. Cunningham), but he has now exceeded the time for which the Secretary of State spoke. Mr. Speaker said that he was anxious to——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. Mr. Speaker said that he was invoking the power vested in him to impose a 10-minute limit on speeches from 7 pm to 9 pm, and expressed the hope that before that right hon. and hon. Members would make brief speeches, but there is no power to curtail speeches, and the hon. Member for Copeland (Dr. Cunningham) is under no time limit.

Dr. Cunningham: The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Health has said a word—or perhaps more than a word—about all this. A little while ago, urging people to adopt better eating and drinking habits, she said:

"Instead of drinking Coca Colas, turn on the tap and drink what the good Lord gave us."

[Dr. Cunningham]

In the light of this Bill, the hon. Lady will have to revise her advice to the people of Britain.

Shakespeare, on the other hand, wrote in "The Merchant of Venice":

"There be land-rats and water-rats, land-thieves and water-thieves".

This Bill is designed for them.

There is a wide gulf between us and the Government. Tories are legislating today to create private monopolies, and to introduce profit-making into domestic water supply. We reject that idea absolutely. Tomorrow, Tories will vote to put the interests of private monopolies before the interests of families and the environment. They will vote tomorrow to undermine the foundations of policy on our national parks and common heritage.

More than a century ago William Wordsworth—[HON. MEMBERS: "Oh, no."] Oh, yes. William Wordsworth foresaw the need to create a national park in the Lake District, when he wrote that the British people

"by their visits, often repeated, to the Lakes in the north of England, testify that they deem the district a sort of national property, in which everyone has a right and interest."

The people's feelings and the poet's vision were made reality by a Labour Government with their National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act 1949. This Bill erodes that right and denies that interest.

No resource is more fundamental to the health of the people than water. We stand by our view that a plentiful supply of wholesome water should be available to every household in Britain at the lowest possible cost to consumers and the nation. We believe that there are irreconcilable conflicts between that objective, the demands of good public health and the interests of shareholders and market forces in water provision. It was exactly these conflicts and crucial national issues of water purity—public health, coherent policies for sewage disposal, pollution control, environmental protection and the strategic investment necessary to secure these vital national interests—that led to water becoming a public utility and monopoly in the first place. for us they remain the most fundamentally important objectives, far outweighing the interests of Tory dogma, of private owners and of private gain. That is why we oppose the Bill.

5.57 pm

Sir Hugh Rossi (Hornsey and Wood Green): I shall vote in favour of the Bill tomorrow because it contains some of the most advanced measures for the protection of water quality in this country since those of the Control of Pollution Act 1974, in which I was involved as a junior Minister.

I welcome the fact that the Government have now accepted the need to establish a single independent regulatory authority. It has been wholly unacceptable that the water authorities—owned by the public—have acted in such a way that, for example, in 1986, 22 per cent. of all water treatment plants were polluting water for 95 per cent. of the time. They could not prosecute themselves, and the Department of the Environment could not prosecute another public authority. So it is necessary to devise an arrangement under which the water authorities become subject to the law in exactly the same way as the private sector, and privatisation is one way of ensuring that.

The hon. Member for Copeland (Dr. Cunningham) quoted in aid some dubious figures that his research assistants produced for him about capital expenditure. I refer him to a document that he did not want mentioned——

Dr. Cunningham: I resent the hon. Gentleman's use of the phrase "dubious figures found by my research assistant"; I hope that he will withdraw it—*[Interruption.]* I understand that Conservative Members are not interested in the truth. My figures were produced by the statistical section of the House of Commons Library and are based on the expenditure figures of the English and Welsh water authorities. I said that when I quoted them. Now I have said it again, so I hope that the hon. Gentleman will withdraw his slur.

Sir Hugh Rossi: In that case, I suggest that the hon. Gentleman has the figures checked. He was not at all interested when I intervened and tried to suggest that he should look at the report by the Select Committee on the Environment. The figures in that report were carefully examined by that all-party Committee; his hon. Friend the Member for Bootle (Mr. Roberts), who is now sitting at his side, accepted them and was a signatory to the report in which they are contained.

Let us look at public sector investment in sewerage and sewage disposal in England and Wales between 1958-59 and 1989-90 in the context of 1985-86 prices. If the hon. Member for Copeland looks at that he will see that the peak shown on the chart in the Select Committee report was reached in 1973-74, when the annual investment was approximately £850 million. From then on, under a Labour Administration, there was a precipitous decline to a trough in 1979-80. That was agreed by the Select Committee, which said:

"As the chart shows, there was a steady drop from the mid-'70s until the early '80s in investment by the water authorities in sewage and sewage disposal.

Because of the lead time required for investment we are now suffering today".

That is why the water authorities are in such trouble, with 22 per cent. of them discharging polluted water for 95 per cent. of the time.

I should like to address some questions to my right hon. Friend the Minister on some aspects of the legislation that cause me a little concern. He has suggested that the National Rivers Authority should be responsible, not only for pollution control, but for flood defence, fisheries, recreation and navigation. We should like to see that authority as a powerful and effective body dealing with water pollution. Is it necessary to lump in these other activities, which would only muddy the water of its main work?

When the Select Committee considered these matters, it said that either an independent new body should be created to see to these matters or that the inspectorate of pollution should be increased in size, power and responsibility and should be given executive responsibilities for water monitoring and prosecution. Quite clearly, the water authorities were incapable of carrying out those functions because, as they could not control themselves, it was hard to expect them to prosecute the private sector.

We have heard in recent weeks that the inspectorate of pollution is in some kind of difficulty. In a short time we have seen the resignation of two chief inspectors, which does not bode well for the way in which we monitor water

pollution. Can the Minister tell the House about the relationship between the National Rivers Authority and the inspectorate? Will the inspectorate be absorbed into the National Rivers Authority, or will it be outside it? If it is outside the NRA, what will be its function?

I spoke earlier about my experience in the Department when I was responsible for these matters. At that time, in 1973-74, I was tremendously impressed by the calibre of work and the quality of what was then known as the alkali inspectorate. It had been established for about 125 years and was manned by scientists, people of the highest calibre, who achieved such a relationship with industry that Britain was able to boast of being in the forefront of nations dealing with environmental problems. That was the case under the Clean Air Acts, the Water Acts and many other Acts. We owe the inspectorate a great deal.

Shortly after I left the Department, in fact in 1975, for reasons that I do not know, under a Labour Government the chief inspector's post was downgraded from under-secretary to grade 4. If the Opposition attach such importance to such matters, why did the Labour Government starve the water authorities of the necessary investment and at the same time downgrade the post of the chief officer in the Department? That downgrading had a tremendous impact on the morale of the Department.

I understand that the Department is currently reappraising the status and grading of the inspectors and the chief inspector. My right hon. Friend should have regard to the tremendous reputation of the inspectorate. The work that it has done over more than 125 years has been recognised by one Royal Commission after another and it would be a great pity if the ethos of that small unit in the Department were destroyed.

I find it a little difficult to understand why the person in charge of that unit is an administrator and not a chief inspector. Perhaps some of the problems that we have heard about arose because of a difference of approach and attitude between the scientists, the people at the coal face looking after pollution problems, and administrators in the Department. These are internal matters, but they are within the remit of my right hon. Friend, and I am drawing them to his attention because it is within his power to put them right. I hope that he will do so.

At the time that my Select Committee reported, there were 11 water inspectors for 10 water authorities. That is 1·1 inspector for each authority. That is totally inadequate in a system where monitoring will be done from outside the water authorities themselves. Within each of the 10 water regions I should like to see a regional office of pollution inspectors who would be responsible for the constant monitoring of waters and rivers within their geographical area. They would need to have the necessary laboratory back-up to test water quality, trace discharges and determine the pollutants going into the rivers. They would also need a legal staff to ensure that prosecutions were followed through from the results of their monitoring.

I do not know whether my right hon. Friend envisages such a scheme within the National Rivers Authority, or what use he intends to make of the inspectorate. If thoughts along those lines are not already in his mind, I hope that I have put them there.

The other matter with which I wish to deal was mentioned by the hon. Member for Copeland—the need to have national water quality objectives. The Committee suggested that they were a prerequisite for a planned and costed programme. It suggested that we should have regard to the effects of effluents on flora and fauna when considering water quality.

I am a little disappointed that under clause 97 the first requirement for water quality—when the mechanism to monitor it is set up—will be to have regard to the purposes for which the water will be used. That is an old-fashioned, cheap approach. The only way in which we can ensure good, clean water in our rivers is to ensure that nothing is put in them that damages life. That must be the aim and final objective. When my right hon. Friend considers the water quality objective, as he will have to before the Bill is enacted, I hope that he will have more regard for life in rivers.

I shall curtail my remarks, in view of what Mr. Speaker has said, but I should like to mention the loopholes to which the hon. Member for Copeland referred. I draw the House's attention to evidence that the Select Committee received when preparing its third report. We received evidence from the Severn-Trent water authority, and paragraph 102 of the report says:

> "It is possible for a discharger to introduce some new contaminant not envisaged when the consent was granted, and hence not limited, to cause serious pollution and then to claim this protection. Protection should apply only to those components of the effluent which are governed by specific conditions."

If an industrial plant is given permission to discharge a chemical into a river, but adds another chemical, it is able to say, "I cannot be prosecuted." As the law stands, it has a licence to discharge, and the fact that the chemical that it is discharging is not mentioned in its licence gives it a measure of protection.

I can give specific examples of where that is happening. My attention has been drawn to this problem by the *Yorkshire Post*, which has carried out an assiduous campaign. It gives specific incidents of a company discharging cadmium into the River Aire. Cadmium is one of the two most poisonous substances known to man, but a company is discharging 12 kg of it per annum under a licence that does not refer to it. The water authority is unable to prosecute. Clause 100 will make it an offence knowingly to permit any poisonous or polluting matter to enter controlled water. An exception is given in clause 101 for those who have consent.

I ask my right hon. Friend whether the combination of those two clauses will block the present loophole. I agree with the hon. Member for Copeland that this is a serious matter, which causes great concern. I hope that my right hon. Friend has addressed himself to this problem and will find a solution to it.

Dr. Cunningham: The hon. Gentleman and I had a disagreement before, but I join him in praising the *Yorkshire Post* and other newspapers which have drawn attention to the flouting of pollution control law. It is my understanding—I am pleased that the hon. Gentleman asked the Secretary of State this question—that nothing in the Bill will change those circumstances. I should be grateful if the Secretary of State would answer his hon. Friend's question.

Sir Hugh Rossi: That is the view put forward by Greenpeace. On occasion, the Committee had to question the evidence given by it. It is an effective pressure group, but it tends to get rather excited and, at times, to overstate

[Sir Hugh Rossi]

its case. It has sent me a copy of the document to which the hon. Member for Copeland referred, but I have not had an opportunity to read it in detail.

Part of the object of Second Reading is to ventilate matters so that when they are considered in Committee and on Report the Government can close any loopholes in the legislation. I should like to think that the Government have directed their attention to these problems and that they may already be covered. Nevertheless, there is no reason why a marker should not be put down, because it is a very serious defect in the law. The problem is that polluters are not acting illegally, If they were, certain consequences could follow. We must therefore ensure that such behaviour is made illegal.

I hope that I have not kept the House too long. I only wished to ask two or three questions about pollution. I think that there can be a tightening and close examination of pollution controls, and I hope that my remarks will commend themselves to my right hon. Friend. Subject to that, he will receive my support in the Lobby. I shall wait with interest to see how the matter is dealt with.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I remind the House that Mr. Speaker has appealed for brief speeches.

6.16 pm

Mr. Richard Livsey (Brecon and Radnor): I commend to the House large parts of the speech of the hon. Member for Hornsey and Wood Green (Sir H. Rossi), especially that part relating to pollution control and the pollution inspectorate. I am certain that he is right in saying that powers need to be improved and expert personnel need to be available on the ground.

The objective of the Bill is quite clear—to dismember the 10 water authorities, which are successors to local authority control, of water resources and supply. They were created to improve standards of public health. We must recognise that, before they were taken into local authority control, there were horrendous problems related to health. In short, the water industry has always been regarded as a service, not an industry suitable for privatisation. We will therefore vehemently oppose the Bill.

The size of the industry has increased enormously, especially since its reorganisation in 1973. It now has an annual turnover of £3 billion. Water authorities supply water to 75 per cent. of the population and sewerage facilities to 96 per cent. It is a large industry and employs 48,500 people. None the less, it is a service industry and should remain in the public sector.

The industry's present functions, especially those of river basin management, are important. The effectiveness of its river basin management is admired throughout the world. Its sewerage and sewage disposal responsibilities have been shown to be unsuccessful at present, and it is reckoned that 20 per cent. of sewage disposal units are ineffective. This is a serious problem and will require much more public money if the system is to be effective. It is therefore doubtful whether the private sector will be able to find sufficient resources to bring about more effective pollution control.

The water authorities have functions in respect of fisheries, flood protection and drainage—that is especially important for agriculture—navigation, recreation and conservation. Over the past 10 or so years there have been massive efforts to reduce costs in order to improve the efficiency of the water authorities. They are now leaner and fitter. There is no more scope for further cost cuts. This is part of the problem with privatisation of the industry. Profits will come only by increasing the price of water to the consumers and selling off the water authorities' assets.

The transfer from a public monopoly to a private one does not introduce competition, and that is surprising. The Bill does not apply to Scotland, and we see no reason why it should apply to Wales. The splitting of functions between the National Rivers Authority and water services companies could have been achieved while the water industry was still in the public sector, and we see no reason why that should not have happened.

Mr. Allan Roberts (Bootle): What does the hon. Gentleman have against England? He has exempted Scotland and Wales. Why should we suffer?

Mr. Livsey: I am sure that the hon. Gentleman is well able to make the case for England.

We are in danger of having a toothless National Rivers Authority, unable to cope with the voracious demands of the water plcs for more profit at the expense of consumers and the environment.

We are worried about the financial arrangements for the National Rivers Authority. First, there seems no logical reason why the money which the Treasury will pocket from the sale of the water authorities should not be used to meet the set-up costs of the NRA. Secondly, we are worried that the NRA will not be properly financed to meet its day-to-day duties. The NRA's remit and powers are generally satisfactory, but the authority can only be as effective as its budget will allow. It is dependent on the Treasury to fund activities beyond those that its income allows it to undertake. The NRA's regulatory functions rest in the Chancellor's hands.

We know that the Department of the Environment does not envisage the NRA receiving substantial state support. That will result in a clear conflict of interest. The Chancellor wants to raise as much as possible from the industry's sale, but knows that the greater the regulation through the NRA the lower the industry's value will be. There is a direct incentive for the Treasury to under-fund the NRA. In its general information pack, the DOE said:

"The general policy of the NRA would be to maximise its cost recovery from charges so as to minimise its dependence on Exchequer grant."

In a speech on 12 November, Lord Crickhowell, chairman of the NRA advisory committee, said:

"It cannot be healthy for the NRA to be dependent on hand-outs from the Government."

Clearly, there is a conflict.

Thirdly, there is concern about the NRA's long-term financial position. The authority is classified as "non-departmental public body"—presumably, that is Treasury terminology. The authority will have no long-term borrowing powers. I should like the Minister to take serious note of that point. The present water authorities have borrowing powers and massive problems occur in drainage and flood control which require additional finance, often at short notice. In the past, the water authorities have borrowed a great deal.

We are worried about the NRA's structure, because we do not want it to become over-centralised. Lord Crickhowell touched on that point in his speech to the national water conference, saying:

"Within the framework of national policies laid down by the NRA, the regional units shall have the greatest practical degree of independence."

The NRA should be independent. That point was made by the hon. Member for Hornsey and Wood Green.

The flotation of the water companies seems to be far removed from consumers and consumer interest. We are not sure why the Government will not consider the consumers' interests more in those areas covered by the plcs, why there should not be participation in share ownership by consumers and why should there not in certain cases be co-operative arrangements with consumers. Surely we need bodies that have consumer interests at heart.

Dr. D. E. Thomas (Meirionnydd Nant Conwy): On the point about consumer control, my hon. Friend will be aware that the Minister for Water and Planning is a respected fellow countryman. I am certain that he will have carefully considered whether it would be appropriate for the functions of the Welsh water authority to be transferred into the hands of Welsh consumers, should such a co-operative be established. I am certain that my hon. Friend will agree.

Mr. Livsey: I certainly agree that Welsh consumers should participate in the ownership functions carried out by their water authority. It is questionable whether the functions of the Welsh water authority should be hived off at all, unless it happens in those circumstances.

Mr. David Ashby (Leicestershire, North-West): How does the hon. Gentleman propose to ensure that only Welsh people apply for the shares?

Mr. Livsey: I am sure that, if the Government wished, such a facility could be given in the Bill to the Welsh people. We shall certainly test the Government on that aspect.

Water consumers are worried. I hope that, at the very least, the Government will make provision in the Bill for the Government to hold a golden share, to ensure that the plcs remain in Britain's hands rather than sold to foreign investors. I am sure that the Government agree.

It is clear that under the Bill there is no competition. When, on the BBC programme "On the Record", it was put to the Minister for Water and Planning that the consumer would have no extra choice as a result of privatisation, he replied:

"Yes, that is probably right."

The Minister admitted that there would not be much competition. The consumer will not have in his house six taps providing water from six plcs. Water is four times more expensive in some parts of France than in others. I trust that the Government will not allow that to happen when the Director General of Water Services is appointed.

We are worried about what will happen in the Principality of Wales, because water from Wales services the midlands and other parts of England. We hope that the future arrangements will bring us adequate compensation for the export of that water, and that we will be properly reimbursed and not under-sold. That is important.

The infrastructure of the water industry is in a very bad state in some parts. Many Victorian sewers need to be repaired and new water pipelines installed. That is a massive task. Most estimates of bringing water quality up to EEC standards show that the work could be done at a cost of about £6 billion. We are concerned that the Secretary of State today mentioned a figure of £2·4 billion to put matters right, which is less than half the current estimate. We hope that the Government will reconsider that matter.

We are also concerned about the current massive land assets of the water authorities. They own 450,000 acres of land and we are not certain what will happen to that land when the industry is privatised. They own 97,000 acres in Wales alone and, in my constituency of Brecon and Radnor, there are 21,000 acres of water authority land in the national park. That is an extremely valuable asset and we should like to know what will happen from the point of view of access and recreation.

Many farmers on that land are tenants of the water authority. What will be their security of tenure? What will happen to their rents when water is privatised? Will they be able to continue in their traditional farming activities, or will they be priced out? Those are important issues which should be discussed in detail in Committee.

We regard the Bill as unsatisfactory. Water is not suitable for privatisation. Many hon. Members are involved in the recreation aspects—I am a keen angler—and are anxious to know whether the fishery aspects will be protected and developed at a cost that everyone can afford. We hope that angling, which is the most popular sport in the British Isles, will not be priced out for the ordinary person as a result of the privatisation of the industry.

We must remind the Minister of the consumer interests that are at stake, particularly in the disconnection of consumers from their water supplies. Last year, disconnections reached an all-time high of more than 9,000. As water is a basic, natural resource, vital for life, consumers should not be cut off in that way.

The poor and lower income groups are particularly exposed to that problem. Low-income families and individuals have to pay rates and water rates from benefit, and those rates are taking increasingly large proportions of their benefit. In the past six months, the standing charge for those consumers with water meters has risen by 33 per cent. I have been shown such cases, and they are very worrying. We hope that the consumer interest will be taken into account in the Bill. The director general must be effective. I do not believe that the estimate of 80 staff in his office is sufficient to protect the industry and the consumers' interests.

I hope that the Minister will take those points into account. The Bill needs amending substantially if it is to make a worthwhile impact. We oppose the principle of the privatisation of water and are glad to say so.

6.34 pm

Sir Charles Morrison (Devizes): In considering the transfer of a utility from the public to the private sector, it is worth remembering that there are two reasons for the existence of the public sector, the one Socialist and the other pragmatic. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State referred to the Socialist reason when he opened the debate. It is the continuing Socialist conviction that only as a result of the nationalisation of the means of production, distribution and exchange, coupled with all-embracing state provision, can the public good be

[Sir Charles Morrison]

served. I totally disagree with such ideology. It provided some dream of a solution to the ills of the late 19th and early 20th centuries, but it never succeeded in practice.

The second reason for the existence of a public sector is the pragmatic one that, at one moment or another in our history, it was seen or believed that the private sector would not, or could not, meet a public need. That is why I do not believe it is a self-evident truth that, automatically, everything in the public sector must be bad or badly run, and everything in the private sector must be good or well run. I hope that the Government do not believe that either. If they do, they should beware, because they would then be in danger of becoming as ideological as the Opposition. Instead of judging issues on their merits, issues would be judged according to the theories of some doctrine or dogma. In my judgment, common sense and pragmatism should be the basis of our thinking about the future of the water industry.

It is against that background that I want to deal with the Bill, while remembering that water first came under public control, as we were reminded in a letter to *The Times* earlier this week, as a result of the determination of a leading Conservative. That does not mean that the time has not arrived for water to be transferred from the public sector back to the private sector, but I again emphasise that it is important to adopt a pragmatic approach to the question of how water should be organised.

The Bill creates a new strategy for water. Given the nature of water and its supply, I cannot see how the Bill can be claimed to provide competition. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State referred to the concept of "comparative competition." That is all very well, given the 10 water authorities and the 10 plcs that will exist. Standards may be adequately set as a result of their existence, but there will be no competition in any normal sense of the word. The Bill therefore creates the opportunity for public monopolies to become private monopolies. However, as we have heard, those private monopolies will be freed from the financial constraints that they currently suffer as a result of being part of the public sector.

Undoubtedly, most of the existing water authorities have, at some time or another, been at the receiving end of justified public criticism, but most of the problems that have given rise to that criticism in respect of poor supply, poor water quality, pollution and inadequate sewerage systems have fundamentally stemmed from Treasury meanness, as a result of which water authorities have not been able to invest as much as they would have wished. Privatisation will certainly overcome that difficulty, because the water plcs will be able to go direct to the market to obtain the capital that they believe is necessary. Thus, it should be possible gradually for the water industry as a whole to become more efficient and less open to many of the criticisms that have been aimed at it in recent years.

None the less, the industry will not be operating as a free agent. It will be subject to regulation by the Director General of Water Services and the National Rivers Authority. It occurs to me that the director general will have to be some sort of Solomon, especially in the early years of his existence. That is if he is to be seen to protect the customer from price rises at the same time as the plcs are investing considerable extra capital to meet the requirements of the director general and of the NRA. No doubt such a paragon can be discovered and appointed.

The concept of the NRA as a regulatory body is admirable. It will remove the conflict of interests that currently exists, with water authorities being responsible for discharges to water, especially of sewage, and for the control of discharges. I should be happier if the NRA were to be a purely regulatory body, without any functional responsibilities. Fortunately, the Government have decided to retain the existing system river basins as the basic structure for the plcs. It seems, however, that there will be some overlap between the responsibilities of the plcs and those of the NRA. If that is so, the opportunity is created for the buck to be passed—I suspect, particularly from the plcs to the NRA—when a necessary expense arises that can give no extra return to the plcs. I hope that my hon. Friend will be able to allay my fears on that score.

The interests of anglers must be recognised, and I happen to be a president of their national council. It is clear that fisheries are to be a major responsibility of the NRA, and that is right. Fishing is a major recreation along rivers and around reservoirs, and it seems that there is no safeguard for specific recreational activities that are currently enjoyed on water. It appears that, within the meaning of the Bill, a plc may abandon one recreation in favour of another. As major users, that could be to the disadvantage of anglers. I accept, however, that it could be to the disadvantage of other users of certain stretches of water. I hope that my hon. Friend will be able to reassure me.

Anglers are concerned about high water quality. Credit can be given to anglers and their various organisations for the way in which they have stressed the importance of water quality in the past. This has resulted in many improvements being made. Anglers fear that the Bill might lower standards of quality.

Previous legislation promoted a national policy to restore the wholesomeness of rivers. My hon. Friend the Member for Hornsey and Wood Green (Sir H. Rossi) said that clause 97 refers to the classification of quality of waters. Apparently, water quality standards are to be related to the use of water. It is felt strongly by anglers, and no doubt by others, that there should be public consultation before water quality standards in any given area are agreed; otherwise, a lowering of standards might occur for cost-cutting purposes, regardless of the interests of users, and anglers especially.

Given such a consideration, would it not be sensible to have two members representing fisheries on the NRA board, with at least one other representing water recreation? There are 2,700,000 freshwater anglers, and water recreation in its various forms involves about 6 million people.

The Government should take careful note of the concern that has been expressed about what will happen to the 450,000 acres that are currently owned by water authorities.

Mr. Cranley Onslow (Woking): Before my hon. Friend moves on from his comments on angling, which he has been making so admirably, would he care to add that many anglers are puzzled about why flood prevention committees are to have executive responsibility, whereas regional fisheries committees are not, given that a great deal of the moneys will come from anglers?

Sir Charles Morrison: My right hon. Friend makes an important additional point, which I did not mention because I was trying to limit myself in time. What he has said is of great importance and I hope that my right hon. and hon. Friends on the Treasury Bench will take careful note of it.

I was referring to land in the ownership of water authorities, and was about to mention that there is concern about access to it. I shall not expand on that issue, because it has been mentioned several times already. I merely say that it is essential that the Government view the matter sympathetically.

Overall, anglers welcome the proposals for the NRA. The authority will act effectively, however, only if it has adequate financial resources. Here there is a contradiction in the Bill, and it was referred to by the hon. Member for Copeland (Dr. Cunningham), who spoke from the Opposition Front Bench. The new plcs will be freed from Treasury constraints, but the new NRA will be subject to them. I have to admit my worry when I read that grant in aid to the NRA will be paid to the authority

"subject to the Treasury's approval".

What guarantee is there that the Treasury will be less mean than usual?

Mr. Nicholas Soames (Crawley): Oh!

Sir Charles Morrison: I know that the NRA will receive income from direct charges, but it was only last week that I was told of a story concerning the grandfather of my hon. Friend the Member for Crawley (Mr. Soames), who always referred to the mean Treasury. I hope that the grandson will learn from the grandfather, rather than seek to correct me when I refer to Treasury meanness.

The NRA will receive income from direct charges, such as navigation and rod licences, from water extraction and from discharges, but without adequate grants it will not live up to the expectation that many have of it. As a reassurance, the NRA should have a guaranteed grant, which should not be reduced. Without that, and even with the best will in the world, the NRA may not be able to live up to its responsibilities, especially in monitoring the effect of pollution along the 25,000 miles of rivers, in coastal waters, on ground water and in estuaries, for which it will have responsibility.

The Bill is a mammoth piece of legislation that includes a mass of matters of substance and of detail. It is heading for lengthy consideration in Committee. I hope that my right hon. Friend the Leader of the House will take account of the recommendations of the Procedure Committee and very early on introduce a timetable motion for its consideration in Committee. Only in that way will there be a reasonable time for every part of the Bill to be discussed. Only in that way shall we ensure that it is not only the other place that deals with a great deal of the Bill. I am sure that the Bill will receive a Second Reading tomorrow night. When it is deliberated upon thereafter, I hope that there will be adequate opportunity for consideration of all major aspects of it and time to reassure those who now have reservations about it.

6.49 pm

Mr. Peter L. Pike (Burnley): The Secretary of State for the Environment and the hon. Member for Hornsey and Wood Green (Sir H. Rossi), the Chairman of the Select Committee on the Environment, mentioned the figures for investment in sewerage and sewage disposal functions in England and Wales from 1958-59 to 1989-90. Those figures have been used in a misleading way, as is shown by chart 1 of the Select Committee report, to which they referred. Although it is clear, in constant 1985-86 prices, that spending reached a peak in 1974-75, it is also clear that it is still far below that peak, despite the fact that the Conservative Government have been in power for nearly 10 years.

It is completely misleading for the Secretary of State and the hon. Gentleman to talk of a long lead-in period when they are considering the present situation. If that were true, they must also accept that the figure that they claim was the peak in 1974-75 was planned during the period of office of the Labour Government under the leadership of Lord Wilson. The Government cannot have it both ways. Although the forecast shows an increase in the next few years, investment will still only reach two thirds of that peak figure. They must put the figures in that perspective.

I want to refer briefly to an editorial in the *Lancashire Evening Telegraph* on 1 December which shows the problems of this appalling Bill. There was an article in that paper on the same day about the conflict between the chairman of North West Water and his deputy chairman, who happens to be the chief executive as well. I must point out that the deputy chairman has been involved in the water industry for considerably longer that the chairman. Like many others, George Mann, the previous chairman, was removed because he would not have been politically in favour of the privatisation of water. The Government have ruthlessly removed almost everybody they could from the water industry who might have opposed its privatisation. They have done that extremely skillfully and ruthlessly over the past few years in preparation for their privatisation proposals.

The deputy chairman of North West Water is quoted as saying that the sell-off is "a waste of time". The chairman of North West Water says that we can disregard that because the deputy chairman is due to retire. The deputy chairman, Bryan Oldfield, has long experience in the industry. It is true that he will retire in a year's time, but Dennis Grove, the chairman, has a short experience of the industry and has been dedicated from the start, like many other chairmen, to carry out the Government's will. Many chairmen and members of water authorities believe that they have the right to make that political decision, and many have played an active part in propagating the Government's views. They have not merely sat back and said that they had to carry out the Government's will, but they have been preparing for privatisation in advance of the Bill, and even in advance of the paving Bill.

The editorial in the *Lancashire Evening Telegraph* says:

"When it comes to the looming privatisation of the water industry, what choice will the public have?"

I emphasise the word "choice", which is the in-word of the Conservative party at present. The editorial continues:

"Water, after all, is the stuff of life—a vital commodity that people have no choice other than to use. In essence, it is a natural monopoly and, so, will be seen by millions of people as a fundamental service that should not be cast into the arena of free enterprise, where the making of a profit for investors is the bottom line and where the notion of improved efficiency and service to the customer is inevitably blunted because there will be no risk of them taking their business elsewhere. . . This is one piece of the Government's privatisation programme that is sure to run into choppy waters. And, at this stage, it would seem that it would have done well to leave the water industry off its list."

[Mr. Peter L. Pike]

Those are true words and, even tonight, the Government should think again and drop this nonsensical proposal of privatising an industry that is so vital to all.

I have said on previous occasions that I would be prepared to support the concept of the National Rivers Authority with a publicly owned water industry. If the National Rivers Authority is given adequate powers and staffing, and is organised on a regional basis to carry out its duties properly, it can play a vital role. I have no objections to the establishment of that body, but I am doubtful that the Government will give it those powers. The Association of District Councils, which is always Tory dominated, also expressed reservations that the National Rivers Authority will have those powers and the teeth to do its job because that may not be in the Government's interests.

North West Water has the biggest landholding of all —more than 150,000 acres, of which over 53 per cent., 79,519 acres, is in national parks. That land is crucial. Many of us are worried about the possible destruction of our heritage by disposals of land. We all know that it is difficult to value that land. As a water catchment area, it has very little commercial value, but if a small section of land is disposed of and given planning permission, its value could change overnight.

The Minister says that land will not be allowed to be sold, but the Bill says that land that is considered to be surplus to requirements can be disposed of. It has also been said that land in a national park would not receive planning permission for development. People who say that have more confidence than I have. I am fairly certain that it will be the financial interests of the water industry to find ways, with their Conservative friends in certain positions, to dispose of some of its land to make money out of it and, at the same time, destroy some of our heritage. These are extremely important matters.

Clause 79 allows the Secretary of State to write off the authorities' debts. The Government are remaining very quiet about their intentions. When I met the chairman of the water authorities who came to the Labour party conference at Blackpool to lobby Members of Parliament —I am sure that they did the same at the Conservative party conference—they told me that they were expecting the Government to wipe off as much as possible of their debts because they would have a new debt, the shareholders' capital within the industry.

They said that they believed that it was right that if the Government received the money for the shareholdings the debts should be wiped off as well. That is a stupid argument. At present, the Government own the assets of the industry and also the debts. When the debts are repaid by those water authorities, the Government will receive the money. We shall be giving something away just to allow people to make money. I am worried that, in the end, privatisation is about making money and that the quality of water and the problems associated with that will become secondary.

Many voluntary organisations, such as the National Trust, the Ramblers Association, and other conservation bodies, have considerable reservations about the Bill. They are worried about access to the countryside and about the possibility of charges. Even if access is maintained, there is a duty on the water authority to earn an income from it if possible. My hon. Friends and I believe that access to the countryside should be available to all people and should be available free of charge wherever possible.

If we do not defeat the Bill tomorrow, we shall have to debate many matters at great length. I doubt whether the Government will recognise the folly of their ways, so the Bill will have to be amended if we are to safeguard some of those important matters.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Sir Paul Dean): Order. I remind the House that the 10-minute limit on speeches is now in operation and I appeal for the co-operation of hon. Members who are called during this period.

7 pm

Sir Anthony Grant (Cambridgeshire, South-West): During the past year, I have had several meetings with chairmen of water authorities and I assure the hon. Member for Burnley (Mr. Pike) that, far from being docile slaves of the Department of the Environment, they are extremely lively people. I understand that some of the discussions that they have had with Ministers could be described as extremely stimulating. But, like men of sense, they agree with me that there is a powerful case for the Bill.

My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State made the case devastatingly in his opening speech. The point that I stress most powerfully is investment. After the lamentable failure of investment by the Labour Government, there is now an opportunity to free the industry from all restraints to enable it to compete for investment throughout the market and thereby to increase its efficiency, instead of standing in a dreary queue before the Treasury behind all sorts of other bodies. In addition, we must increase standards of water purity and reduce pollution. The creation of the National Rivers Authority is immensely important in that regard.

The area that I know best is covered by the Anglian water authority. It is not the north-west authority, but Anglian authority which has the largest land area of the 10 water authorities. It is the fourth largest in the number of customers and in turnover. It has the fastest population growth of any authority, with about 500 new houses every week being connected to the water supply and 600 new houses a week linked to the sewerage system. It used to have the greatest problem with coastal defences, but happily that will become the responsibility of the NRA.

There is great anxiety in the area of the Anglian water authority concerning nitrates in soil, but the fears have been vastly exaggerated. They are as ludicrous as some of the fears about eggs. On Monday, the hon. Member for Greenwich (Mrs. Barnes) said that the chances of getting salmonella were the same as being hit by a meteorite. The chances of contracting stomach cancer from nitrates in the soil in East Anglia is about the same as my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State for Health being struck dumb.

In my area, water has been supplied excellently for many years by the private Cambridge water company. I tried to intervene in the speech of the hon. Member for Copeland (Dr. Cunningham). Eventually, my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State managed to ask him whether, in the remote event of a Labour Government being elected, they would renationalise the private water companies. The hon. Gentleman dismissed it by saying, "Probably there will be none." The hon. Gentleman would

not give way to me. When the Opposition spokesman replies to the debate I hope that he will tell us point blank what would happen to the private water companies in the event of a Labour Government taking office. Perhaps the hon. Lady would like to tell me now. If so, I gladly give way.

Ms. Joan Walley (Stoke on Trent, North): I am grateful for the opportunity to answer. The hon. Gentleman said clearly that there will be a Labour Government. Our commitment is clear. Because of this Bill, a Labour Government would ensure proper public control over water, which is God-given.

Sir Anthony Grant: I assume, therefore, that the hitherto free private water companies will be taken over. We shall take that message back with us.

The Anglian water authority approaches privatisation with enthusiasm, but it says that the regulatory regime is heavy and complex. It is heavier than that for any previous privatisation, but it says that it will make it work. The regime will certainly deliver the improvements in quality and environmental standards that my right hon. Friend has promised, and any fears to the contrary are entirely fallacious. But costs will be high and can be met only by increased charges. That would have happened irrespective of privatisation. Customers must recognise that higher standards mean higher charges.

I beg the Government to ensure that the price control mechanism allows those increased costs to be recovered. Absolute clarity on cost time scales and recovery through charges is imperative if the companies are to be floated successfully. Much of the debate has centred on the environment, but we should remember that this exercise is primarily about establishing efficient and profitable public limited companies—[HON. MEMBERS: "Ah!"] That is what it is all about.

Is it rather naive to assume that there is tremendous scope for offsetting the extra costs by savings made in operational costs. Anglian Water will continue to increase productivity, but since 1980 it has reduced its manpower by 22 per cent. against an increasing work load. All those factors must be taken into consideration.

I am very much in sympathy with what my hon. Friend the Member for Devizes (Sir C. Morrison) said about the National Rivers Authority. It would be a great pity if the NRA became the poor relation of this exercise. In Anglia we believe that a highly professional, properly resourced NRA will be an essential part of the package embodied in the Bill, and I hope that Parliament will be careful to ensure that the Bill achieves those aims.

Another reason why I strongly support the Bill is that it is a step along the path towards a wider share-owning democracy. I was a founder member of the wider share ownership movement longer ago that I care to remember —even before it became fashionable in the Conservative party. I have welcomed all the steps that have been taken, of which this is another example. I rejoice that there are now 9 million private shareholders. I hope the Government will ensure that privatisation of water will involve the largest possible circle of investors, so that many people can participate in a vital industry. It is important that the water industry is owned by those who are interested in and wish to be associated with it, rather than by a faceless bureaucracy. I feel sure that that will be the case.

I wish the Bill well. It is a formidable document. I weighed it at the post office and it came to about 600 or 800 grams—the post office no longer deals in avoirdupois. It is certainly one of the biggest Bills I have seen, running to 180 clauses. My hon. Friend the Member for Devizes (Mr. Morrison) made the important point that proper arrangements should be made to debate the Bill in Committee, if necessary with a guillotine, at an early stage. The Bill will improve and spread share ownership throughout the land, raise water quality, and increase efficiency. It deserves a resounding Second Reading.

7.10 pm

Mr. Gareth Wardell (Gower): In the Welsh language there is the phrase "asgwrn cefn", meaning determination, steadfastness, spine and a willingness to do that which is right. For a Government who supposedly pride themselves on their "asgwrn cefn", pulling the plug on the water industry must be one of the most hypocritical acts they have contemplated.

First and foremost, the sell-off of water is a sell-off of Government responsibility. The Government are shedding responsibility for their policy of imposing such unrealistic financial targets and external financial limits since 1981 that water authorities have been unable to keep up with required levels of maintenance and investment needed to repair and improve basic water functions. Our network of sewage works is old, overloaded and often badly operated. In 1986, 22 per cent. of them poured into our rivers effluent dirtier than regulations allow. Reported river pollution incidents rose from 12,500 in 1981 to 23,253 last year. One sixth of all sewage is poured untreated into the sea and 69 per cent. of outfall pipes are at or near the low water mark.

The Select Committee on Welsh Affairs, of which I am proud still to be Chairman, conducted an inquiry into coastal pollution. During our investigation, we saw one polluted beach after another. In the United Kingdom as a whole, only 70 per cent. of beaches meet EEC minimum pollution standards, and according to the European Environmental Bureau, only one in eight of Britain's beaches meet the EEC's full pollution standards over the complete range of 20 tests. I make the point that its definition of a beach is not that used by the Department of the Environment for many years to circumvent the EEC's bathing waters directive. According to the Department's definition, not one Welsh beach has a sufficient number of bathers using it to qualify for the tests.

By imposing artificially low ceilings on water authorities' capital investment and borrowings, the Government have created a backlog of remedial works that will cost enormous amounts of money to clear. The Bill, financially and morally, sells off that responsibility. The Government see the spending forced on us by EEC directives—it is estimated that it will cost about £6 billion to meet EEC standards for drinking water affected, for example, by nitrates, aluminium, lead and chlorine.

Over the past two months, Mr. Nick Carter, editor of the *South Wales Evening Post*, has spearheaded a battle to have Swansea bay cleaned of gross pollution so that it may again safely be used for swimming, surfing, fishing and water sports. That campaign has exposed thoroughly and in depth the cause and effect of pollution and the remedies. The campaign has the support of 36,000 residents who have signed the *South Wales Evening Post* petition, which is not lightly to be dismissed.

[Mr. Gareth Wardell]

In response, Welsh Water points out that, for the past five years, it has spent £1 million annually on the bay, which was all it could afford while tackling higher priority pollution at locations such as Tenby and Porthcawl and improved water supplies for drought protection. The chairman says that Welsh Water has been informed that it must bring forward £28 million of planned investment to improve the bay by between one and six years, to 1995. The investment needed to clean up just that one small part of Britain's coastline is £90 million. The scale of pollution there, although totally unacceptable, is not as gross as in areas such as Askham, Cleethorpes or Blackpool.

While the Department of the Environment has decided to spend £93,000 on much-needed research into the link between infectious diseases and the dangers of bathing in grossly polluted sea water, one is still tempted to say that the evidence is not there. The answer can always be given that no one has undertaken the necesssry research. Meanwhile, the results of a university of Sussex survey undertaken this summer offer good advice. That survey found that bathers who keep their heads above the water while swimming are far less likely to contract various diseases than those who swim with their heads below the waves. I feel sure that the Department of the Environment will confirm that that is good advice.

Since the Government imposed external financial limits in 1981, water charges have risen from £165 million in 1981-82 to £620 million in 1987-88. Yet, with all those works in the pipeline and growing increasingly urgent, the Government claim that water charges will not increase. That must be double-speak. The Secretary of State really means that it will be water plcs which increase costs and not the Government, because the Government will have sold off their responsibility. Privatisation itself will increase charges. Accountants Arthur Collins and Company put the bill for privatisation at about £850 million per year. Water companies will need about £350 million for corporation tax, £400 million annually for shareholders, and another £100 million for higher management salaries, directors' fees, share registration, services to shareholders, and the National Rivers Authority. That will mean a 20 per cent. increase in charges just because of privatisation.

The Water Authorities Association does not dispute that estimate. Several estimates, including those made by the chairman of the association, and of Welsh Water, conclude that water charges will increase by another 50 per cent. to meet the costs of improved water quality—and that was before the Government announced their new timetable for improvement works and £3 billion of increased debts for the water plcs to take on board.

The Government say that they are environmentally aware and point to the National Rivers Authority as proof of a new, responsible approach to environmental issues. It is ironic that the Government can establish such a body only when someone else will pay for it. Polluters will, rightly so, pay—and the water plcs will pay the rest: directly as their share and indirectly, through corporation tax, as the Government's share. The NRA will cost the Government nothing, so their talk of concern for the environment is cheap.

The Government's talk of being concerned about many thousands of private home owners who unwittingly bought new homes having unadopted or unadoptable sewers is also cheap. The Minister of State, Welsh Office assured me that the Government were concerned that, because of the difference in standards between current building regulations and the conditions of sewers belonging to water authorities, and the inadequate powers of local authorities to insist on section 18 agreements from developers, many householders face potentially huge bills for repairing sewers that water authorities will not adopt. There are more than 2,500 such households in one local authority area in my constituency alone.

Before privatisation, the Government have talked about introducing new measures to prevent further problems. The Bill makes no such provisions and is a missed opportunity.

The Government will make a major error of judgment if they go ahead with the Bill, which is ridiculous, unnecessary and expensive. As they are wrapping themselves in their new green cloak, the Government should shoulder their responsibility for restoring our water industry—once the envy of the world—to its premier position as a public utility.

7.20 pm

Mr. Martin M. Brandon-Bravo (Nottingham, South): Of all the privatisation measures, in the public's perception water privatisation is the most difficult to understand and accept. However, its concept is just as right, and it is as much in the long-term public interest as the denationalisations that have gone before and are still to come. British Telecom, steel, gas and so on are easily perceived as commercial enterprises that can be best run and managed in the private sector with parliamentary scrutiny exercised at arm's length, just as we do with the rest of the commercial and industrial life of this country.

There seems to be some mysticism about water. It is looked on as life itself, which makes it seem to many a sacred trust in the hands of the public sector. I cannot see it that way. Also, it cannot be said that that sacred trust —if it be that—has been so well looked after these past years that another look and approach might not better serve the public interest.

Before the last general election, before the Secretary of State had a chance to study the feedback on consultation, we did not have a Bill remotely as good or sound as that before the House now. I welcome the fact that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State has realised the seriousness of the concerns expressed. I fear that much of the present worry is based on hangover impressions of the supposed Bill of the previous Parliament and has not taken into account the fundamental changes that have been made in the Bill now before us.

Rightly, in recent years, the public have not only realised the need to address green and environmental issues but, happily, have also recognised that such issues have a cost. They may not like paying, but at least the recognition is there.

The fundamental change in this revised Bill, which answers most, if not all, of those earlier fears and concerns, is the creation of the National Rivers Authority. Those who expressed fears sought public and parliamentary control over water resources, river management, pollution, flood and sea defences, water-based recreation, amenity and conservation. The Bill achieves that aim through the National Rivers Authority. The commercial

and industrial aspects of the current scene—water treatment, distribution and supply, and similar functions for sewerage, with some recreation and conservation—are being put into the company framework.

I am sure that when the public recognise that we are privatising only that which is rightly commercial, and leaving the public sector that which is rightly left there, the Bill will have at least the same measure of support as the other, more obvious privatisation measures that have come before the House.

Even though we have made the division of function and responsibility, there still remains for me the worry over what landholdings will transfer to the water plcs and what longer-term protection will be in place to ensure that there are no large-scale financial windfalls for the new companies that belong rightly to the public. The new companies will be valued as going commercial concerns with calculations based on return on capital with values for landand buildings at current user values.

If a company finds that it has a few bits of land or a few buildings that it does not want and makes a few bob by selling them off, I have no objection. However, if those holdings are large, were previously in public ownership and were sold at current user value, there is real public concern about the preservation of the land for its original purpose. I would not want to leave it to the whim of a future planning application to protect those landholdings and, in so doing, give the new plcs a reserve pot of gold on which to draw. Surely that is not our purpose and I hope that my hon. Friend the Minister will be able to give a clear steer on that aspect of genuine disquiet.

There are other points of public concern that we should address. However, I should like to draw the House's attention to some of the more outrageous criticisms in a recent television programme called "Open Space". It might have been fairer had the programme indicated fully that it had been produced by the anti-privatisation lobby. We would then have had the right to claim equal time on which to show the other side of the coin.

We were treated to graphic examples of what was wrong with the current water authorities. We were told how financial starvation by successive Governments—none worse than the Labour Administration—caused collapsing mains and sewers. We were told that local authorities were allowing dreadful abuses of discharge licences without prosecuting, as they are entitled to do under the present law. We were told about unclean beaches and of rivers being downgraded from category 1 to category 4. The programme was supposed to be a justification for leaving the water industry in the public sector. If that is what happens when it is left to the whim of Government or a particular Chancellor, what is the objection to letting private capital have a go?

An ex-senior executive of one of the water authorities complained that there would have to be a massive input of investment if we were to meet the aspirations of the public and EC directives. He said that, as a consequence of privatisation,

"the wretched consumer will have to pay".

I have to ask: who else? It is dishonest to argue for better standards and the enforcement of those standards and then expect the cost to be borne by others. What we consume, we must pay for and the improvements that we as parliamentarians call for in legislation must also be paid for.

The companies meeting the new criteria must have the right to include the cost of those imposed improvements in their charges. It follows that the new companies must have the ability under proper and tight watchdog control imposed by the Bill, to finance the measures to put right what is clearly wrong now and to charge for what we decide the public want in the way of improvements in the future. That cannot be done without a commercial margin of profit. The arguments against profit simply ignore the realities. That is what Greenpeace sought to do in that television programme. Greenpeace has a good case on the quality of life and it should not undermine it with such nonsense as sneering at profit as if it is a great evil.

Also, it is no good for Labour Members to claim that the costs should be borne through taxation. When taxation was at an all-time high with the standard rate of income tax at 37p in the pound, investment in the water industry was being cut and cut.

In his opening remarks my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State gave four reasons for privatisation. He spoke about the 25 per cent. of our water that already comes from private sector statutory undertakings. He spoke of less centralisation and the independence of the new bodies. He spoke also about innovation, efficiency and access to capital.

I shall add a fifth point. In recent years, we have recognised that our state pension has no investment base. An additional or second pension must have a sound raft of gilt-edged or semi gilt-edged stock in its portfolio. My hon. Friend the Member for Cambridgeshire, South-West (Sir A. Grant) spoke of wider share ownership. I entirely support his remarks. But our major privatisations, particularly this one, will provide the blue chip investment base that should be and most certainly will be in all pension fund portfolios, giving future generations confidence in those pensions as the percentage of population of pensionable age increases over the coming years. For those reasons, it is a proper and right decision. Happily, I believe that the Government have got their priorities right.

7.30 pm

Mr. Nigel Spearing (Newham, South): For several reasons, I am pleased to follow the hon. Member for Nottingham, South (Mr. Brandon-Bravo). I agree with half of what he said and fundamentally disagree with the other half. I hope that that remark provides the basis for a good debate. The hon. Gentleman was right to be worried about the disposal of land. In London, near the Thames and on the River Lea, large areas of land are owned by the Metropolitan water board, and the Thames water authority or Thames plc might sell that land. That action must be resisted.

The hon. Gentleman was right, too, about the National Rivers Authority. We needed it for some time. The Secretary of State's argument that it justifies the Bill is nonsense. We should have it, and we should have had it even with the present structure. There is no reason why the proposed national regulatory authority, which we should have had under a central water council or authority, should not regulate existing regional authorities. If it were to do so, many of the Secretary of State's green objectives would be secured without privatisation.

We are discussing the privatisation of only part of what was public. As the hon. Member for Cambridgeshire,

[Mr. Nigel Spearing]

South-West (Sir A. Grant) pointed out, the supply side has partly been in the private sector for some time, and it has been considerably constrained. But the disposal side has never been in the private sector. The worthy Victorians who built the system in London would not have dreamt that it ever should be. Victorian virtues said, "No public ownership of water disposal and purification." That has been the case right from the beginning. The service has been municipally owned—publicly owned—as it should be. Water disposal services and, in some respects, sewerage services are absolutely fundamental for public health, and they determine the purity of our rivers and coasts, or their non-purity as the case may be.

Conservative Members have not understood what the privatisation of sewerage means. There are drains and sewers under every road in their constituencies. If they, including the hon. Member for Nottingham, South, vote for the Bill, they will put into potential private ownership every sewer and drain in their constituencies. I do not know whether they have thought of that. I have not seen it reported in the papers, and it has not been mentioned by Conservative Members, but that is what the Bill will permit.

Mr. Leigh: So what?

Mr. Spearing: "So what?" the hon. Gentleman asks. I shall explain.

Until 1974, every drain and sewer in the land was managed by local councils and they were integrated with the management of highways and public health. Public health and sewerage go hand in hand. At the moment, many sewers are still run by elected local bodies, to which ratepayers and electors turn, but on agency terms from regional water authorities. They are owned by RWAs, but they are run under contract by district councils. Will that be the case in future?

I asked the Secretary of State a question earlier today, and he said that he would answer the question shortly. He should do so tonight. Unless there are exclusive powers of contract, the responsibility of running sewers under our towns, cities and villages will be dispersed to private ownership. Conservative Members ask, "So what?" Sewerage is intimately concerned with public health. There might be 3,000 sewerage blockages a year in an outer London borough. Some sewerage system maps are complex and difficult. We must always bear those points in mind when considering disposal.

I now refer to the structure that we shall have if the Bill is passed without singular amendment. I am glad that the Secretary of State is present, as I shall give way if he wishes to correct anything that I get wrong. We are to have a three-decker structure. The supply side will be partly the responsibility of statutory water companies and partly that of other water enterprises, broken up or wholly run by what was the RWA. If a body wishes, disposal contracts can be split. It is up to RWA plcs, which will initially be Crown-owned, to dispose of them as they so wish, and if they can.

Above all—Mr. Roy Watts of Thames Water has been clear about this—there will be a regional water authority holding company, which will be the holding company for various subsidiary enterprises. Holding companies—the Secretary of State hinted at this in his opening speech—will not be confined to water services. They can go abroad and they can float all sorts of enterprises because they will have the capital to do so. If there is any restriction on that, I invite the Minister, even within my 10 minutes, to tell me that I am wrong.

If I am right RWA holding companies will become part of the national and international machine of the movement of capital moneys. They will be quoted on Tokyo, Frankfurt and New York stock exchanges. Their shares will be traded—*[Interruption.]* So the sewers in every Conservative Member's constituency can be owned by gentlemen in Chicago, Tokyo, or anywhere else in the world. Is that what Conservative Members are saying? The Secretary of State may be quite content for the sewerage structure of Cirencester, Tewkesbury or Lewisham to be traded on international stock exchanges and to be subject to takeover bids. He may be content to have dawn raids, for management to be booted out by some takeover body which sits, perhaps, in a South American capital city. Is that what Conservative Members are saying? Apparently, they are saying that. If that is what they are saying, the British public will not put up with it.

I doubt whether, at the moment, the British public understand what Conservative Members are about. If they wish to intervene, I shall give way. They do not understand that that is what the Bill means, or could mean. Although bodies such as Thames Water in the south-east might be sold off to people abroad, bodies in the north-west, where things are different, might not be. That is a possibility, but it is in the hands of the Secretary of State and the chairman of RWA plcs to sell off bit by bit.

How can profits be made? They can be made only by charges. Charges for sewerage, as distinct from water supply, will be linked to meters. It is possible that our water disposal services will be run by a patchwork of private companies whose control can be changed overnight and whose shares are quoted in Tokyo, Berlin, or Moscow. If Conservative Members will permit a flight of fancy, why not Kremlin Overseas Investments plc? That may not be too far away.

Mr. Leigh: It is a good idea.

Mr. Spearing: The hon. Gentleman says that it is a good idea. At least the possibility exists. The potential for damage to public health services—that is what our sewerage system is—is enormous, and beyond what the British public have understood so far.

This Bill is not about providing fresh, pure water. It is about providing worldwide capitalist interests with yet another card that they can play on the international Monopoly board. They will be playing not only for waterworks, but for our sewers and drains which were built by our Victorian forefathers as Victorian virtues. Even they believed in public ownership, and so should we.

7.39 pm

Mr. Alastair Goodlad (Eddisbury): I welcome the Bill as one of the most important advances in environmental legislation that has yet happened. The framework for quality standards and the provisions for reforming the industry will enable those who work in it to make enormous advances in building on what has been achieved hitherto. It can only be in the interests of consumers to end the present need for water authorities to compete with other public services for limited resources and to finance

the enormous investment needed with uninhibited access to capital markets backed by improved private sector efficiency.

The statutory water companies supply about a quarter of consumers and I should like to deal with the effects of the Bill on those consumers, the people who work in the industry and the shareholders. By and large, these provisions should be beneficial to the companies. They will be subjected to the same forms of regulation as the privatised authorities. Their financial restrictions are to be removed in so far as that is necessary to give shareholders the same protection as they have in a Companies Act company, and they are to be given the opportunity to convert to a public limited companies. These changes are of fundamental importance to the statutory water companies. Because of their system of regulation the interested shareholders hitherto have been limited and the companies have always thought of themselves as being customer-oriented. With the removal of dividend limitation there will be a considerable culture change. The customer will remain all important, but the shareholder will become of increasing significance.

I am most concerned that in making these historic changes the existing and future employees, shareholders, and consumers have their interests protected by the creation of a regime which allows competition with the authorities on fair and level terms. We are legislating for a unique industry in which a monopoly exists with 25 per cent. of that industry already in private hands. It would be most unfortunate if we were to disadvantage those already in the private sector by our proposals to bring the authorities into the private sector too. We must ensure that in creating the new structure and framework we do not create a situation where the authorities compete unfairly with the companies. We should do so during the passage of the legislation as there is to be no right of appeal against the licences.

With regard to existing debts, the Bill contains a provision which would enable the Secretary of State to write off or restructure authority debt so as to enable authorities to be floated on the market. Statutory companies, on the other hand, will have to continue to bear their current debt and its consequences. I hope that my right hon. Friend will bear in mind the importance of balancing the interests of the companies with those of the authorities.

It is likely that if large amounts of authority debt were written off the companies would be placed in a much less favourable position for capital raising than the authorities. It is all very well to argue that on conversion to plc status the authorities will have their capital structures and debt equity ratios in their own hands. There will be a period before which they will have convetred to plc status and there may be great difficulties in achieving that status.

I hope that my right hon. Friend will be careful to ensure that there is a level playing field at all times. The same argument applies to the terms of flotation of the authorities. It is in the Government's interests that the terms on which the shares are offered fully reflect the prospects of the undertakings, but in setting the flotation terms I hope that my right hon. Friend will ensure that the authorities are not in any way disadvantaged as against the companies.

That brings me to the question of protection from takeover bids following the flotation. In some privatisations, there have been protections from takeovers. It is undesirable that the authorities should be given protection from takeovers. What is certainly true is that it is not possible to give statutory water companies protection from takeover and that to give it to the authorities would obviously put the statutory water companies at a disadvantage in seeking to defend themselves against acquisition by water authorities. If my right hon. Friend seeks to give authorities some protection against takeover, a restriction should be placed on the ability of the water authorities to acquire statutory water companies. It is inherently undesirable to fetter the market, and I should prefer to see no restrictions whatever.

Hitherto, the authorities and companies have operated under different financial regimes, both agreed by Parliament. That has led to the authorities having high levels of self-financing and high charges while the companies have had low levels of self-financing and low charges. The system of price increase control proposed in the Bill means that unless some way can be found of enabling the companies to increase their prices to a base comparable with that of the water authorities, they will be in a much worse position to earn a return on their assets in the new environment. That would be most unfair.

To increase prices for the purpose of achieving comparability with the authorities would be contrary to the law under which statutory water companies operate at present. It follows that a mechanism must be found through the proposed price increase formula which is currently being negotiated. There will have to be a substantial increase in the level of charges levied by the companies which is attributable to the change in form of the regulation and profit control currently operative to the price control envisaged in the Bill for the new plc environment.

With regard to the timing of the flotation of the authorities and the possible conversion of the companies to plc status, it would be wholly unacceptable if, for whatever reason, there was a period after the authorities were floated but before the statutory water companies were brought into full regulation and could achieve plc status. An even playing field in capital raising could not exist in such circumstances. There would also be serious implications for takeover activity in such a period. Yet under the Bill a small minority of a class of stock in a statutory company could hold up the conversion to plc status for a significant period, if not frustrate it altogether.

It is likely that the time between Royal Assent to the Bill and the flotation of the authorities will be short. There could be serious consequences if the procedures for converting the statutory companies to plc status took longer. We must consider carefully whether small minorities of classes of stockholders in statutory companies should be able to frustrate the intentions of the legislation and deny the vast majority of stockholders their rights. We should examine whether the Bill can be improved so that such stockholders are entitled to receive financial compensation only if they can be shown in some way to have been unfairly treated.

At present, water company employees enjoy a pension scheme which was set up under the provisions of the Water Act 1973. It is proposed that, as a consequence of privatisation, that statutory basis should be removed. It seems strange that current statutory water company employees should have their pension rights so fundamentally affected by a measure which is essentially intended to bring the authorities into the private sector. If employees

[Mr. Alastair Goodlad]

of the electricity supply industry are to continue to have a statute-based pension scheme, it is strange that there should be a difference between the treatment of employees in the two industries. I hope that my right hon. Friend will reconsider that.

Many of these matters can be addressed in Committee, but the House should bear them in mind, particularly as the licences will not be subject to appeal. The new plc regime will enable the industry to broaden its activities.

Finally, I should like to mention two ancillary aspects. The first, which is of great interest to many in the industry, is Water Aid. Water Aid began in 1981 as a response to the current Water Decade but intends to carry on after the decade. Currently a million people throughout the world are getting improved water and sanitation from projects supported by Water Aid, some complete and some still under way.

The necessity of massively improving the availability of clean water needs no repetition. Suffice it to remind the House that whereas in this country 1·2 per cent. of children die before the age of five, the figures in other countries are horrifying. In Sierra Leone, the figure is 30 per cent., in Gambia 29 per cent., in Ethiopia 25 per cent. and in India 15 per cent. The contribution of Water Aid in applying the funds raised from appeals to consumers, community groups and lotteries among water industry staff, together with overseas development agency and European funds, has been significant and something in which the industry can take pride.

The contribution is being made in rainwater harvesting, tube wells, bore-hole pump refurbishing, sewerage systems and the like, and it means the difference between life and death for many people. Many of the organisations which have created Water Aid, whose income now approaches £2 million a year, will disappear with this legislation. Hitherto, water authorities have been unable to support water aid through their funds. Under these privatisation proposals there will be enhanced opportunities for the work of Water Aid to expand. It is a cause which means a great deal to many who work in the industry.

Secondly, and finally, it would be open to the industry to set up a jointly owned consultancy organisation, perhaps on the lines of British Electricity International —an enormous commercial and technical success—to bring British expertise in water and sewerage management to a wider and needier world. That could be achieved on an entirely commercial basis with the assistance, where necessary, of the World bank, and European and ODA development funds. I hope that the industry will give this suggestion some consideration.

I wish the Bill every success.

7.49 pm

Mr. David Hinchliffe (Wakefield): The Bill is the most evil measure so far brought before the House by this profoundly evil Government. It strikes at the most basic and crucial of human needs—the need for water. We have been on this slippery slope for a number of years. The passing of the Water Act 1983 was significant in removing democratic involvement in local water provision and, instead, stuffing the water authorities full of Government stooges and enabling them to meet, as they do now, in secret, without the press being present. That is all part and parcel of the problems that have built up in the provision of water and the effects on our environment.

We have seen, too, the subsequent Government directives to water authorities, such as those lowering the levels of capital spending and borrowing for investment, which has major implications for the environment and pollution. The Government set artificially high profit targets in order to ripen the industry for privatisation and the way in which financial targets, but not targets for services and standards, have been imposed on water authorities certainly worries my constituents.

The results of those Government policies can clearly be seen. An example is the Yorkshire water authority, which I mentioned in a debate on river pollution about three weeks ago. Yorkshire Water is considered to be one of the most attractive investments for the individual entering into private ownership of water. In the past year, more than three quarters of Yorkshire Water's treatment works failed to meet EC standards, its sewerage works broke pollution inspectorate consents no fewer than 83 times, and it had 811 known breaches of consent. Alongside that must be put the fact that there has been a 40 per cent. increase in its profits, to £81·5 million. That is the contrast between what the Government are aiming for and what is really happening at local level, with the consequential effects on our environment.

Yorkshire Water's record clearly evidences what the Bill is all about. The Secretary of State's attempt to wrap up the Bill in environmental packaging is like the emperor's new clothes. We can see straight through them and we do not like what we see.

The idea of the National Rivers Authority was an afterthought, as the Government must concede. It was forced upon them because, with the 1986 White Paper, they were bringing in self-regulation. What absolute nonsense. It was forced on them by the EC, because it was frightened of what the extremists in the Government were proposing.

For the Government, the Bill is all about one thing, the big "P"—profit. I shall refer to one area that has scarcely been touched on so far, the small "p"—proverty, which does not feature on the Government's agenda.

I believe that the Bill is probably the most serious attack on the poor by the Government. Conservative Members are laughing, but the implications for low-income families are frightening. In Yorkshire, within the past three years, there has been a twentyfold increase in disconnections. Last year, 560 families had their water cut off. If Conservative Members find that amusing I feel very sad, because the families concerned did not.

That has not happened only in the north of England. For example, in Bath, in the area of Wessex Water, 35 families were cut off in one day in September including a family with five children—one of them an eight-week-old baby—and a pensioner with a 17-year medical history of depression. That is the reality of what is happening in the water industry, and the situation will clearly worsen under the ownership of private companies.

Gordon Jones, the chairman of the Yorkshire water authority, who also chairs the national body of water authorities, said:

"Water bills to double to an average of £200 per annum by 1993."

That is under private ownership. The fact is that the 7,000 cut-offs last year will be nothing compared to the number that will be cut off under private ownership, which worries me.

What will happen to the huge numbers of people on low incomes, who need more water than most, when we have metering, which we surely will shortly after the Bill is passed? What will happen to low-paid industrial workers who, as my father did, come home in their muck and need to use a lot of water at home after carrying out a dirty job? What about those who before April would have had an automatic benefit increase when water rates were increased? What about the 50,000 sick and disabled who receive extra money for laundry and bath costs because of their individual problems? What about the 73,000 one-parent families who previously received assistance? What about the 139,000 pensioners, and the others of the 400,000 people, who received help before it was stopped by the Government?

As I know from being involved in social services work for many years, it is bad enough to be without heating and lighting, as many families sadly are—living with calor gas and candles is no fun and to see children living in that environment is deeply worrying—but how will those people manage when they do not have water?

I am sorry that the Secretary of State and the Minister have left. I wonder whether the Secretary of State or the Minister have had young children or have cared for them. Are they aware that babies and young children occasionally soil themselves and need regular baths? Have they ever been concerned with looking after an incontinent disabled or elderly relative, who has needed regular bathing and whose clothes and bedding needed to be put in a washer several times a day? All those examples involve a large consumption of water. If Ministers had that experience they would not be proposing this legislation.

The Bill is the ultimate in Tory complacency and callousness. It is about people washing less often, cleaning themselves less often and flushing their toilets less often. *[Interruption.]* That is what metering will mean. Conservative Members laugh because they do not know the realities for many people. It is about people being deprived of their right to the most basic amenity—water. It is about profit and about pollution. It is about dirt, disease and above all, about Tory dogma—free market dogma—which was dead and buried a century ago.

7.58 pm

Mr. Roger Knapman (Stroud): The Opposition Front Bench spokesman, the non. Member for Copeland (Dr. Cunningham) and the hon. Member for Wakefield (Mr. Hinchliffe) have both said that the Bill is about Tory dogma. Fortunately we have also heard something about Labour dogma. Public control might have something to do with it, but we are not too sure any more about public ownership.

We have learned enough about Labour dogma, however, to know that the Labour party will be occupying the Opposition Benches for many years to come, especially since the hon. Member for Copeland has suggested that the statutory water companies are not in the private sector. That came as something of a surprise to the Minister and myself, but it will be even more of a surprise to the French water companies which have already invested several millions of pounds in those particular companies. The French are now unique, because they are the first people to want, voluntarily, to invest in a British public sector concern. I believe that Opposition Members are now pro-European Socialists. Therefore, I cannot understand why it is all right in France to have private water companies, but that our services must be administered by a nanny state.

As has been said, about 25 per cent. of the water industry is in private ownership. In my constituency, the water in one part is controlled by a water authority and in another by a water company. Housewives in Stroud high street may congregate and say, "Gosh, you are lucky, you get your water from the water authority, but I am obliged to have mine from the water company." I do not believe, however, that that is the case.

I congratulate my right hon. Friend on substantially adopting the 1973 structure of integrated river basis management. That was a great step forward compared with the hundreds of companies that then made up the water boards. I applaud the decision to carry out the privatisation of water on substantially the same geographical basis.

I have no objection to privatisation—I do not believe that we have enough of it.

Mr. Allan Roberts *rose*——

Mr. Knapman: No. I shall not give way, because we are restricted to 10 minutes.

I do not believe that we have enough privatisation. We have had a long string of successful privatisation issues, including, of course, the much-quoted Jaguar. If more privatisation had taken place earlier we would not just be talking about Jaguar Cars plc, but MG Cars plc also.

The objections to the Bill might be summarised by a reference to the briefing from the Council for the Protection of Rural England. That organisation is not run by a bashful crowd, because it says that it forced the Secretary of State to create the National Rivers Authority. I suspect that it was pushing at an already open door. Nevertheless, if the council wishes to put it like that, so be it; at least it says in its briefing:

"The creation of the National Rivers Authority is an important and greatly desired reform. The CPRE's long-held view is that the water authorities frequently fail to reconcile their role as water and sewerage undertaker with that of water regulator".

Quite so.

The first concern mentioned by the CPRE relates to the viability of local authority land assets:

"very substantial areas of unspoilt land in the countryside and towns are potentially vulnerable to new pressures".

It does not seem to recognise the Government's record of doubling the size of the green belt in the past few years. It also seems to be unaware that, in due course, a statutory code of practice will be introduced. The water authorities are already subject to the usual planning procedures and their operations in national parks are subject to the scrutiny of the national park committee. I believe that the CPRE's fears are unfounded. If we are not careful it will soon be believed that land must be publicly owned to ensure that it is "safe". That impression is already held by a few, but I do not accept it.

The CPRE's second concern relates to infrastructure provision and back-door development:

"Water PLCs may use their control of water and sewerage infrastructure to influence the location and pace of new development".

[Mr. Knapman]

The council must have a low opinion of local councils and councillors, who would resent any such interference. Water authorities can only advise the local authorities where the water and sewerage capacity already exists. That is the present system and it will be the system in the future.

The third concern of the CPRE is

"under-investment in sewerage facilities and pollution control."

Pollution, of course, is the responsibility of the National Rivers Authority. With regard to sewerage there is, at present, more than £5 billion of collective debt. There is a massive debt and no equity. It is hardly surprising that Opposition Members approve of that because that is what they specialise in. I have a letter from the chairman of Severn-Trent Water who points out:

"debt conversion is bound to be a significant factor . . . our capital structure, which at present is entirely composed of debt and no equity, already requires the payment of some £90 million per annum in interest".

The fourth concern of the CPRE is the lack of commitment and control of agricultural pollution. Unfortunately for the council, that fear was put in print just before the announcement from my right hon. Friend the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food that he would remedy the situation and change the system of grant.

Over-abstraction of water is another CPRE concern. We are having metering tests in certain areas and no doubt that will be the subject of a contentious debate in due course. It is precisely the investment from private sources that will help to replace pipes in some areas where substantial leaks already occur. That is the best solution to the problem of the over-abstraction of water.

The most substantial benefit for the industry must be the creation of strong regional companies with a strong regional identity. There is a common thread between the privatisation of the water supply industry, the electricity supply industry and, in due course, the privatisation of, I hope, British Rail, on a regional basis. As a result of the water privatisation, we shall have 10 companies spread around the country and the privatisation of electricity will create 12 new companies. I hope that when British Rail is privatised, four or five more companies are created. All those companies will help to cure one problem about which I constantly hear in my constituency—the feeling that too much wealth and too much influence has gone to the south-east and especially to London.

I believe that strong regional companies will help to redress that balance. I support the Bill and congratulate my right hon. Friend on the way in which he has put it across.

8.6 pm

Mr. Jimmy Wray (Glasgow, Provan): Nobody is fooled by the Bill, which is a national disgrace. The robbers of our national resources are sitting on the Conservative Benches. I would not like to be left in the desert with a pail of water and the Conservatives. We know exactly what would happen.

It is clear to me that no Government would sell for nothing a resource with assets worth £27 billion, 435,000 acres of prime land and an income in 1987-88 of £3 billion gross with a profit of £740 million. Those assets and income are the reason why the Government want to privatise the industry.

Who are the big buyers? The hon. Member for Stroud (Mr. Knapman) has already said that the French are investing, but what are they investing? Three French companies have already started to invest before the Bill becomes an Act. Générale has already bid £57 million for two of the regional water authorities. Of the 29 private companies in the statutory sector, it has invested in 10.

Lyonnaise has made a £67 million bid for Essex and East Anglian water companies plus £60 million for the Newcastle and Gateshead and Sunderland and South Shields water companies. SAUR has invested in a joint venture with Trafalgar House. That investment tells a story. If those companies were really interested on British consumers, why have they sold two of the four London companies that they bought not long ago to Générale at a handsome profit? They have agreed to offer another bid of £68 million for three more water companies.

The hon. Member for Cambridgeshire, South-West (Sir A. Grant) asked what a Labour Government would do. We shall nationalise the water industry and the gas industry. Anything that has been privatised by the Government will be returned to those to whom it belongs.

The Council for the Preservation of Rural England represents those people with the most experience of the land and it is worried about the Bill. It knows that the private developer will rape the unspoiled landscape of the Welsh valleys and sell out for profit. The National Rivers Authority will have less power than the [illegible] by the time the private companies have finished with it. They will use the back door methods and the way in which they will do that can be seen when one looks closely at the Bill. They will set up subsidiary companies to which to transfer the land and then sell them off.

The Central Council of Physical Recreation is also worried about the Bill. Clause 7 says that the Water Bill places a duty on every relevant body. Clause 7(6) defines "relevant body" as the National Rivers Authority, a water undertaker, a sewerage undertaker or an internal drainage board. It says nothing about subsidiary bodies. That is the loophole that the private companies will use.

The protection of public rights of access is further eroded in clause 7(5), which gives the National Rivers Authority and private water companies an overriding power to charge. That is what this is all about. People will have to pay to go to every park and golf course. All the luxuries of the beautiful rivers and parks will be for the rich—for those who can afford them for themselves and their children.

I hope that the Central Council of Physical Recreation will be consulted on the environmental and recreational code of practice. It is worried about the lack of consultation so far and it wants to discuss clause 9.

Another organisation, and one dear to my heart is the National Anti-fluoridation Campaign, which is worried about the standard of drinking water and who will be responsible for it. We now realise why the Government had a large majority when it decided to fluoridate the public water supply. It knew that in two or three years' time a few bucks would be made and that Fisons would be breathing down the necks of the private companies to pollute the water with fluoride. What answers can we give that society about fluorocylisic acid and its dangers and diseases such as skeletal fluorosis, dental fluorosis and

chronic fluorine poisoning? Who will be the underwriter? Who will indemnify the consumer? The Bill says nothing about that.

We recently read in the newspapers of the danger of cancer from London's drinking water and from polycylic aromatic hydrocarbon. Cleaning up would cost £1 billion and who will pay for that—the taxpayer? Nobody wants to privatise the non-profit-making side of water, so we shall end up with the bill.

The Consumers Association is worried that the Director General of Water Services has insufficient power. The association is worried about the consumer. The Government have proposed a staff of 80, which also includes the support staff for the customer service commmittee. That is not sufficient to enable the director general to investigate consumers' complaints.

We are worried about the monitoring of pollution in public water supplies. The director general will give that work to private enterprise and we do not trust private enterprise to do the job properly.

The Bill should end where is belongs—in the dustbin. It is a thieves' charter. It allows the nation's resources to be stolen.

8.16 pm

Mr. Keith Raffan (Delyn): It would not be surprising if, after the over-the-top speech to which we have just been treated by the hon. Member for Glasgow, Provan (Mr. Wray), Glasgow, Provan goes down the drain and joins Glasgow, Govan at the next general election.

Water, as one may have gathered from the debate, is a highly political and contentious issue in Wales. I am glad to see that colleagues from the Principality are present. In the Principality we sometimes describe it as a "burning" issue.

The work of the Select Committee on Welsh Affairs in the 1979-83 Parliament was dominated by a two-and-a-half-year inquiry into water in Wales. Water also played a significant part in the Committee's work during the last Parliament when we undertook an inquiry into coastal sewage pollution in Wales.

During that inquiry in December 1984, following a discussion on the Welsh water authority's capital programme, I asked the chairman:

"Perhaps you would rather be in the position of a private company so that you would then be able to borrow according to your needs?"

Mr. John Elfed Jones, the chairman of the Welsh water authority, replied:

"The proposition has immediate appeal."

The water industry has for far too long been prevented from raising capital to meet heavy capital expenditure programmes to improve the quality of water and sewage treatment. Privatisation will free the water authorities from the constraint of the Government's external financing limit, enabling them to borrow more money as required, so that they will be able to accelerate their capital programmes.

That is particularly important for the Welsh water authority. It has the longest coastline of any water authority in the country—1,300 km. It has 130 sea outfalls discharging into coastal waters—over 25 per cent. of the total in England and Wales. Of those 130, only 42 are deemed satisfactory. Only 6 per cent. of them are under 10 years old—these figures are well known to hon. Members from Wales—75 per cent. are over 20 years old and 40 per cent. are over 40 years old.

The virtue of the infrastructure that the water authorities are now providing is its longevity. There is an ongoing benefit of 50 to 100 years from the capital expenditure undertaken. Therefore, there is a strong argument that they should be able to borrow more. Privatisation will allow them to do so.

Government interference and constraints are not limited to finance. The water authorities are not allowed to engage in profitable business activity unless it is incidental to their main statutory responsibilities. As my right hon. Friend said when opening the debate—other hon. Friends have also mentioned it since—the French water companies have diversified and developed new lines of profit. They have diversified into communications, construction, waste disposal, supplying water internationally, industrial heating, leisure, health services and even funeral services. They have developed worldwide interests in North America, Africa and the far east.

Privatisation will give the water authorities commercial freedom and allow them to exploit commercially their skills, expertise and experience. In that regard, the Welsh water authority has nothing to fear. It is the only authority with a tidal waters unit, and one of only two with a virological laboratory. It has also developed several computer software packages.

Privatisation will lead to a new approach based on an imaginative enterprise culture, rather than a stagnant, stale public sector culture such as the present one. There is tremendous scope for international consultancy, especially in the United States, where the water industry is so fragmented. There is scope for international water contracts, and for more local services, particularly in leisure.

Water authorities must think more commercially about property and about freeing surplus assets. What is so wrong about that? Assets such as old sewage works on the edges of towns may allow houses to be built which might otherwise have to go up in greenbelt areas. Water authorities should also make their remaining assets work harder. Before 1974 the water authorities were responsible for monitoring pollution and the district councils' predecessors were largely responsible for sewage discharges. After reorganisation, the water authorities became responsible for both roles. That prompted the 10th report of the Royal Commission on environmental pollution, which was recently echoed by the Environment Select Committee, to say that water authorities were becoming poachers as well as gamekeepers.

When the committee of Welsh district councils gave evidence to the Select Committee on Welsh Affairs during the coastal sewage pollution inquiry, it called for an independent authority to assess the discharges that were taking place. That is precisely what the Government are providing by setting up the NRA to take over water authorities' regulatory functions.

One of the great fallacies of public ownership is the assumption that because an industry is nationalised it will automatically look after the public interest. Labour cuts in the middle of the last decade gave the lie to that. Capital spending in Wales in 1976-77 by the Welsh water authority was £32·9 million. The then Labour Government had to crawl, humiliated, to the IMF, and the hon. Member for Alyn and Deeside (Mr. Jones), who was a member of that

[Mr. Keith Raffan]

Government, tried pathetically to apologise for their bankruptcy in the Welsh Grand Committee and the House.

By 1987-88, the water authorities' spending had risen to £67·8 million. That is the difference between Labour "caring" and our action, which is action for the people to ensure that they have a clean water supply and that sewage is treated properly. As my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State said, we are making up for the neglect of the last Labour Government——

Mr. Elliot Morley (Glanford and Scunthorpe): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Raffan: I have no time.

There will be competition under privatisation—competition for investment funds and competition between water companies to prove which is best. Whatever it may be called—competition by comparison or yardstick competition—it is still competition. Privatisation will achieve an efficient balance between controls and incentives. All the Opposition scares are given the lie by the 29 privately owned statutory water companies, which are both efficient and safe.

The Opposition have indulged in scaremongering. Yet I was intrigued to read in the newsletter put out by Wrexham Water, one of the 29 companies, the following item:

"Praise from MPs . . . Three Clwyd MPs"—

all of them Labour and one of them a Front-Bench spokesman—

"praised Wrexham Water Company for the work it does in maintaining the quality and safety of its water supplies to customers."

If privately owned statutory water companies can be efficient and safe, why cannot the new plcs? If Labour Members are satisfied with the present private water companies, why can they not be satisfied by the highly regulated new water plcs?

Accelerated capital programmes, greater environmental protection under the NRA, and more commercially minded entrepreneurial water authorities are all sufficient reasons for Conservative—indeed, all sensible—Members strongly to support water privatisation. Nationalisation never served the consumer well, especially under the Labour party, which slashed expenditure on capital programmes for water infrastructure when in power. Privatisation will serve the customers of Britain and of Wales much better.

8.26 pm

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett (Denton and Reddish): I was interested to note that the hon. Member for Delyn (Mr. Raffan) did not answer the question of how far the Bill would help to allay the continuing resentment in parts of north Wales about the way in which certain communities were destroyed by drowning their valleys to provide water for the big English cities. The Bill will increase the resentment of many of those communities. Now their homelands will be used not only to provide water but to provide profits. I should have liked to hear how the hon. Member for Delyn would avoid fuelling that resentment.

I am a little disappointed, Madam Deputy Speaker, to see you in the Chair; I had hoped to see the Chairman of Ways and Means because I wanted to remind him that as a youngster he larked about around the Audenshaw reservoirs in my constituency. The reservoirs there were a monument to the municipal enterprise of Manchester, which developed them and went on to create reservoirs in Longendale at the turn of the century and, just before the second world war, the reservoirs in the Lake district. The other cities and towns around Manchester also developed a series of municipal water undertakings, all of them a monument to the public-spirited investment of local authorities of that time. They provided high quality pure water for the cities and towns.

Interestingly, those water supplies have lasted well as good investments, but they would not have offered the short-term return that private companies want. Their returns have come in over a long time. In most of those cities, the pure water supply is far better than the sewerage systems, many of which were provided by the local builders who put up the houses. They went for the cheapest systems that they could find and the systems are now in a sorry state because the builders did not share the enthusiasm for long-term investment as opposed to short-term profit.

I also note that the water undertakings in those big cities protected large parts of the Pennines and Lake district from being built over, and from factories and pollution. It is regrettable that the water authorities did not open up the land sooner to public access for recreation and enjoyment. I understand the problems: at one stage the water was collected and had to be kept as pure as possible because there were no treatment works. Now, in the north-west particularly, and in other parts of the country, the water undertakings protect large tracts of land. About 150,000 acres in the north-west are held by the North West water authority; half of those acres are in areas of outstanding natural beauty or national parks. A considerable number of recreational amenities in the north-west are provided by the water authority. There are many permissive footpaths, picnic areas, viewing points, and so on.

In the Peak district, about 15 per cent. of the national park is held by the water authority. Around Thirlmere about 10,000 acres of land are held by it and the same pattern applies in Wales around the reservoirs of Brenig, Elan valley and Lake Vyrnwy. The Countryside Commission—I remind the Minister that it is a Government body—is concerned, as are a large number of voluntary bodies, that areas which have been protected by water undertakings will no longer be protected.

Some hon. Members have spoken about whether we will suffer through intensive agricultural use of the land. I am not sure how much will be intensively cultivated, but I am sure that there will be increasing pressure to afforest much of the land and that much effort will be devoted to getting the trees to grow as quickly as possible. We have seen the indiscriminate use of fertiliser from the air in many afforested areas. If the profit motive enters into the management of the land, it may be spoiled for public enjoyment.

There will also be pressure to create money-making recreational areas. It is difficult in such areas to separate the recreational demands, but it is likely that the profit-making activities will be high on the list. There will also be pressures to reduce conservation and access. I am worried about clause 7 and I would like the Minister to give a clear undertaking that the Government do not

intend to reduce access to areas now owned by water authorities. Perhaps he will explain the meaning of the following words in clause 7(2)(a):

"to have regard to the desirability".

We should insist on something much stronger to preserve public rights of way and guarantee access to woodlands, mountains, moor, heath, down, cliff and foreshore. The Bill should not use the wavy word "desirability".

The Bill puts charges in the negative and says that there will be no requirement to provide items free of charge. When I intervened on the Minister he said that there was no intention to impose charges. He should put on the face of the Bill that there will be no charge for the things that are presently provided. As soon as the profit motive is introduced, there will be a temptation for companies to charge for all sorts of things, and without payment, access to the countryside may be reduced. If the fears expressed by ramblers and members of other organisations are totally unfounded, it would be simple for the Minister to say that an amendment will be made at the earliest possible moment to make it clear that there will be no charges and no restrictions on access. From the way that the Bill is worded, I fear that that will not be the case.

When I was a youngster, walkers and climbers resented the water authorities which kept people off their land. I should not like to see that conflict returning to the countryside around Greater Manchester in which I walk and climb. It will be a sad day if that happens. At one time when people saw notices saying "Keep out" and were told by the water bailiffs that they were not allowed to walk over certain areas, they took it out on the water authority. They did not stage grand demonstrations, but they showed their resentment of the water authority in what were perhaps silly and petty ways. When I was a kid I was often turned off rock climbing areas by water bailiffs, but as soon as the bailiff's back was turned we returned and made defiant gestures which certainly did not help the purity of the water supply.

That sort of resentment could easily return to such areas if the new water authorities start to restrict access. I know that they will not do that on a grand scale to start with, but there will be a little erosion here and there. We shall see the removal of the traditional right for people to walk over an area although such an area is not a public footpath. The Minister should get rid of those areas of doubt at the earliest opportunity. He should give an undertaking that there will be no powers in the Bill to allow the new companies to charge for access to their land and that people can continue to use such land for recreation. The Government should say that they will not allow those bodies to restrict access to areas that people have traditionally used and should make it clear that they want to see an expansion of access to water authority land for recreation.

In our crowded country we need to use every available bit of land for recreation. To have people making profits out of such land is totally wrong. I agree with my hon. Friend the Member for Newham, South (Mr. Spearing), who spoke about what might happen if water companies speculate in international markets. Who will be responsible for sewer rats? Are they to be bought and sold? That could be a major problem, because if people are making profits out of their management there will be a temptation to take short cuts and someone else will be left with the problems. We know that many problems are developing because of decaying sewerage systems. The Minister should make sure that the water companies do not take the profit and leave the local authorities and public health authorities to deal with the problems.

8.36 pm

Mr. Dudley Fishburn (Kensington): Perhaps it is because I am a new boy in the House that I often find that it is Opposition speeches which convince me most about the correctness of the policy pursued by the Government. That has never been truer than on this occasion, given the content of the speech by the hon. Member for Copeland (Dr. Cunningham) on the Opposition Front Bench. He made four points, all of which are splendidly wrong. The first was that because water is a public and universal commodity it should be publicly controlled and supplied. It is precisely because it is so universal a commodity that it should be privately and competitively controlled and supplied.

There is a case for a Government seeking to control something that is unique or rare, which comes into the country only at great cost and difficulty to the Government. However, there is no case for a Government to seek to control the supply of so natural a commodity as water. The Roman Senate once tried to control the monopoly supply of glass. The policy was not very effective, but at least it had more logic to it than the policy put forward by the Opposition to control the supply of water.

The second argument advanced by the Opposition is that water is unique in that it is important for the health and well-being of the community—and therefore also should be controlled by the Government. I agree that water is unique in so far as it is essential for the health and welfare of our people. It is for that very reason that its supply should not be under the control of a monopoly. One has only to have a slight sense of history to remember the appalling decision by this House a generation ago to seek control of the supply of salt, a vital commodity in India, and then to tax it. The great Mahatma Gandhi then led his famous march to the Indian ocean to privatise salt by scooping it up with his own hand away from Government control.

The third Opposition argument was that profit was somehow inherently wrong. How does the hon. Member for Copeland wish our water undertakings to be run? Are they to incur a loss or are they to break even? Does he not realise that a loss by a Government monopoly is a subsidy paid for by a tax on somebody else's profit? When the water undertakings are privatised and are public limited companies, we shall see them making profits, and the Government will reap the benefit in corporation tax. That will be more money to the Exchequer than even the most rapacious Opposition Members could wish for. Nearly £22 billion has been reaped into the coffers of the Exchequer from companies that have been privatised since 1979.

The hon. Member for Copeland argued that the water industry should remain a public monopoly. He conveyed the feeling that somehow the Government should control the water industry and that the man who sits on the Government Front Bench should be the controller and chief executive of one of Britain's great industries. We well remember Conservative and Labour Governments interfering with British Steel, repeatedly making political judgments, which did so much harm to the company in the 1960s and 1970s.

[Mr. Dudley Fishburn]

I have great respect for my hon. and learned Friend the Minister for Water and Planning. He is a distinguished barrister, a distinguished parliamentarian and, not least, a distinguished resident of my constituency. He does not have among his skills, nor would he say that he did, the ability to be chief executive of the country's water undertakings. The quicker he talks himself out of that job —I am delighted that he will be doing so over the coming months—the better it will be for us all.

Finally, we heard about the Opposition's discovery of open spaces and nature. The hon. Member for Copeland quoted, in a hackneyed way, Shakespeare and Wordsworth. It says something of the self-importance of politicians that they do not turn to Evelyn Waugh on such occasions. The great naturalist, Scoop, recalled how

"feather-footed through the plashy fen passes the questing vole."

Perhaps these days it should read "passes the quest for votes".

A bucolic charm has come into this water debate. But I come from an inner-city area, through which no sylvan waters flow. The Kensal canal inks its way along the border of my constituency as a demilitarised zone between the hon. Member for Brent, South (Mr. Boateng) and the Socialist republic of that borough. Yet we, who live in tower and mansion blocks, have as great an interest in clean and pure water being cheaply delivered to our community.

We are delighted with the increased efficiency of Thames Water as it moves to privatisation. As it does so, we shall have a company that we know about; that we can go along and kick; that as hon. Members we can lobby to ensure not least that those who cannot afford water do not have it cut off; and to make it part of our community. When Thames Water is floated on the stock market, one of the first things that I will do is to request that it supports another float—a float in my constituency's famous Notting Hill carnival.

8.42 pm

Mr. Clifford Forsythe (Antrim, South): At one time I might have had to declare an interest because I used to be a plumbing contractor. Perhaps the House will forgive me, therefore, if I speak in practical terms.

Having listened to Conservative Members, the logic of giving a public utility to private companies escapes me. It is a sad reflection on the Secretary of State and the Department of the Environment that they believe that by transferring public utilities to private companies they will be able to make a profit. Why could not the Government get the economics of the public utilities right, and therefore give money to the Exchequer? If the private companies make a profit, they will do so at a cost to some of their other operations.

As a former plumber, I wonder from where the competition will come. Water mains and service pipes are already in place underground. Will there be different coloured water to show that it is coming from different firms? Will the private companies build new reservoirs or fit new water mains? There will be no competition if there is only one set of water pipes.

It is at least heartening that a number of restrictions will be placed on the private companies. From a practical point of view, they will need to be tightly controlled. It is also heartening to know that on 1 January 1989 the model byelaws will be implemented by the Government.

Many new plumbing operations will be introduced. It has been suggested that there will be no more storage tanks and that the single-pipe system will be supplied off the mains. If a private company's water main bursts and is losing a lot of water, what will happen if it decides, to guard its profits, to turn off the water mains to prevent an even more serious leak, leaving householders without water? That possibility must be considered carefully and seriously.

Plumbing contractors in Northern Ireland formerly came under the control of the Belfast water commissioners. All plumbers working under its auspices had to be licensed. If a plumber did not have a licence he could not work on the water supply. It amazes me that that is not the case in the rest of Britain. There is no compulsory list of plumbers, so private companies supplying water will be entitled to employ anybody to fit plumbing. If there is no compulsory list of plumbers who can show that they know what they are doing, many of the problems of the past will become worse in the future.

Mr. Ashby: Is the hon. Gentleman aware that the Bill does not apply to Northern Ireland?

Mr. Forsythe: I am entitled, as an hon. Member, to speak. *[Interruption.]*

Mr. Ashby: I do not want to discuss the matter; I merely felt that the hon. Gentleman might be reassured by that knowledge.

Mr. Allan Roberts: On a point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. The Government have said that they intend to introduce these measures in Northern Ireland.

Madam Deputy Speaker (Miss Betty Boothroyd): The hon. Member for Antrim, South (Mr. Forsythe) is perfectly in order to speak on the Bill. He is an hon. Member of the House.

Mr. Forsythe: I am most disappointed, in this democratic House, that an hon. Member should question another hon. Member's right to speak.

I was saying that there must be a compulsory register of plumbers or those entitled to work on water undertakings. To put the matter in context, I ask the Minister to give the meaning of clause 180(5), which says:

"This section and the following provisions of this Act shall extend to the whole of the United Kingdom, namely—

(a) Schedules 2 and 5 and sections 3, 11 and 22 so far as relating to any scheme under either of those Schedules;

(b) Section 88; and

(c) any amendment or repeal by this Act of any provision contained in the Parliamentary Commissioner Act 1967, the House of Commons Disqualification Act 1975 or the Northern Ireland Assembly Disqualification Act 1975."

8.49 pm

Mr. Henry Bellingham (Norfolk, North-West): It is a pleasure to follow the hon. Member for Antrim, South (Mr. Forsythe), not least because my party is the Conservative and Unionist party. We should applaud the fact that the hon. Members for Antrim, East (Mr. Beggs)

and for Londonderry, East (Mr. Ross) are listening to and participating in the debate. I hope that they will join us in the Division Lobby tomorrow night to support the Bill.

The Bill has given rise to great interest in west Norfolk, not least because it is the land of Vermuiden. Much of my constituency is land that was reclaimed in the 17th century and drained. Much of it is below sea level, so coastal and sea defence aspects are important. My constituency is dominated by the River Ouse, which has many tributaries. It is part of a large river basin which will form the key to the new local companies.

Originally, there was some suspicion about the water privatisation proposals. My constituents were under the impression that crucial functions, such as coastal drainage, coastal defence and water pollution control, would be part of the functions of the plcs and were afraid that there would be a conflict of interests. That is why I welcome the Government's moves to separate the two functions, to set up the National Rivers Authority and to take out that part of the industry that can be profitable and sold to the public and to put the other into a new framework. I find that there is now broad support for the Bill and great support for the NRA.

It is interesting that most, if not all, of those groups and bodies that Opposition Members have cited as opposing the Bill have welcomed the creation of the NRA. This is a move in the right direction. Pollution control is far from perfect. My hon. Friend the Member for Hornsey and Wood Green (Sir H. Rossi) said that 20 per cent. of the sewage plants breach the discharge consents laid down by the Department of the Environment. That is a disgrace. The number of reported pollution incidents has increased from 12,000 in 1982 to 23,000. In 1986 there were only 250 prosecutions. The penalties are far too low.

We have heard about fishing. I understand that the eels caught in 31 rivers were so contaminated by pesticides that they could not be eaten by anyone. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State is a keen fisherman and is concerned about river pollution and angling. Some rivers are a disgrace. Obviously, the Control of Pollution Act 1974 is not working. If the NRA is to work, it must have sufficient funding and staff, and have deadlines to which to work.

I am slightly worried about sea defences. Under existing arrangements, borrowing powers can be assumed in a low rateable area. I hope that my hon. Friend the Minister will address himself to this point. What will happen under the new arrangements? We have heard much about the greenhouse effect. If the sea level increases by 2 ft or 3 ft, my constituency will disappear.

Mr. Paul Boateng (Brent, South): That is the best argument that the hon. Gentleman has made all night.

Mr. Bellingham: The hon. Gentleman is being unfair. Those psychedelic socks of his are putting me off.

Most of my constituency would disappear, as would a great deal of the Queen's estate at Sandringham. Water would lap up the front door at Sandringham. That would be a disaster. That is why we must get our sea and tidal defences right. I hope that my hon. Friend the Minister will address himself to those important points. The NRA can work. I hope that those powers vested in the Secretary of State under the Control of Pollution Act will be vested also in the NRA.

We have a long way to go, but separating these two functions is a crucial move in the right direction. I urge the Government to adopt a more radical stance and to consider the new structure carefully. Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution is to be restructured and put on a regional basis. There is a strong argument for a new, integrated, pollution control structure. This would mean creating a body along the lines of the United States Environmental Protection Agency. We could have a national EPA, but one with regional centres which would be advised by not only the NRA but by that part of HMIP that deals with air pollution and toxic waste.

The waste disposal authorities would be integrated into the regional centres. The WDAs have not served this country well. Many have refused to file reports to HMIP. Many are not properly funded, which may be partly the Government's fault. This is an opportunity to set up a more radical structure, whereby functions such as air pollution control and waste disposal are under one roof on a regional basis. I hope that my hon. Friend the Minister will comment on that suggestion.

Surely, with HMIP being restructured and the WDAs, which are part of local authorities, coming under increased pressure and criticism, the time has come to take these functions from local authorities and give them to regional organisations. That will leave local authorities free to concentrate on planning and on vetting planning applications.

The new water authorities will have control over the licensing of new waste disposal facilities and will be able to say whether sites may go ahead. They will be able to impose a veto if they are worried about leachates or geological factors. Why not give them more say and control and take that function from the WDAs? Local authorities will be able to concentrate on what they are best at doing—imposing planning controls and considering planning aspects. I hope that my hon. Friend the Minister will take those points on board and put them to our right hon. Friend the Secretary of State. I hope to be a member of the Standing Committee, where there will be opportunities for us to pursue those points. A number of Opposition Members feel equally strongly that this opportunity to introduce an integrated approach is not to be missed.

I well remember that every time I met the chairman of Anglian Water, Mr. Bernard Henderson, CBE, he said, "We are hamstrung by Treasury controls. Every time we want to invest, we cannot. We have a negative external financing limit. When we want to borrow money for new investment or to put money into new infrastructure and plant, we cannot. When we can, we are hidebound in terms of how much we can borrow and the extent of our capital expenditure." He, among many other water authority chairmen, may welcome water privatisation and these new privatised plcs being let off the leash and able to serve the public as they want by spending sufficient funds on capital investment and, at the same time, not having to worry about some of the other functions that will rightly remain in the public domain.

I support the Bill because it represents an excellent way forward and a unique step during the Government's tenure in making major progress on the environmental front and, above all, in presenting to the public a better service and a cleaner environment.

8.58 pm

Mr. Dafydd Wigley (Caernarfon): I agree very much with the hon. Member for Norfolk, North-West (Mr. Bellingham) about the need for a regional, co-ordinated structure. My real fear for Wales—although we look on Wales as a national unit, we regard it in regional terms from an organisational point of view—is that the rivers authority will impose centralisation. We shall lose the river functions that exist on an all-Wales basis and we are far from happy that there are sufficient provisions in the Bill to deal satisfactorily with rivers in Wales.

The hon. Member for Norfolk, North-West spoke of obtaining more capital, but whether the plcs concerned will be able to afford to attract that capital and at what price will be central to the argument. The hon. Member for Delyn (Mr. Raffan) said that water was a burning issue in Wales. It certainly is and, many years before he came and graced our presence in Wales, we had a very difficult time there.

The hon. Member for Denton and Reddish (Mr. Bennett) mentioned the considerable controversy involving cities such as Liverpool and Birmingham which took over valleys in Wales to provide reservoirs, as a result of which people were moved out. Legislation was enacted in Parliament, against the united opposition of all Welsh Members, across party lines, but there was still considerable controversy. In the 1960s, there were episodes of water pipelines being blown up. That was a difficult time.

It is difficult to imagine how much change there has been in perception and understanding since that time. Although Members on both sides of the House will criticise the Welsh water authority from time to time—no doubt there are times when they are right to do so—over the intervening two decades new harmony and planning has come about in the provision of one of the most basic services of the community—the provision of water, including sewerage, flood control and pollution control.

I fear that we are now moving backwards, not to Victorian times but to a pre-Victorian time. One of the first most exciting steps in municipal development was the provision of water and sewerage services in some of our large cities. I am gravely concerned about the effect of the Bill in Wales. The balance sheet of the Welsh water authority shows that the current cost net asset value is about £2,000 million and the turnover is about £223 million. If we wanted to obtain a return of 10 per cent. on that £2,000 million in the market place, we should be looking for £200 million profit. In other words, we should be looking to increase the turnover from £223 million to about £423 million, which represents a doubling of the total charges. Clearly, that is not on and I am not suggesting that charges will increase by that much, although I have real fears that they are bound to go up a considerable amount.

If the charges do not go up by that much, the assets of the water authorities, which have a book value of just under £2,000 million, will be sold off for a fraction of that sum. If I understand the position correctly, the Welsh Office is looking for a figure of £250 million to £300 million for those assets. That is one sixth or one seventh of their book value. That is giving away public assets which have been paid for by the water ratepayers of Wales. On what grounds can that be justified?

It may be possible to have a write-off which makes it practical to appear to have a reasonable return. Perhaps the £27 million profit last year can be pushed up to £30 million or £40 million and a reasonable return appear on the cost of the shareholding. When we look for additional capital to undertake the sewerage replacement works and all the other works that are needed, there will be no write-up or grant provision. The system will have to stand on its own two feet. That is where the valid comparison comes in for a return on the £2,000 million equivalent that we are now discussing. However, if we dress this up for a one-off sale, to justify increased capital in the future—that is the argument advanced by Conservative Members in favour of privatisation, and I accept the need for additional capital—there will have to be a substantially higher profit margin. That must mean higher prices, and it will hit some of the most vulnerable people very hard.

The question of answerability and control has also led to much discussion in Wales. At present, we have a quango. I should be much happier if the Welsh water authority were answerable directly to an all-Wales elected body, but that is not on the agenda at the moment, although we are hoping to work in that direction again before too long. In the meantime, if privatisation is to take place—we are unlikely to stop it with the balance of power in this Parliament—what safeguard can be provided to ensure that water consumers in Wales have a dominant part of the equity capital? This issue was raised by the hon. Member for Brecon and Radnor (Mr. Livsey). I understand that the Welsh Office, with the Welsh water authority and institutional investors, has been considering various options.

Mr. Leigh: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Wigley: No, I shall not give way as there is a 10-minute limit on speeches.

Perhaps 60 per cent. of the equity shareholding could be in the form of A shares and designated for consumers. I and others are worried that after consumers have bought the initial share-out the shares will pass into the hands of institutional investors. We know that the television company for which the Minister of State, Welsh Office, formerly worked—HTV—introduced share restrictions to ensure that the shareholding reflected tight control of the company so that the company could maintain the policy which had led to its securing its franchise.

The Government should find a way of ensuring that a mechanism is found to enable consumers, even those with small incomes, to secure a share so that the overall control of Welsh water is at least indirectly in the hands of Welsh people. Is it practical and feasible—this is an issue that I raised as a member of the Welsh Grand Committee this morning, in response to which the Secretary of State indicated some sympathy—to have a form of a golden share in the Welsh Office to ensure that issues of public concern in Wales are subject to a longstop and are not determined merely by pure market considerations?

Many bodies have made representations to us on these issues, including those representing anglers, farmers, ramblers, those with an interest in bird life, outdoor educationists and consumers. The Countryside Commission is a specific example. Welsh constituency Members are well aware of the range of problems which arise, including those associated with the water charges, cut-offs, floods, pollution, sewer replacements, inadequate

pipes, fish farms and coastal erosion. All these matters will have to be dealt with by the proposed new bodies. My heart tells me that an organisation that is geared to commercial profit only cannot meet the problems that we and our constituents come up against week by week and month by month.

If I am lucky enough or unlucky enough to be a member of the Committee which considers the Bill—an enormous amount of work will face those Members—I hope that those on the Government Front Bench will be flexible in their response to practical amendments tabled to protect the interests of those who might suffer if purely commercial considerations alone are taken on board. We must not slip back into the days of contention of the 1950s and 1960s in Wales. There must be a structure which ensures that the necessary safeguards are provided.

9.8 pm

Mr. David Ashby (Leicestershire, North-West): I welcome the Bill, and I think that there are many who take the same view. They are unhappy that regional authorities have not fulfilled all that was expected of them. They expect and demand higher standards, and we all recognise that those standards are required regardless of whether there is privatisation. I agree with my hon. Friend the Member for Cambridgeshire, South-West (Sir A. Grant) that fundamentally the Bill is directed to raising standards as well as privatisation. It provides for a massive raising of standards, and we must understand and accept that there is a cost to raising standards. If we are to improve the environment, we must spend more. That is a cost which I am sure we all willingly accept because we want to improve the environment and our standards.

The Bill recognises the necessity of environmental and regulatory controls. It reflects the need for those controls to remain in the public sector. That need will be met by the National Rivers Authority and the Director General of Water Services.

I want to speak briefly about the National Rivers Authority. The fight against the pollution of water courses too often makes the headlines only when a disaster occurs. Pollution is a chronic phenomenon and is produced by a combination of sources, as a result of our way of life. In consequence, the fight against pollution must not be limited to ad hoc measures designed to repair extensive and sometimes irreversible damage at great expense. Instead, it must take the form of long-term action to tackle the causes of pollution.

The pollution of water courses is not caused solely by large industries. It is caused also by the citizens of this country, as consumers and producers of products, or by activities that result in that pollution. The solution must be that we consider not only sanctions, but the education of those people who are involved in activities that could pollute water courses.

Therefore, I hope that the Minister will take on board the point that the National Rivers Authority must be able, not only to prosecute or impose sanctions, but, equally important, to raise public awareness of these problems. It must have a role in advertising and a role to educate. It must be able to put on exhibitions and to provide advisory services for those who are involved in activities that might cause pollution.

That is the most important point that I wanted to make. I promised that I would not speak for 10 minutes and I said that if I was called, I could say what I wanted to say in three or four minutes. That is the message that I wanted to put over.

9.12 pm

Mr. Paul Boateng (Brent, South): The surest sign of a poor advocate defending an even poorer case is the large number of character witnesses that are traipsed before the court as a sign of the worth of the indefensible. In the course of this debate, we have seen a number of character witnesses traipsed before our eyes in defence of the indefensible. One of those witnesses, bizarrely, was the grandfather of the hon. Member for Crawley (Mr. Soames)—that is, an early right hon. Member for Woodford, Winston Churchill. We were told that, were he alive, he would be a great supporter of water privatisation. His own knowledge of clear white liquids—like that of his distinguished grandson—was limited to those clear white liquids that are produced in vats in Warrington rather than those that descend from heaven.

Juxtaposed even more bizarrely with the late right hon. Member for Woodford was a contemporary—none other than Mahatma Gandhi. We were told by the hon. Member for Kensington (Mr. Fishburn)—who is now in his place—that the Mahatma, were he alive, would be a supporter of water privatisation. The hon. Member for Kensington has got his gurus somewhat mixed up. The only guru of water privatisation is Professor Milton Friedman. Privatisation is a product of his philosophy and the idea that Gandhi can be prayed in aid as a supporter of this squalid little measure is complete nonsense. The point of the march to the shores that the Mahatma led was to say that salt belonged to the people. He said that salt should not be usurped by the state through the imposition of taxation.

In opposing the Bill, root and branch, we say that water belongs to the people and should not be given away by the state for the benefit of private enterprise. We say that it belongs to the people and that the true purpose of the Bill is not the greening of England. There is nothing more ludicrous than the suggestion by the Secretary of State in the leaks and press conferences before the presentation of the Bill that it was all about protecting the environment. We were told that this is a green measure. The British people may be getting increasingly greener, but we are not so green round the gills as to believe one word of the Secretary of State's ex post facto justification for the Bill.

The true purpose of the Bill came out clearly in the speech of the hon. Member for Cambridgeshire, South-West (Sir A. Grant). He had had enough of all this talk about the environment and he reminded everyone that the bottom line was efficiency and profits. We are glad to hear about efficiency, but it is strange to hear the hon. Gentleman talk in glowing terms about the Anglian water authority being a model for private enterprise and attractive to the French, when 35 per cent. of the Anglian authority's consented sewage treatment plants are in breach of their discharge consents. But, above all, the purpose is profit. The interests of the environment and of the consumer will be subjugated to the overwhelming interests of profit. That is the bottom line.

The select Committee on the Environment has been prayed in aid by people who should know better—I do not include the Secretary of State in that category. In my early days as a member of that Committee, we visited a toxic

[Mr. Paul Boateng]

waste dump in the north country. A man who had been in the business for a long time put his hand on my shoulder and said, "You know, son, where there's muck there's brass." On this Bill, Conservative Members believe, "where there's water, there's dosh". The French would call it "leauds and leauds" of dosh. We must put aside this pretence about care for the environment because it does not feature on the Government's agenda.

I am glad that the Minister for Water and Planning is in his place because I have several questions to ask him about the role and resources of the National Rivers Authority. An alarming fact that came out from the press conferences, leaks and subsequent statements was that the NRA will be subject to a Treasury regime in terms of staffing and resources. It will also be subject to Department of the Environment guidance in terms of staffing.

We all know the Department's record in respect of those responsible for monitoring, controlling and trying to abate pollution. During the past four months, two Department inspectors have disappeared from the scene because they were so disgruntled and dissatisfied with the state of staffing and the priority given to adequate resources for the control of pollution. We are supposed to trust our rivers and our patrimony to the tender mercies of the Department of the Environment. We cannot do so. The record of the past nine years is that Conservatives are not up to the job of giving water pollution the priority it deserves.

As to what is expected of the NRA, it is not only Greenpeace—which has wrongly been subjected to some calumny in this debate—that is concerned about the environment. It is not often that one feels compelled to call on the advice of the Country Landowners Association. Unlike the hon. Member for Norfolk, North West (Mr. Bellingham), I do not wake up in the night in a cold sweat over the interests of country landowners—perhaps I ought to. However, I am interested that the association expresses concern about the NRA's financing:

> "The Country Landowners Association is therefore strongly opposed to the provisions of the Bill which would make the NRA dependent upon Exchequer grant aid to carry out its function and which would prevent it from borrowing to finance capital works."

That is interesting, and when the Minister responds, I hope he will answer the associations's concerns. If he is not so concerned about the views of Greenpeace or of other groups well known for their work in protecting the environment, perhaps he will answer the concern expressed by the Country Landowners Association, and that of the hon. Member for Norfolk, North-West, which I share, in relation to what will happen to our coastal defences. We do not want to see the hon. Gentleman's constituency disappear under six inches of water—at least, not in the course of this Parliament.

We must consider also the concerns of the consumers. We have been told that this measure will benefit the consumer. To give Jack his jacket, the Secretary of State has always made it crystal clear that the consumer will have to pay for protecting the environment. There is never any question of the polluter or of those who have profited from the creation of waste having to pay. Let us take it as read that the consumer will pay, because that is entirely consistent with the political philosophy of Conservative Members. Let us instead ask what protection the consumer will have under the new regime.

The House has been told, and is entitled to clarification of this point, that there will be two parallel and separate committees charged with responsibility for protecting the consumer interests. They are the rivers advisory committee and the customer services committee. May the House be given the assurance that has also been sought by the Consumers Association and by other consumer protection bodies, that both committees will be properly resourced and funded; above all, that they will be given the requisite power for dealing with the problems that the industry has faced in ensuring that those responsible for pollution are brought to book?

In conclusion, I ask for one further point of clarification. The Secretary of State will understand the confusion that exists in the minds of observers of the environmental scene. At one moment, the Secretary of State makes it clear that it is no part of a water authority's responsibility to impose a level of fine or to prosecute large numbers of defaulters, arguing that in such a situation, money that could be spent on improvements would be spent on implementing fines.

On the other hand, the acceptable face of the Department of the Environment, in the form of the Secretary of State's junior Minister, tells us that it is important that there be a greater readiness to prosecute and to make more effective use of powers that already exist. Which is the true voice of the Department of the Environment? Let us hear it tonight and let it stop speaking—as we have heard it, and many Conservative Members speak tonight, and as various Ministers have over the past few months—with a forked tongue.

9.24 pm

Mr. Edward Leigh (Gainsborough and Horncastle): I am grateful to the hon. Member for Brent, South (Mr. Boateng) for allowing me five minutes at the end of the debate in which to say few words.

I want to say a little about the presentation of the Bill. We must be honest—even among those who are not motivated by party spite there is some concern about the provisions of the Bill. There is bound to be concern about any new aspect of legislation and it has been expressed about many privatisation measures that we have introduced. There is no doubt that, as usual, the Opposition have not attempted to use reasoned argument but have resorted to scaremongering, as my hon. Friend the Member for Pembroke (Mr. Bennett) said.

I shall return to first principles, as I did to an audience of about 100 people in my constituency last Friday. If one looks at the present situation and what can be done about it and clears one's mind of all the alternatives, one ends up with something remarkably similar to what my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State has suggested.

The first thing one asks when one talks to ordinary people is, "Are you satisfied with the present water industry?" Of course, the answer is no. Earlier in the debate we heard that the Labour Government cut spending in the water industry by a third. They would have liked to spend more and, if they returned to power and renationalised the industry, they would not want to cut capital spending.

Government language, however, is the language of priorities. It is about roads versus pensions. There are no votes in sewerage and water when compared with roads, pensions and social security. That has been the problem underlying public dissatisfaction with the water industry. We cannot deny that. Despite the fact that we have increased capital spending by half, we are still not spending enough. A village in my constituency, Claxby, has been denied an adequate sewerage scheme for 20 years. I have a sheaf of correspondence about that on my desk. My predecessor tried to deal with it and I have tried, but the buck has been passed from the local authority to the water authority and nothing has been done. The present facilities are inadequate.

If we ask ourselves what to do about the situation, we might come forward with a simple solution. First, why not set up for the first time in our history an environmental protection agency with real teeth? Why not, for the first time, ensure that the gamekeeper is no longer employed by the poacher? That is what is being done in part III of the Bill and it is something of which we should be proud. That is a matter not of presentation but of fact.

If we were starting from square one and asking what we could do to make privatisation work, the answer might be to create powerful, strong, regionally based water companies free from the day-to-day interference of Ministers, free to invest and attract private capital and to provide villages such as Claxby and others with adequate sewerage systems. That is contained in part I of the Bill.

Finally, we might say that overlaying that we should ensure that we have the tightest, strongest and most closely regulated industry in the world, which will ensure that despite the monopoly that water companies must have, they will not abuse the monopoly by overcharging, discriminating against certain customers, reducing services and so on. That is all in part II of the Bill. So even if one were not motivated by dogma, as the Opposition say we are, and if one approached the matter from first principles, one might come to the House with something similar to the Bill.

There are bound to be one or two worries. The National Anglers Council welcomes the Bill but is concerned about representation on the National Rivers Authority. I have no doubt that its concerns will be listened to. There are fears about allowing the water authorities to get on their feet. The golden share has been mentioned and there may be some mileage in that. However, while we ensure that there is a tight regulatory framework, we must remember that water is, and always has been, a business. For all our sakes we have to allow the water companies to invest in the future. They are determined to make privatisation work and I am sure that the Bill provides an excellent way forward. I give it my full support.

9.29 pm

Mr. Allan Roberts (Bootle): The Select Committee report has been quoted at some length to illustrate that the last Labour Government cut capital expenditure on the water and sewerage industry. We accept that that is the case. However, we claim two things: first, that this Government have continued to reduce capital expenditure; secondly, the last Labour Government were in power for five years, and since then this Government have been in power 10 years. Nearly every recommendation in the Environment Select Committee's report is an indictment of the Government's record over the past 10 years. We quote in aid the Select Committee's report. We recommend that greater scope should be given to water authorities to borrow commercially. In the light of the report—an all-party one—such scope does not depend on the privatisation of the water industry.

The Bill will introduce momentous changes to the management of the water environment. Although the Government have sought to defuse the potential time bomb standing in the way of privatisation, they face major environmental controversies about sewage discharges, the quality of drinking water, and the industry's land assets. It is a 340-page monster, containing 180 clauses and 24 schedules. The Bill must receive Royal Assent next June if the flotation of water authorities, which is currently intended to be at the end of 1989, is not to interfere with the Government's plans for the sale of the electricity industry. The Government want the Bill to be pushed through with unparalleled haste. Opposition Members will not co-operate with their intention.

In recent weeks, Government and water industry sources have insisted that an extremely tough regulatory regime will be ushered in by the Bill. However, the industry and the Government have been anxious to head off extra controls that could prejudice the chances of a successful flotation. If the National Rivers Authority is to be an effective force in improving environmental standards, it must strengthen its technical, monitoring and scientific capabilities. The National Rivers Authority already faces significant extra responsibilities, before it is properly established. I refer to the need to prepare plans to implement the decisions of last year's North sea conference and the 1990 national river quality survey, and extra monitoring of "red list" substances, all of which could rapidly erode the real value of its resources.

The Government are yet to work out how to deal with the major threat—it is a major threat—to their privatisation proposals. Ironically, that threat is entirely home-grown. It is posed by the water authorities' own sewage treatment works. The recent public debate about such facilities involved the failure of more than 850 works —or over 20 per cent. of those with numerical discharge consents—to comply with their consent conditions.

Illegality—and it is illegality—on that scale is a significant obstacle to flotation. Lawyers have already advised senior executives in the water industry that they must not sign prospectuses if their businesses are knowingly committing criminal offences. To date, the Government have responded in two ways. First—the Opposition welcome it—they have provided extra funds for capital investments which, according to different ministerial statements, are intended to ensure that all, or almost all, non-complying works operate within the law by October 1992. Opposition Members doubt that that can be achieved with the amount of extra capital that the Government have allocated.

They have also said—we regret it—that non-complying works may be given interim relaxed consents to facilitate privatisation, provided that credible improvement programmes are in hand. In preparation for privatisation, more, not less, damage will be done to the environment, which gives the lie to the Government's claim.

Organisations such as Friends of the Earth and Greenpeace are prepared to apply to the High Court to test any dubious Government decisions. Anything but a small-scale relaxation exercise would certainly drive a

[Mr. Allan Roberts]

coach and horses through the long-established principle of even-handedness, as British industry has never received relaxations for its discharges on the scale now being sought by some parts of the water industry and granted by the Government to facilitate privatisation.

The Government's arguments pull the Bill in opposite directions. One argument is to provide firm assurances that the Bill contains genuine additional environmental safeguards, and the second argument is to convince the City that there are no destabilising uncertainties about costs attached to environmental controls. That is the Government's dilemma.

On the first of those counts, the Government are heavily burdened by recent history. Broadly speaking, this is an enabling Bill. Many environmental clauses have to be fleshed out in regulations before they can have any practical effect. Many of the clauses characterised as new by the Secretary of State have been carried forward with some simplification or amendment from the Control of Pollution Act 1974. Developments since 1974 do not inspire confidence that the Government, with a successful flotation uppermost in their mind, will look rapidly to give effect to these provisions. The powers in that Act to introduce protection zones and to impose controls on the storage of dangerous substances have never been invoked. The Government are continuing to display little haste about introducing statutory controls on nitrogen fertiliser applications to agricultural land, using the water protection zone powers that they already have in the Control of Pollution Act. They are backsliding all over the place.

Last year, the Department of the Environment said that the Bill would give backing for the first time to river quality objectives and provide for deadlines to be set for their achievement. But the Department also said that these would be in place when the Bill was enacted. Now the intention is not to introduce them until 1992. The conflicts are inevitable and the Government's record on the environment is clear.

One of the Government's main arguments for privatisation is that it will release the water authorities from public sector borrowing requirement controls, but the Government are nationalising many functions of the water industry and giving them to the National Rivers Authority. That does not release water resource planning and licensing, abstracting and monitoring of licences, environmental quality and pollution control, land drainage and flood protection, the maintenance, improvement and development of fisheries and inland waters, conservation and recreation, navigational responsibilities and functions of three water authorities, the functions of Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution, research, and flood and sea defences.

None of those will be released from PSBR restrictions. They will be the functions of a National Rivers Authority, and that will not solve any problems. The revenue consequences of all those functions will be paid for by additional, higher charges—it says so in the Government's document—and by taxation. That is not releasing the evironmental functions of the water industry from PSBR constraints. At a stroke, and without privatisation, the Government could release the water industry from the stupid and ridiculous PSBR control.

We were asked whether a Labour Government would take the water industry back into public ownership. The answer is yes. We will not nationalise it. It is this Government who are doing the nationalising by setting up the NRA.

This is absolute nonsense. Let us look at the logic of it. The same organisation, whether in public or private ownership, will borrow the same money on the market from the same people to spend on the same projects. One is bad for the nation's economy because the public sector is doing it, and the other is good for the nation's economy because the private sector is doing it. We are talking about the same money from the same sources for the same purposes. What economic nonsense. If that is the only justification for privatisation, no wonder the public have seen it for what it is—asset stripping.

Conservative Members laughed when my hon. Friend the Member for Wakefield (Mr. Hinchliffe) spoke about poverty. They think that compulsory water metering and charging people per second per gallon per squirt is good. They do not think that an old-age pensioner will worry about the bill and will continue to flush the toilet as often as now. They do not believe that large families in the poverty trap will stop bathing their children as often as now because they will be worried about how much water they are using and their water bills.

I would not mind if water metering saved significant sums. The lowest estimate for putting water meters into people's houses is £2 billion—others have been about £3 billion or £4 billion. Having put the meter into a house, it does not matter whether that household uses twice as much or four times less water than it was using before it had the meter, it will still cost the water authority the same to deliver it. Conservative Members do not understand that water is not the same as electricity. Electricity is expensive to produce, but cheap to distribute. Water is cheap to produce—it droppeth, as the quality of mercy, from the heavens—but expensive to distribute.

Once the pipe has been laid from the reservoir to the house, the cost has been paid. It does not matter how much water is used or is not used, the cost will be the same. If people economise with water—unless there is a drought and people economise on a voluntary basis—the water authorities save nothing, because any water that is saved flows out of the reservoir, back into the rivers and into the oceans. Water—that God—given asset—is freely available, but must be paid for by the gallon and by the pint once the reservoirs have been built and the pipes have been laid to the households.

Sir Anthony Grant: If that is the case, why did the Labour party, when it was in government, not abolish the water rate?

Mr. Roberts: What has the water rate to do with water metering?

I predict that compulsory water metering will be an inevitable consequence of water privatisation. Many members of the public have not realised that, in the interim, while the meters are being fitted—they will be fitted in all commercial and industrial premises in the north-west almost immediately, and automatically into any new dwellings—we shall get rid of water rates and have a water poll tax, which will not be related to the ability to pay, the size of the household or its consumption. That will be on top of the poll tax, and they will be

introduced, as they say in the music hall, at one and the same time. The water poll tax, along with the poll tax, will be the end of the Government. The Bill will put another nail in their coffin because water metering—as is the privatisation of water and making a profit from it—is opposed by the public.

The Government are keen to sell off water, and they do not care who buys it. They do not care if the French buy it. They tell us that the French system is excellent. Some 99·2 per cent. of British households are connected to mains water supplies. In the United States it is 75 per cent.; in West Germany it is 86 per cent.; and in France—where the system is so good—under French privatisation it is only 56 per cent. When I visit France, Spain and many other countries, I must buy my water in bottles, because the tap water is not drinkable. That is becoming the state of affairs in many parts of this country because of the Government's neglect and their ignoring of EEC directives.

The Australians want to buy into British water. The Australians are interested, and they do not give a triple X for our environment. They certainly do not give a triple X for providing cheap wholesome water for the British people.

Mr. Roger King (Birmingham, Northfield): Four X, actually.

Mr. Roberts: It is the same thing. The Australians are interested in profit, and that will apply to everyone who buys into the water industry.

It is said that costs will not rise, but there will not only be the extra costs—as the Minister admits—of any pollution control that may be imposed on the water industry by the National Rivers Authority, but there will be the costs arising directly from privatisation. There will be higher directors' fees and top managers' salaries. So far, there have been 85 per cent. increases in managers' pay in the first two years of any privatisation.

In addition to the National Rivers Authority, there will be the cost of shareholders' registrations and servicing, dividends for shareholders, and corporation tax, which the consumer will have to pay because that will not come out of the profits. An expert on water authority finance has calculated that there will be an increase of 29 per cent. on existing costs. That will inevitably lead to higher charges. After announcing a 39 per cent. increase in profits, British Telecom put rentals up by 8·6 per cent. Many other costs will also be involved.

What should be done? All the Government's stated aims for privatisation could be achieved without privatisation. The Government could free the authorities from their tight borrowing limits and the stupid restrictions of the public sector borrowing requirement. We will, and the Government could, democratise the water industry and put some accountability back into the way in which it is run regionally. At present the Government contribute no money to water authorities' operating costs, but they take out an increasing amount. That should stop. The present problems that the Government rightly highlight could be dealt with adequately.

The Labour party and most of the British people are totally opposed to the privatisation of water. We recognise that water is even more essential than food. It should not be subject to the free market or to the profit motive. It should be free and readily available, in public ownership, providing a plentiful supply to all who need it, and it should not be related to people's ability to pay.

9.45 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Environment (Mr. Colin Moynihan): I have never heard such a fundamental misunderstanding of an industry from a Front Bench spokesman as I have this evening from the hon. Member for Bootle (Mr. Roberts).

To say that water just trickles down from the sky and appears, without cost, in the pipes and through the taps is a nonsense. It is a highly expensive industry, requiring highly expensive inputs for treatment and preparation. It is also subject to many European directives and many quality objectives. When the hon. Gentleman is on the Committee I only hope that he will pay as much attention to the importance of producing first-rate quality water as he has to the pipes and the supply works that provide water to homes.

Mr. Allan Roberts: If water is so expensive to produce, why do the Government not take action to stop 30 per cent. of it leaking out of our aging system? From leaving the reservoir to reaching the tap, 30 per cent. of water is lost. How will water metering solve that problem? Will the Minister admit that the major cost to the water industry is distribution and not production?

Mr. Moynihan: We accept that major capital expenditure is required and that is why we are investing in it, unlike the Opposition who slashed expenditure when investment was required.

Tonight has also revealed another interesting point that emerged from an earlier and excellent speech from my hon. Friend the Member for Cambridgeshire, South-West (Sir A. Grant). Through his lucid description of the importance of his statutory water company, he identified that we have an interesting framework for the water industry—private companies under public regulation. My hon. Friend challenged the Opposition to inform the House whether it was their intention to nationalise the statutory water companies and to remove, as the hon. Member for Copeland (Dr. Cunningham) had stated, their present private monopoly status.

The Opposition did not go as far as saying that they want to nationalise the statutory water companies. They accepted that there should be private companies and they welcomed the fact that, if one had private companies, they should be subject to proper and effective regulation. That is what we understood to be their argument. If the Opposition are unhappy about that summary of their argument, I shall give way.

Mr. Allan Roberts: My hon. Friend the shadow Secretary of State made our position clear. We will take the water industry back into social ownership. That does not mean that a nationalised body will run all the water industry. If nothing has changed and the private statutory companies, which are regulated, still exist, they will not necessarily be taken back. But we predict that they will not, because powerful conglomerates will be running the water industry, and then they will be taken into social ownership.

Mr. Moynihan: So if they continue to exist they will be private companies under public control and regulation. That is precisely what we are proposing in the Bill.

We have come before the House with a Bill to create private companies within a strong regulatory regime to protect the customer against general abuses such as excessive charges, reduced service levels and the neglect of assets. Under that regulation individual customers should be entitled to rights and protection. We recognise that on the one hand the water industry can be given tremendous opportunities through the private sector and on the other hand that we need an important regulatory framework to protect customers. That is precisely the position being espoused by the Opposition on statutory water companies and that is exactly what we have produced in the Bill.

Mr. Allen McKay (Barnsley, West and Penistone): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Moynihan: No. Many other points were mentioned and, out of courtesy to the House, I should like to deal with as many of them as I can.

We are now halfway through the debate and many important points have been made about the National Rivers Authority. First, let me pay tribute to the work of the Select Committee on the Environment under the Chairmanship of my hon. Friend the Member for Hornsey and Wood Green (Sir H. Rossi). It was its report on the pollution of rivers and estuaries in May 1987 that drew attention to the anomaly that the present arangements for the control of water pollution involve water authorities having the dual role of poacher and gamekeeper. That anomaly has been central to our decision to create the National Rivers Authority.

Let me try to allay the worries that many hon. Members have raised about the structure and organisation of the National Rivers Authority. We are confident that the proposals for the National Rivers Authority combine the best features of the existing system of unified control of the river basin while providing the essential separation of the regulatory functions in the new national body. The National Rivers Authority will retain control over river catchments because it will have all the functions associated with the management of natural waters—abstractions, discharges, pollution control, land drainage, flood protection and conservation.

Hon. Members have raised an important issue relating to the staff and resources of the National Rivers Authority, a point rightly raised by the Select Committee in its third report. I can assure hon. Members that the Government are fully committed to ensuring that the authority has adequate staff and resources.

But hon. Members will want me to go further than that. I hope that in the first stage hon. Members will have already drawn comfort from the fact that in the summary schemes of organisation that are now available in the Library it is clear that our commitments at the Dispatch Box are backed up by actions. The National Rivers Authority will have the vast majority of its 6,500 staff in the regions. The schemes show that pollution control and other functions will be carried out by same people who are currently carrying out those functions in the water authorities.

The National Rivers Authority will inherit from the water authorities the staff needed to carry out all the functions, but—this is an important but—instead of being a small part of a water authority whose primary function is water supply, it will represent the main function of an important national environment body. The creation of that new body is a major component of the Bill which recognises the great importance that we attach to pollution control and the environment.

Important issues have also been raised on conservation and recreation. The first important point is to promote the good practice that exists already. Over recent years, numerous and varied practices and strategies have been adopted by water authorities in respect of conservation and recreation, some successful, others less so. The time has now come to identify and promote best practice to ensure that the industry learns from experience and to give more meaning and substance to the general duties placed upon it—hence, a code of practice for the first time, to which I shall return.

The second is to seize the opportunities for conservation and recreation created by the restructuring of the industry. The creation of the NRA is an important milestone. It can take on tasks and functions which could not so readily have fallen to the water authorities, and some of its functions will be new. I shall return to that subject, too.

Our brief should be twofold: to promote good practice and to seize the opportunities for positive steps forward in conservation and recreation. I shall follow through three aspects of the legislation, the first of which are statutory duties. The Bill imposes on the NRA and the plcs the duties to further conservation, having regard to landscape, natural beauty and public access, and to put their rights and properties to good use for recreation. These are broad and positive duties, which will set the tone for the privatised industry. I know that many people did not believe that we would preserve in a privatised regime the present duty to further conservation—but we have. So the Government are not going back on what has been achieved.

Secondly, I turn to the code of practice. I hope that hon. Members on both sides who are concerned about the important issue of sport and recreation and conservation will carefully examine the implications of the code and benefit from the discussions about its detailed context that will take place. Early on in our privatisation proposals we suggested that the general statutory duties should be supplemented by a code of conservation and recreation practice. As is clear from much correspondence that I have received, that has received a wide welcome in the sporting world, and clause 9 provides for it.

We shall shortly publish a first discussion draft of the code so that it can be taken into account at the relevant stages of the Committee proceedings. It will provide guidance on how the general duties, which are enforceable by the Secretary of State, are to be interpreted and applied. The Secretary of State will have to take account of the code and of any failure to observe it when exercising his enforcement powers. We hope that it will provide effective practical guidance to the companies on how the conservation and recreation duties are to be discharged. It will certainly provide them with a clear warning about the essential standards to be observed in this area—on matters concerning recreational duties, ramblers and anglers, canoeists and oarsmen. I have found in discussions with the bodies that represent anglers that they believe the NRA will enhance and protect their interests.

Another point mentioned by several of my hon. Friends concerned the importance of not segregating pollution control from recreation duties in the NRA. The two are intermingled in their effects. Anglers and, to a lesser extent, canoeists and oarsmen need pure water, so it is important for the recreation and conservation committees to ensure that all these interests are represented so that we can see the water course in the round and ensure that we enhance the conservation and recreation interest and improve the quality of the waters, thereby reducing the pollution risk.

The hon. Member for Wakefield (Mr. Hinchliffe) raised one of the most important issues of the debate—disconnections—and I want to allay concerns about them. We shall discuss with the industry how the existing code of practice applying to customers who have difficulty in paying their bills could be strengthened to include additional safeguards. The existing arrangements, whereby debts may be paid off by instalments and people in receipt of income support may have serious debts deducted from benefit by the DSS and paid direct to the water undertaker, will continue. The new companies will be required to prepare or adopt a code of practice on disconnections at least as extensive as the present one. *[Interruption.]* Opposition Members may laugh, but disconnections are a serious issue and I regret that the Opposition do not regard them as important. We do.

My hon. Friend the Member for Norfolk, North-West (Mr. Bellingham) asked why there are so few prosecutions for pollution. I agree that there are too few prosecutions of those who pollute our water courses. We shall look to the National Rivers Authority to develop more rigorous and consistent national enforcement policies. Other measures are also needed and that is why we propose new regulations governing the construction of silage and slurry stores and oil storage installations in order to reduce the pollution risks about which my hon. Friend spoke.

The hon. Member for Copeland spoke about drinking water standards not being in the Bill.

It being Ten o'clock, the debate stood adjourned.

Debate to be resumed tomorrow.

NEW PARLIAMENTARY BUILDING

Ordered,

That this House agrees with the Select Committee on House of Commons (Services) in its First Report of the last Session of Parliament on New Parliamentary Building (Phase 2): The Next Steps (House of Commons Paper No. 561 (1987-88)).—*[Mr. David Hunt.]*

Midwives (Grading Review)

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. John M. Taylor.]*

10 pm

Mr. David Alton (Liverpool, Mossley Hill): I am indebted to you, Mr. Speaker, for this opportunity to raise the manner in which the regrading of midwives has been undertaken. I intend to examine the particular problems that this has caused in the Merseyside area. I am pleased to see that the Minister of State, Department of Health, is in his place to reply to the debate. I am sure that he will not be offended if I say that it might have been more appropriate if his hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State were present. I understand that she was born in the Oxford street maternity unit which serves much of Liverpool. I am also pleased to see in the House the official Opposition spokesman. Anyone reading the debate will realise that in an Adjournment debate it is not possible for all hon. Members who are present to take part. However, I am glad to see so much interest.

It is no bad thing to remind the House that 76 per cent. of us were brought safely into the world by midwives acting alone and assuming total responsibility for life and death decisions. Ministers are no exception, and while stridently asserting their claim that the National Health Service is safe in their hands they should pause to reflect that from the moment of birth many of us are safe in the hands of any one of the 32,000 members of the Royal College of Midwives.

I want to use my time today to do three things. First, I shall set out the background to the present crisis, then I shall rehearse the grievances and finally I shall explore some of the ways forward. For just over 30 years between 1870 and 1902 midwives waged a national campaign to see themselves established as a separate profession and to create better maternity facilities for women. Thirteen Bills were required to be laid before Parliament before their much-prized autonomy was finally conferred. It is that hard-fought-for professional standing that is at the heart of the present dispute, not an avaricious love of money.

The present Prime Minister established the pay review body for nurses, midwives, health visitors and the professions allied to medicine. In its third report, the review body conceded that the RCM had put forward a well argued case for a separate pay and grading structure for midwives. Unfortunately, both management and staff sides opposed any such development and midwives were simply lumped into the general regrading exercise. Only one of the eight seats for negotiators on the staff side is held by an RCM representative, so the unique and distinctive arguments of the midwives have been pushed to the margins and given a Cinderella status.

As recently as 30 November, in reply to a letter from me, the Under-Secretary of State was still hiding behind the fig leaf of an agreement. Although midwives were a party to that agreement, it was never directly discussed with their professional body on a bipartisan basis. Two days ago, in answer to a parliamentary question which I tabled, the Secretary of State said:

"I suspect that much of the sense of grievance felt by some midwives in Merseyside is caused by misunderstanding of the basis of the grading exercise which the Royal College of Midwives and other trades unions agreed to."—[*Official Report*, 5 December 1988; Vol. 143, c. 86.]

I repeat that midwives were never entirely happy about the basis on which the regrading exercise was begun, and as the row simmered over the summer period their unhappiness turned to anger and dismay. The other organisations which made up the staff side understandably concentrated on important issues such as the definition of supervision and continuing responsibility. The midwives were treated as an obscure minority interest.

What are the midwives' grievances? Guidance on prime care providers was given by the Department to general managers in May and July 1988. The original agreement made between staff and management stated that one of the criteria for being placed on scale E was a requirement

"to take responsibility as the prime care provider for one or a defined group of patients/mothers, in the hospital setting. He/she works with minimal supervision in the assessment of all relevant care needs, the development, implementation and evaluation of programmes of care. The post holder is able to supervise and teach junior staff including basic and/or post-basic students."

Subsequently, in evidence to the pay review body on 5 January 1988, the staff stated in paragraph 4.3 that

"the definition of the prime care provider at Scale E(2) was intended to cover those nurses and midwives carrying high levels of responsibility in relation to patients, clients or mothers, but whose work is so organised that they do not normally take charge of a ward or supervise other staff. There is no dispute that such jobs should be graded on scale E rather than D because of the level of their direct care responsibilities."

When the Department's guidance to general managers was published, it sought first to limit and then to prevent the use of those criteria for midwives. It inserted double-talk in the form of an interpretative note, which was never agreed with staff, stating that

"this is a 24 hour responsibility even though delivery of care is assigned to another nurse or midwife when the prime care provider is off duty."

Clearly, in the context of midwives dealing with women whose labour may be less than eight hours, let alone 24 hours, and who may be discharged within hours of being admitted to the hospital, this is a deliberate exclusion clause. Yet the mother will have been cared for by one midwife throughout, who will have to make critical life-or-death decisions and a series of crucial judgments. The midwife is unarguably a prime care provider.

The Department proceeded to compound its felony in supplementary management guidance which advised health authorities that the prime care provider criteria applied to a few authorities where primary nursing had been introduced. By implication, it did not include midwives. I hope that the Minister will confirm that health authorities may apply those criteria for midwives, and that he will arrange for written guidance to general managers clarifying this apparent misunderstanding and the 24-hour rule.

Another grievance concerns the lack of fairness and consistency applied to the regrading exercise. Why has one staff midwife in 10 in England and Wales been placed on scale D, but only one in 500 in Scotland? Why have half the staff midwives in Wales been placed on scale F, but only one in eight in England? Why have 25 per cent. of midwifery sisters in Scotland and England been placed on scale F, but only 8 per cent. in Wales? There are many examples of hospitals where all or virtually all the hospital-based midwifery sisters have been placed on scale F, while in some areas every midwifery sister has been placed on scale G.

Funding restrictions are given as the reason for not having graded in accordance with the agreed criteria. Perhaps when the Minister replies he will say what differences exist between the five districts in the Mersey region. Will he say what consideration has been given to the consequences for recruitment and retention of midwives in the Mersey region and when it will be possible for them to move to north Wales and have their clinical skills recognised by higher grades and salaries? The problem cannot be minimised in a profession that already has an 8 per cent. vacancy rate at the sister-midwife level and a 17 per cent. shortfall of sister midwives.

The Minister will no doubt state, as have his right hon. and hon. Friends, that the sheer size of the award should satisfy midwives. If he or representatives of the regional health authority had been present at a meeting that I addressed on 18 November at the Liverpool Institution, he would realise that the inconsistencies and confusion caused by the grading implementation have far outweighed any so-called benefits. The 130 midwives present at that meeting—even those who had benefited—signed a petition, which I subsequently presented to the House on 23 November, registering their unanimous dismay at the block grading, which they believe has been determined by cash constraints and not clinical considerations. In early day motion 79, my right hon. and hon. Friends and I emphasise our support for their case.

Midwives at that meeting gave an example of a midwife with 10 or 12 years' service who was still on E grade. She will remain there until she either votes with her feet to leave the area or decides to go back into general nursing or into health visiting. To get to G grade is a near impossibility. Some sisters of 30 years' standing are not on G grade. The midwives told us at that meeting about students cancelling places at training schools. Although in October the Department stated that nurses opting for midwifery training need not be worse off during their training, the ludicrous situation still applies that, once they complete their training, they will be forced to apply for posts at the lower grade D. What sort of incentive is that? No one with a mortgage will be able to afford to take that option, so expenditure on such training will be of no avail. Taxpayers' money will be used to train people who will not be able to afford to take up posts.

The Merseyside midwives gave an example of one woman who had trained another, yet the trainee had ended up on a higher grade than the trainer. One midwife said, "The Minister seemed to think that just because Lofty could deliver a baby on EastEnders anyone could do it," and that midwives' worth had effectively been down-graded. Experience in other countries shows that fewer midwives leads to more deliveries by doctors, more intervention and more caesarian deliveries—in other words, serious long-term shortages of midwives will be detrimental to care of mother and child and carry grave consequences for maternity services.

What needs to be done? It is no good the Minister simply telling us that midwives in Merseyside and elsewhere should appeal. For a start, in many authorities the watchdog is too closely identified with the burglar, with the appeals mechanism weighted in favour of the health authorities. It is also a gruesomely long drawn out process, the length of which will turn this issue into a running sore. Before they consider the appeals, the Minister needs to tell the House what instructions he will give health authorities over issues such as prime care provider criteria and on what basis appeals are to be settled. Are they, for instance, to be heard against the agreed grading criteria, or will authorities be expected to apply management guidance which grossly distorts those agreed criteria? The Minister needs to say what funds will be available if authorities decide to set aside their earlier decisions.

The Government also need to change their attitude. They appear to believe that midwives do not understand the grading structure and that that is responsible for much of the unhappiness in the profession. As midwives see it, the problem is very much the other way around.

Mr. Nigel Spearing (Newham, South): Does the hon. Gentleman agree that despite the 25 per cent. reduction in staff at Newham general hospital the midwives' diagnosis of the problem is virtually the same as the one that he is outlining, which, I dare say, is found throughout the country? It appears to the staff that the Department does not understand their job or profession.

Mr. Alton: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for that intervention. The Merseyside problem is a microcosm of the difficulties faced all over the country and experienced by hon. Members on both sides of the House.

It is important for us to recognise that midwives are not arguing that they should all be on the same grade. They believe that those midwives with identical responsibilities should be on the same grade. They cannot accept that it is right for an arbitrary distinction to be made between midwives doing precisely the same jobs. Many are on the sister scale, not because of supervisory duties but because of their clinical expertise and responsibilities. They will not accept being told that only a limited number of them can be paid on the scale appropriate to those skills and responsibilities because the regional health authority will allow them only a limited number of posts at that grade. They strongly resent that, whether the district authority has selected certain midwives for the higher grade or whether they are all asked to compete for the limited number of scale G posts.

Similarly, those midwives working in hospitals in ante-natal and post-natal areas cannot understand why they should be graded on lower scales than their colleagues doing similar work but based in the community. Midwives working in the community have a minimum of scale G, yet the Health Department has been advising that, although scale G posts may be in such areas as delivery suites and special care baby units, lower scales are appropriate for those hospital-based midwives who have responsibilities similar to those of their community-based colleagues. That is clearly nonsense. Each and every midwife, wherever she works, is legally accountable as an individual for the decisions that she makes and the actions that she takes. Hospital-based midwives are making crucial decisions without reference to other midwives or doctors every working day. If those decisions turn out to be mistaken, the midwife is liable to be struck off the professional register and be unable to practise. Community midwives find those arbitrary distinctions just as difficult to understand or support as do hospital-based midwives.

What midwives such as Lorna Muirhead, a local RCM representative who organised the Liverpool meeting to which I referred, cannot understand is how a health department which supports integrated maternity services and therefore flexibility within maternity units and

[Mr. Alton]

flexibility between hospitals and the community can be seeking to enforce gradings which are having the effect of preventing that.

All concerned agree that the operation and extension of that flexibility is desirable and in the interests of mothers and babies alike. I hope that I have said enough for the Minister to realise that, on Merseyside and in the country at large, midwives feel a deep sense of grievance and that we owe it to them and to mothers-to-be to come up with something better than the present grading hotchpotch. I hope that the Minister understands that they and their professional body, the Royal College of Midwives, which has today met the Secretary of State, will be awaiting his reply tonight with hopeful anticipation.

10.15 pm

The Minister of State, Department of Health (Mr. David Mellor): I am grateful for the opportunity to set the record straight about the grading of midwives both nationally and in the Mersey region because the hon. Member for Liverpool, Mossley Hill (Mr. Alton) is only the last in a long, but perhaps not altogether distinguished, line of people who have said some pretty extraordinary things about this exercise.

Claims that the midwives have done badly out of this exercise quite simply do not stand up. This is the best deal ever for midwives and the biggest ever pay award for their profession, worth well over 20 per cent. on average. This award gives the profession the highest ever level of real terms pay, higher than the previous high point set by the Halsbury report in 1974 and the Clegg award in 1979. This is a larger award than that enjoyed by any other major staff group in the public sector this year. Midwives have done even better than nurses in the regrading exercise, which reflects their qualifications.

I should like to bring some figures into this debate that will demonstrate that. As I have said, the average pay award for midwives this year is over 20 per cent. and, for staff midwives, it is over 25 per cent. In each case, these figures are exclusive of the London supplements which will add another 5 per cent. to 9 per cent. for those individuals who work in midwifery in London. Staff midwives have done particularly well. Nine out of 10 have gone on to the higher grades with increases this year of around £2,000, a quite unprecedented sum. The bulk of staff midwives have gone on to scale E with basic pay now of £9,200 to £10,650 a year and almost £2,000 a year more than that in inner London. With additional payments for working unsocial hours and overtime, the average earnings on this scale are likely to rise to £12,500 in the country generally and to around £14,500 in inner London.

About one in eight staff midwives has been graded at F and received even larger increases of 40 to 45 per cent., an utterly unprecedented sum; that is to say, £2,900 to £3,900 this year. The hon. Member for Newham, South (Mr. Spearing) finds that funny, but he was a supine Back Bencher in the days when Labour Governments were cutting the real pay increases of nurses and midwives by 20 per cent.

The minority of staff midwives—about one in 10—who have gone on to the lowest grade of D have still received increases this year of 7 to 10 per cent. and have still seen their pay go up in real terms by 30 per cent. since 1979, an arresting contrast with what happened in the preceding years.

Three out of four midwifery sisters have gone on to the higher grades and will receive increases of £2,000 to £3,000 this year. Their new scales are from £12,025 a year to £13,925 a year with additional payments for unsocial hours and overtime. Earnings for this grade are likely to rise to an average of £16,000 or almost £18,000 in inner London.

A minority of midwifery sisters who receive smaller increases this year will nevertheless have seen their pay go up by over one third in real terms since 1979. Midwives have gone into the higher grades in even larger numbers than nurses at both levels. This reflects the additional qualifications that midwives must have.

At staff midwife level, no fewer than 77 per cent. are on grade E, compared with 66 per cent. of staff nurses, and 12 per cent. have gone into grade F compared with 9 per cent. of staff nurses. As for midwifery sisters, 74 per cent. have gone into grade G compared with 58 per cent. of nursing sisters.

It is not true that midwives have been treated badly during the exercise. Indeed, the exercise will give the nursing profession the greatest shot in the arm that it has had since the National Health Service was founded.

Mr. Spearing: Will the hon. and learned Gentleman give way?

Mr. Mellor: No, I shall not give way. If the Opposition want to debate the matter, they have their parliamentary time. I can assure them that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State and I are only too willing to debate it at greater length, but this is not the occasion to do so. I want to get a few facts on the record in response to what the hon. Member for Mossley Hill said.

Mr. Spearing: I wanted only to ask a question.

Mr. Mellor: I understand that there is some misunderstanding in certain quarters within the profession. That is inevitable when a major change is instigated by the unions concerned, which were pressing for regrading. They did not want an across-the-board pay increase. They wanted a regrading that gave nurses and midwives an incentive to stay in clinical medicine rather than go into administration to improve their lot. When half a million people are being regraded in six months—perhaps the most massive industrial relations exercise that has ever been undertaken in Britain—it is inevitable that there will be some misunderstanding. That is why I want to deal with some of the issues that have been misunderstood. A number of points arise from what the hon. Member for Mossley Hill has said.

We are talking about the greatest change in the way in which nurses and midwives are graded and paid in the history of the NHS. It is clear that some do not fully understand the thinking behind the change, and that is inevitable. We have a task before us to ensure that the reasons for the change are plainly understood. The old grading system was based on qualifications. Under the new structure, posts are graded on the basis of duties and responsibilities. In other words, the basis of grading has been overturned. It follows that some of the issues raised by the hon. Member for Mossley Hill, such as length of time in post and qualifications held, are not in themselves

factors that decide grading. That was commonly agreed after two and a half years of negotiations between unions and management.

Mr. Spearing: Not midwives.

Mr. Mellor: Midwives absolutely, yes. As usual, the hon. Gentleman is wrong on his facts. The Royal College of Midwives was a party to the agreement, along with the Royal College of Nursing. The colleges actively sought a regrading exercise and sought to persuade the Government that it was not sufficient to think in terms of pay increases. They argued that it was necessary to change the basis of grading, which was entirely archaic. A staff nurse was on one grade and a sister was on another. There was a low plateau of achievement in clinical medicine in terms of salaries and awards. It was time to do better, and I believe that history will show that that is what we have done.

Inevitably, there is dislocation. The unions and the royal colleges knew when they embarked on the exercise that the basis of the regrading structure made it certain that some who were similarly graded in the past would find themselves in different grades and receiving different pay increases. That was inherent in the scale of the change.

I appreciate that there are some concerns that are specific to midwives, and I am happy to address them. We know that midwives have long had the ambition that they should have a separate pay and grading structure. They have sought unsuccessfully to persuade the management side and the rest of the staff side of the nursing and midwifery staff negotiating council to accept that. They failed to impress the staff side and they took their case to the review body, which also rejected the idea that midwives, valued though they are—and they are valued enormously within the service—should have an entirely separate grading structure.

The review body is another innovation of this Administration. Needless to say, the Labour Government were always in far too much economic jeopardy ever to agree to allow anything so radical as nurses' and midwives' pay to be recommended by a wholly independent body, recommendations which the Government would accept unless there were exceptional reasons not to do so. It was an innovation of the Conservative Government in recognition of the services nurses and midwives give to the community, and in recognition also of the happier economic times that allow us to fund increases of a sort that could not have been contemplated previously.

In its fifth report, the review body said that the new structure, to which the Royal College of Midwives as part of the staff side agreed, would

"provide a satisfactory basis on which to determine the grading of midwives, taking account of their training, qualifications and the particular responsibilities they carry."

In determining that midwives should be on the same grading structure as nurses, we were acting on the clear endorsement of the independent review body, which has been established to consider those matters. I understand that the Royal College of Midwives remains attached to its opinions, notwithstanding the fact that it has, thus far, been unable to persuade anyone else, not least its colleagues on the union side, to join it on that point.

Of course, the vast majority of midwives have to undertake midwifery training after they have completed training as general nurses and some midwives say therefore that they should have a higher level of grading as soon as they have qualified. The management side's view is that the minimum level for midwives should be D—the same as the minimum level for registered nurses although, of course, only a small minority—one in 10—of staff midwives actually start on D. Nothing in the analysis of midwifery posts that was carried out during the grading review indicated that newly qualified midwives were working in a significantly different way from newly qualified nurses. We have to accept that in the modern Health Service of today, with high technology medicine a commonplace, there are many sophisticated practitioners of the arts of nursing and midwifery. Midwives, although vital to the service, are only one of a range of groups that bring additional qualifications and specialisms to the Health Service and that are equally entitled to be graded under this new grading structure, with unprecedented levels of salary and prospects. A sister who was earning £96 a week maximum less than 10 years ago under the benevolent rule of the Labour Government now stands to earn at least £270 a week and, usually, on higher grades, much more than £300 a week. We would hardly have dared in 1979 to have said that that would be the improved condition of nurses and midwives, but that is what we have achieved.

I conclude by dealing with the specific problems in Mersey. The hon. Gentleman very properly ranged more widely and I am glad to have had a chance to say something about the national picture. Turning to the outcome of the exercise in Mersey, the grading outcomes are very much in line with the national figures. A large majority of staff midwives and midwifery sisters have gone into the higher grades. That is hardly surprising because, of course, the exercise in Mersey has been carried out in line with the national guidelines. There are 190 different health districts in England and each of them is an independent decision-taker. It is inevitable that there will be differences between one district and another and the only alternative to that is for the man in Whitehall to do the whole job himself, which would lead to an equal range of protest, not more. I can imagine the outcry from the Opposition if there were more attempts by Whitehall to say that each district should come into line with another. We are caught in a Morton's fork. On the one hand, if we intervene too much we are criticised, and if we allow some districts to go their own way, we are criticised for that. It is a no-win situation and we must take much of the criticism with a substantial grain of salt. My hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Health assures me that salt in excess is bad for health.

To the extent that the pattern of grading differs from that elsewhere, this is likely to be explained by the fact that, under the old grading system, there were 60 per cent. more midwifery sisters than staff midwives in Mersey. That compares with a national pattern where there were about 10 per cent. more midwifery sisters. That is good news for Mersey because it means that the number of experienced midwives in the region is somewhat higher than elsewhere. It also means that sisters in Mersey were doing some of the jobs that staff midwives were doing elsewhere and vice versa, and this will, very properly, be reflected in the grading outcome, which analyses existing jobs and not individuals.

The newly appointed regional nursing officer in Mersey is keen to develop the educational strategies for midwives in the Mersey region. Plans are in hand for a direct entry midwifery training programme which will deal with some of the problems and anomalies that the hon. Gentleman

[Mr. Mellor]

has identified. It will allow students to follow a three-year course without first having to undertake nurse training and we hope that it will commence in the autumn of next year and will be well supported in the Mersey region.

There are also plans to extend professional development programmes for qualified midwives and to develop links with universities for an advanced diploma in midwifery course. Work is also beginning in Mersey on an examination of work loads and activity, linked to skill mix, to ensure the best utilisation of valuable midwifery resources. All these developments are to be welcomed and should serve to boost the morale of midwives in Mersey and aid their recruitment and retention.

We hope that we have demonstrated in the most practical way possible the high regard in which we hold the midwifery profession. Midwives' pay stands at its highest ever in real terms. The new grading structure is the biggest change in the grading and pay of midwives since 1948. The agreement was reached after very hard negotiations with the trade unions. It provides a structure capable of recognising and rewarding the exciting developments in the maternity services——

The motion having been made at Ten o'clock and the debate having continued for half an hour, MR. SPEAKER *adjourned the debate without Question put, pursuant to the Standing Order.*

Adjourned at half-past Ten o'clock.

House of Commons

Thursday 8 December 1988

The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

PRIVATE BUSINESS

CITY OF LONDON (SPITALFIELDS MARKET) BILL
Order for Third Reading read.
To be read a Third time on Thursday 15 December.

AVON LIGHT RAIL TRANSIT BILL *[LORDS]*
(By Order)
Order for Second Reading read.
To be read a Second time on Thursday 15 December.

CITY OF GLASGOW DISTRICT COUNCIL ORDER CONFIRMATION BILL
Read the Third time, and passed.

Oral Answers to Questions

Mr. Churchill: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. You will be aware that in previous Parliaments there have been inquiries into the planting of parliamentary questions. Have you noticed the coincidence that today four questions on the Order Paper are in identical terms? Might this be a coincidence that you would consider inquiring into, Mr. Speaker?

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Order. *[Interruption.]* Further points of order will take up a great deal of time. I shall deal with the matter.

Mr. Skinner: When?

Mr. Speaker: I shall protect the hon. Gentleman.

I do not know about the planting of questions. Questions that are in the same terms often appear on the Order Paper, and that is in order. It is unusual for them to come so high on the Order Paper.

NATIONAL FINANCE

Budget Tax Cuts

1. **Mr. Graham:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what estimate he can provide of the proportion of an average earner's 1988 Budget tax cut that has been absorbed by subsequent *(a)* water and electricity price rises, *(b)* mortgage interest rates and *(c)* interest on personal debt.

2. **Dr. Godman:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what estimate he can provide of the proportion of an average earner's 1988 Budget tax cut that has been absorbed by subsequent *(a)* water and electricity price rises, *(b)* mortgage interest rates and *(c)* interest on personal debt.

6. **Mr. Nigel Griffiths:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what estimate he can provide of the proportion of an average earner's 1988 Budget tax cut that has been absorbed by subsequent *(a)* water and electricity price rises, *(b)* mortgage interest rates and *(c)* interest on personal debt.

8. **Mr. Cummings:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what estimate he can provide of the proportion of an average earner's 1988 Budget tax cut that has been absorbed by subsequent *(a)* water and electricity price rises, *(b)* mortgage interest rates and *(c)* interest on personal debt.

The Chancellor of the Exchequer (Mr. Nigel Lawson): As the hon. Members know, mortgage interest payments and nationalised industry prices are both reflected in the RPI. Since average earnings have risen faster than the RPI, it follows that the average earner has seen a rise in his standard of living even before any account is taken of the benefit of the tax cuts in this year's Budget.

Mr. Graham: Does the Chancellor of the Exchequer realise that in some parts of the United Kingdom the greatest cause of homelessness is mortgage default? Does he understand that many who bought their houses in good faith are being badly let down by him? How high must interest rates rise before he will admit that his policies are wrong? How many more people will have to be made homeless because of the right hon. Gentleman's incompetence?

Mr. Lawson: I have three points to make to the hon. Gentleman. In the first place, the overwhelming cause of mortgage default is broken marriages. It is nothing to do with the mortgage rate. And that is a fact. The second point is that it is well known that interest rates, and therefore the mortgage rate, fluctuate. The third point which the hon. Gentleman ought to take into account—so should other Opposition Members—is that when interest rates go up, on one side certainly borrowers have to pay more, but on the other side savers are getting more too.

Dr. Godman: What does the Chancellor of the Exchequer say to the average wage earner who received about £12 by way of tax cuts in the Budget, who since then has had to pay an extra £30 a month as a result of increased mortgage payments, leaving him and his wife and family £18 worse off? Should we blame the Chancellor of the Exchequer, or the couple? May I put it to the right hon. Gentleman that it is his fiscal policies and other policies that are driving more and more Scots into the seductive but impotent embrace of the Nationalists?

Mr. Lawson: I understand the acute problem posed to the Labour party by the Scottish National party in Scotland, I do not want to intrude into private grief and I shall not say anything more about that, but it does not really arise from the question anyway. As I pointed out, the average earner, fully taking mortgage rate increases into account, is better off today in real terms substantially, even before taking into account the tax cuts in the Budget.

Mr. Griffiths: Is the Chancellor aware of the statement from the CBI which states: "We are consistently"—

[Interruption.] Is he aware of the statement from the CBI which states that it has consistently argued against the need for a price increase in electricity, which has inflicted so much harm on its members and export potential and also on over 20 million households in this country? How does the Chancellor justify forcing up electricity prices by more than 15 per cent. in 13 months?

Mr. Lawson: Since the hon. Gentleman is interested in how business is doing, I shall quote to him, even though he is not permitted to quote to me. I shall quote to him if I may, because it is an important document, from the most recent quarterly regional business survey of the British chambers of commerce, which says:

"Business remains buoyant"——

and this takes full account of electricity rises——

"Confidence is rising, turnover and profitability remains extremely strong . . . That confidence is being equally maintained when translated into investment activity"

and so on. That is the state of business and industry today. I would hope that the hon. Gentleman would welcome it, because that comes from the people who are in business and industry and who know what they are talking about, unlike Opposition Members.

Mr. Cummings: Having heard what the Chancellor has just said, what message can he send to home buyers in my constituency of Easington and home buyers elsewhere in the northern region who are subjected to the horrendous rise in interest rates, but who are earning less than the national average weekly wage? Those people therefore have not benefited from recent tax cuts. What message can he send to the 2,000 shipyard workers who have just lost their jobs in Sunderland and who are subjected to increased hardship because of the rise in home interest rates?

Mr. Lawson: The problem of the shipyard workers in Sunderland has got nothing to do with interest rates. I am indeed sorry about the plight of the shipyard workers in Sunderland, but it is well known that there is gross over-capacity in the shipbuilding industry throughout the world. There is no way in which North East Shipbuilders Ltd. could be made into a profitable enterprise. Instead, we want to see new industries developing in the north-east. Taking the economy as a whole, I remind the hon. Gentleman that there are more people at work in Britain today than at any time in our history.

Mr. Tim Smith: Does my right hon. Friend agree that if we had the misfortune to have a Labour Government, not only would water and electricity prices, and mortgage interest rates have risen, but income tax as well? Will he remind the House by how much the real take-home pay of the average earner has increased over the past nine years and compare that with the record of the last Labour Government?

Mr. Lawson: My hon. Friend is making a very good point. Certainly for a married man on average earnings, with two children, his real earnings have risen during the period of this Government by 29 per cent. in real terms. Under the period of the Labour Government there was virtually no rise whatever. During the period of the Labour Government we had the lowest rate of growth of any Government since the war, the lowest rate of growth of productivity in manufacturing, the lowest level of profitability and indeed a fall in manufacturing output. The only thing that they achieved highs for were inflation and taxation.

Sir Michael Shaw: Does my right hon. Friend accept that this matter must be considered from all aspects? Will he remind us how much the taxpayer is saving by no longer having to subsidise the many loss-making nationalised industries?

Mr. Lawson: My hon. Friend is quite right. There is a substantial saving in not having to subsidise loss-making industries now that these industries have been turned round and are in the private sector. Indeed, we are getting increasing income and increasing yield of corporation tax from those industries now that they are healthy and in the private sector.

Mr. John Townend: Is my right hon. Friend aware that in the north of England, where we have not had the ridiculous rise in property prices that people have had in the south, real increases in wages and tax cuts have made people infinitely better off? Will he resist the pressure from the Opposition Front Bench to increase taxes and continue to decrease taxes? Does he agree that the problem is a fall in the savings ratio and an increase in personal borrowing, and that increases in interest rates will encourage saving and discourage borrowing?

Mr. Lawson: My hon. Friend's understanding of the economy is absolutely correct. As for the regional dimension, he is right there too. The effect of a rise in interest rates, particularly now that the personal sector is a net borrower for the first time ever by a substantial amount, is most pronounced in the south-east, which is where the overheating is, and that shows how well directed that instrument of policy is.

Sir Peter Emery: Will my right hon. Friend point out to the prophets of doom on the Opposition Benches that, to the average earner, the most important thing is to stabilise and lower inflation, and that his policy, to anybody who understands it, is bound to have a lead time of anything between five and eight months? Those critics should keep quiet until we see the success of his policy some time in the new year.

Mr. Lawson: My hon. Friend to some extent flatters the Opposition by suggesting that they have a policy. If they do have a policy, I am sure that the Opposition Members on the Front Bench will seek to catch your eye in a moment, Mr. Speaker, to tell the House what it is, but their track record is one of total indifference to inflation and of allowing inflation to reach record levels. I share my hon. Friend's fear that if they were ever given the chance to get into office—which they will not be—they would do the same again. We, by contrast, will maintain low inflation. That is what we have done since we took office, and that is more important than anything else to the people of Britain, whether business men or private individuals.

Mr. Beith: Will the Chancellor rule out now the tactic of using a further savage rise in interest rates early in the new year as a means of controlling overheating in the economy when there are so many other weapons that he could use—including measures to give tax relief on savings and to encourage the banks to slacken the credit explosion —which would not make him as dependent on interest rates as he has made himself?

Mr. Lawson: Unlike the Labour party, which appears not to have any policy that it is prepared to avow, the Liberal party, or what ever it is now called—always has any number of policies or bright ideas. They are nearly all of them crackpot ideas and the electorate will see through them.

Mr. Butterfill: Will my right hon. Friend confirm that the price increases of public utilities during the last five years of the previous Labour Government were more than double those during the past five years of this Government? Electricity prices increased 170 per cent. during the last five years of the Labour Government whereas they have gone down in real terms under this Government.

Mr. Lawson: My hon. Friend is right. It is also the case that the average earner in Britain is better off in real terms than ever before, and that is what causes the Opposition such deep distress.

Mr. Nicholas Brown: Inflation is higher now than when the Chancellor first started to attack it, and it comes ill from him to demand that we explain our policies when we see his policies in tatters. But I will not be uncharitable. Given the net loss of weekly income to mortgage holders set out in the Chancellor's helpful answer of 31 October to his right hon. Friend the Member for Chesham and Amersham (Sir I. Gilmour), how far would the Government have to reduce income tax to offset those losses, and what would be the effect of such a further reduction on interest rates?

Mr. Lawson: What I will tell the hon. Gentleman is that the average earner is far better off now than he was a year ago, despite the increase in mortgage rates. The table was very precise. It did not take into account the increase in earnings. It did not take into account also the fact that there is a higher interest rate on savings—and people have savings too. So I am telling the hon. Gentleman that the average income and the average earnings of the average person in this country are higher than they were a year ago. I am not going to take lectures on inflation from the Labour party, when the average rate of inflation under Labour was 15½ per cent.—and not in one single month did it ever get it as low as it is today.

Mortgages

3. **Mr. Blunkett:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether his Department will commission research into the relationship between increases in base rates and levels of mortgage default.

The Economic Secretary to the Treasury (Mr. Peter Lilley): No. A study by the Building Societies Association showed no correlation between interest rates and mortgage defaults and that the single most important cause of mortgage arrears is matrimonial breakdown.

Mr. Blunkett: In view of the fact that between 1979 and 1987, of those accepted as homeless for whatever reason, mortgage defaulters rose from 4 to 19 per cent. of the total, does the Minister still believe, as the Government declared 18 months ago, that

"Some people are still deterred by the costs and complications of house purchase. That is why we must look for new ways to make house buying simpler and easier"?

Does he believe that that statement, in the Conservative party election manifesto, has been helped, or hindered, by the Government's actions?

Mr. Lilley: The hon. Gentleman will welcome the fact that in the first six months of this year the number of people in arrears with their mortgage, or forced into having their property repossessed, though extremely small, was 19 per cent. down on the previous year. Another factor found by the Building Societies Association to be important in affecting the level of repossessions was unemployment. With the decline in unemployment, the number of repossessions has also fallen. We believe in making it easier for people to buy their own houses and we welcome those trends.

Mr. Holt: Will my hon. Friend note that, despite the strictures of Opposition Members, the hon. Member for Stockton, North (Mr. Cook) has just taken full advantage of the Government's legislation to purchase his own council house at a maximum 54 per cent. discount?

Mr. Lilley: If that is the case, I congratulate the hon. Member for Stockton, North (Mr. Cook) on his good sense in taking advantage of the opportunities that we have created for all working people. I am proud that 1 million others have joined the hon. Gentleman in taking advantage of their right to buy.

Mr. Frank Cook: Will the Minister note that the purchase of council houses by sitting tenants is not against Labour party policy and never has been? It has been possible to do so in Stockton on Tees since the early 1920s. If the Minister's right hon. and hon. Friends undertook any research, they would realise that their information is grossly distorted—like their mentality.

Mr. Lilley: It would be interesting to know whether the hon. Gentleman joined so many of his right hon. and hon. Friends in voting against the right-to-buy legislation, which ensured that the majority of Labour authorities that did not grant the right to buy to their tenants were required to do so. His right hon. and hon. Friends would be embarrassed by this issue being raised.

Mr. Dykes: Does my hon. Friend agree that home ownership on the current scale is one of the Government's outstanding successes and leaves the Labour party in a state of acute embarrassment on a constant basis? Does he also agree that the financial system is now strong enough to withstand any significant defaults next year, and that it is essential that those who are in difficulties with mortgage repayments should contact the relevant agencies before the problem develops into an unsolvable one?

Mr. Lilley: Yes, my hon. Friend is right. He has returned to the original question, which concerns the burden of debt. Another great Labour party hypocrisy is to pretend to be concerned about debt, when a Labour Government burdened every household in this country with a level of debt far greater than that recently highlighted by the Citizens Advice Bureaux report.

Mr. Chris Smith: Does the Economic Secretary recall that the Chancellor told the nation on London Weekend Television on 9 October, specifically in relation to the issue of mortgage default and repossessions, that he did not think that, with increasing interest rates, there would be more repossessions because families would have to spend

less on other things. Does the hon. Gentleman recall that the Chancellor said that, and does he not think that the remarks were deeply offensive to millions of homebuyers? What has he to say to those home buyers who budgeted sensibly in taking out their mortgages, who mortgaged themselves up to the hilt, cutting back on other expenditure, and who now have no fat in the family budget to cut out? What are they to cut out to meet the higher interest payments?

Mr. Lilley: I agree with my right hon. Friend and disagree with the hon. Gentleman profoundly when he says that it is budgeting sensibly to mortgage oneself up to the hilt. To the extent that people have borrowed too much, and lenders have been unwise enough to lend too much, it is normal to accept—as most building societies do—that when there are difficulties in repayment because of changes in the interest rate, the mortgage can be prolonged, and that is why the level of repossessions is not related to the mortgage rate. I refer the hon. Gentleman to the report of the Building Societies Association, which says:

"A careful examination of the statistics shows that there is no relationship between the level of mortgage rates and the level of possessions and arrears."

Mr. Gow: Would it not add to the spirit of comradeship on the Opposition Benches if my hon. Friend were to publish in the *Official Report* a list of those Opposition Members and Labour councillors who have taken advantage of our right-to-buy legislation?

Mr. Lilley: My hon. Friend is always doing his best to stir up unity in the Labour party. If it proves possible to carry out his request, I shall do so.

Privatisation

4. **Mr. Harry Barnes:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the total sum raised from the privatisation programme from 1979 to date; and to what these revenues have been applied.

The Financial Secretary to the Treasury (Mr. Norman Lamont): The net proceeds from privatisation since May 1979 amount to some £23½ billion.

Mr. Barnes: Have not the revenues been used to stoke up a consumer-led import drive, which is helping to ruin the British economy, and have not consumers' assets been wasted in these nonsensical sales?

Mr. Lamont: The answer to the first point is no and the answer to the second point is, equally, no. The result of privatisation has been that businesses amounting to about 45 per cent. of the public sector in 1979 are operating more efficiently and profitably than ever before.

Mr. Burt: Is it not the case that the privatisation programme is proceeding apace throughout the world, that Socialist Sweden has returned 15 companies with a total turnover of £100 million to the private sector, and that only the Albanian-style Labour party is kicking against this trend?

Mr. Lamont: My hon. Friend is absolutely right. Privatisation programmes are being implemented in many countries in Europe, Asia and also North America. Yet only yesterday the Labour party recommitted itself to the renationalisation of the water industry, which shows that it has not understood that privatisation is a programme that is immensely popular in this country.

Contingency Fund

5. **Mr. Ronnie Campbell:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he expects to allocate resources from the Contingency Fund in 1989-90 to *(a)* pensions and *(b)* education.

7. **Mr. McFall:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he expects to allocate resources from the Contingency Fund in 1989-90 to *(a)* pensions and *(b)* education.

The Chief Secretary to the Treasury (Mr. John Major): I assume that the hon. Gentlemen are referring to the reserve. In the case of pensions, the answer is yes. Other allocations from the reserve will be made as the need arises.

Mr. Campbell: Given the break in the earnings-linked update for pensions, is the Chancellor aware that pensions now are £11 lower for single people and £18 lower for married couples, which has given the Treasury a net saving of £5 billion a year? That has robbed British pensioners of £2,000 a year since 1979. How does the Chancellor feel about being voted the No. 1 Scrooge this Christmas by the pensioners?

Mr. Major: The hon. Gentleman's remarks are wholly misleading, for a variety of reasons. The first point that I want to make is that pensioners' average real incomes have risen by 23 per cent. from 1979 to 1986, compared with only 3 per cent. in real terms between 1974 and 1979. Frankly, we need no lectures from the hon. Gentleman, whose party, when in government, savaged pensioners' living standards.

Mr. McFall: As skills shortages are believed to be the main impediment to the growth of industrial companies, and as a CBI survey shows that over 20 per cent. of industrial firms believe that skills shortages are the primary impediment to growth, why is it that in the White Paper published by the Secretary of State for Employment the Chancellor of the Exchequer did not see fit to allocate an extra penny from the contingency fund to further education and training?

Mr. Major: Substantial increases were allocated to education and training in the recent public expenditure round. The hon. Gentleman may be aware that, in particular, there were substantial increases recently over the whole range of university and other education-related areas of expenditure.

Mr. Brazier: Does my right hon. Friend agree that it is only because of the increase in growth that has occurred as a result of the successful economic policies of this Government that there are extra resources and that we can have discussions about how they ought to be allocated?

Mr. Major: That is right. There were substantial increases in a series of priority programmes during this year's public expenditure round.

Mr. Adley: Will my right hon. Friend consider the significance of the figures that he has just given to the House? There has been a 23 per cent. increase in the real value of pensions, compared with the miserly sum that the

last Labour Government managed to give to pensioners. In particular, there are now more than 1 million additional state pensioners since this Government were elected in 1979. Will my right hon. Friend point out to the people of this country that it is possible to contemplate that a Government such as might emerge if the Labour party were elected would reduce the real value of pensions for state pensioners?

Mr. Major: It is perfectly clear that in the event of there being a further hypothetical Labour Government, and of that Government being as successful as their predecessors, they would undoubtedly, given the increase in the number of pensioners in the last few years, reduce the living standards of pensioners. That is not taking into account the effect of inflation under the last Labour Government. The Opposition would do well to recall that they twice denied the Christmas bonus to pensioners and that a considerable number of pensioners suffered a negative loss on their hard-earned savings as a result of their policies.

Mr. Ron Brown: Does the Minister not understand that today's sick society—also known as the "tick society"—suffers greatly because of Dr. Lawson's quack medicine? Pensioners in their droves in Scotland are backing the mass movement against the poll tax. That is something that the Government will have to face next year in Scotland—as well as in England, in due course.

Mr. Major: My right hon. Friend's policies have led to eight successive years of quite substantial growth, which is both a creditable and a remarkable record. As for pensioners, the hon. Gentleman and all his hon. Friends have neglected to mention the further substantial assistance that has just been announced in respect of older pensioners. I should have thought that they would welcome that announcement.

Charities (VAT)

9. **Sir Peter Emery:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether he will list the total level of value added tax estimated to be provided by charities during the forthcoming financial year and the amount provided by charities over the last five years.

Mr. Lilley: I regret that this information is not available.

Sir Peter Emery: This Government have probably done more than any other to encourage giving to charities, but does my hon. Friend not realise that they are suffering considerably after donations have been made because some leading charities are paying £1 million or £2 million more in VAT? Those who make donations to charities do not believe that their money should be used for that purpose. Will my hon. Friend ask the Chancellor to consider that matter when he is thinking about next April's Budget?

Mr. Lilley: I thank my hon. Friend for his remarks about the Government's policies to encourage charitable giving, and I pay tribute to him for his consistent interest in this issue. My right hon. Friend considered the possibility of a general VAT relief, but decided against it. First, it is inconsistent with and would not be permitted under European Community law, although specific reliefs might be. Secondly, my right hon. Friend decided that it would be better to concentrate on encouraging the act of charitable giving, since it is clearly right that the amount of tax relief that a charity receives should be related to the amount of giving that it is able to attract. It is also good that, whereas £1 of VAT relief is worth just £1, an extra £1 of tax relief on the act of giving has a multiplier effect and encourages extra charitable giving.

Mr. Rooker: What are the Government doing to distinguish between charities whose purposes we all understand and charities set up exclusively to avoid tax? What action are the Government taking to ensure that those charities are shut down?

Mr. Lilley: From time to time measures are introduced in the Finance Bill to prevent the use of tax legislation as tax loopholes. Another safeguard is provided through the charity commissioners, who are required to examine the matter.

Mr. Higgins: Does my hon. Friend agree that there are real difficulties in giving VAT relief to charities? Were not those dificulties recognised when the tax was introduced? Do not the compensation advantages in tax that were given to charities at that time, and continued by successive Conservative Governments for the same purpose, vastly exceed the actual cost to charities of VAT?

Mr. Lilley: My right hon. Friend is absolutely right. Because of the benefits that we have given to charities and the inducement that we have given to encourage charitable giving, the amount of charitable giving has doubled in real terms since 1979.

Group of Seven

10. **Ms. Mowlam:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what information he has as to the current inflation rates of the member states of the Group of Seven leading industrialised countries.

Mr. Norman Lamont: With permission, Mr. Speaker, I shall publish a table in the *Official Report*.

Ms. Mowlam: In view of the Minister's response, will he tell the House when he expects Britain's inflation rates to fall into line with those of our competitors—this year, next year, or after the Chancellor leaves his job?

Mr. Lamont: When my right hon. Friend the Chancellor made a speech during the debate on the Loyal Address, he told the House when he expected the rate of inflation to peak and when he expected it to come down.

Ms. Mowlam: When?

Mr. Lamont: The hon. Lady knows that I would never make such a precise prediction. The inflation differential between this country and the G7 countries to which the hon. Lady referred in her question has been narrowing since the Government took office. Between 1974 and 1979, when the Labour Government were in office, the gap was 6½ points on average. Under the Conservative Government, it has been a mere 1·7 points. We intend to narrow the gap even further.

Mr. Budgen: Does my right hon. Friend agree that the history of those countries, especially Germany, shows that any relatively open economy can adjust to high and rising rates of inflation? Does he further agree that while

Governments are pouring excess demand into the economy there will always be those who are unwise enough to applaud that because they personally enjoy its benefits? Does he also agree that the case against inflation is not economic, but social, because of the corrosive effect that it creates for all those who lose by inflation—whether council tenants, pensioners or savers?

Mr. Lamont: My hon. Friend is absolutely right. Those who suffer most from inflation are those on fixed incomes, savers and the elderly. A major part of our recent inflation has been caused by our very fast rate of growth. Despite the advantages of that rate of growth, we must do justice to those who are disadvantaged by inflation. That is why we have acted promptly and are determined to bring down inflation. That is why we have a Budget surplus, which is the best possible background for bringing that about.

Mr. Gordon Brown: Is the Minister aware that the Chancellor told both the House and the Treasury Select Committee last week that inflation would rise to 5·5 per cent. in 1989 if mortgage costs were excluded? Will he confirm that with mortgage costs included—a real burden that millions face—the new Treasury forecast is that inflation will rise towards 7 per cent. during 1989? Does he now forecast inflation rising above 7 per cent.? Will he say yes or no?

Mr. Lamont: The hon. Gentleman makes his calculations, but my right hon. Friend the Chancellor has published the figures both with and without mortgage costs being included. We are determined to bring down inflation and we have taken firm action to achieve that. The results of that policy will show fairly soon.

Following is the information:

Percentage increase in consumer prices over 12 months to October 1988

	Per cent
United States	4·2
Japan	1·1
Germany	1·3
France	3·0
United Kingdom	6·4 [1](5·1)
Italy	4·7
Canada	4·2 [1](4·2)

[1] Bracketed figure excludes mortgage interest payments.
Source: OECD, Department of Employment.

Company Profits

11. **Mr. Jack:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer by how much in percentage terms company profitability has changed in the north-west of England in the last five years.

Mr. Major: The net rate of return of non-North sea industrial and commercial companies in 1987 was two and a half times its level in 1982. I am glad to say that the north-west of England has fully participated in the economy's strong growth over the past six years.

Mr. Jack: My right hon. Friend's answer will bring enlightenment and knowledge to the dark recesses of the Opposition Benches. Will he confirm that the growth in profitability has enabled Fox's Biscuits in my constituency to invest £14·5 million in a new factory which will create 400 jobs in the next five years? Will he further confirm that improved profitability has benefited company liquidity in the north-west with continuous extra investment?

Mr. Major: I am delighted to hear of that particular investment by Fox's Biscuits. I had the opportunity of visiting United Biscuits at Stockport and was delighted to see how well that company was doing. It is true to say that there is a substantial degree of capital investment, most noticeably in manufacturing industry. That has contributed substantially to the fall in unemployment.

Mr. Ashton: The Government have been in power for nine and a half years, not five years. For how much longer are we to see this charade of staged Conservative party political broadcasts using the best figures and the best times? Is it not a fact that if a company in the north-west made £1 profit in 1982, and now makes £2 profit, the Government would say that it had doubled its profits or increased its profits by 100 per cent.? For how much longer will we have to put up with phoney figures being trotted out in the House? Give us the figures since 1979.

Mr. Major: I shall do better than that. I can tell the hon. Gentleman that private-sector investment in 1988 as a percentage of GDP is at the highest level since statistics were first collected.

Mr. Goodlad: Has my right hon. Friend read the latest regional survey of the chambers of commerce of Manchester and Merseyside, showing the high level of confidence in future profitability? Is that not indicative of the state of the economy throughout the north-west?

Mr. Major: I entirely agree with my hon. Friend. I have seen the survey and it shows, among other things, that expectations have risen in the third quarter over the second quarter.

Confederation of British Industry

12. **Mr. Turner:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer when he next expects to meet representatives of the Confederation of British Industry; and what matters will be discussed.

16. **Mr. Buckley:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer when he next expects to meet representatives of the Confederation of British Industry; and what matters will be discussed.

Mr. Lawson: This evening I shall be meeting the economic and financial policy committee of the CBI, where a wide range of subjects will be discussed.

Mr. Turner: In view of the hostile resolution at the CBI conference—[HON. MEMBERS: "Reading."]—and the fact that the base rate increases—*[Interruption.]* I shall not give way. As, since May of this year, industry has lost £700 million in base rate increases, and manufacturing companies' overseas order books are the lowest since April as a result of the Government's sterling policy, why does the Chancellor not take the Edinburgh Hundreds?

Mr. Lawson: I must tell the hon. Gentleman that he has been sadly misled by the brief which someone has handed to him. In fact, the CBI acknowledged that British business today is doing better than ever before. Manufacturing productivity has been rising faster in this country than ever before and faster, indeed, than in any

other major industrial country. Investment this year is running at some 12 per cent. growth in real terms—twice as fast as the growth in consumption—and there will be further substantial growth in investment next year. As my right hon. Friend the Chief Secretary pointed out a moment ago, private-sector investment this year as a percentage of GDP is at the highest level since figures were first collected in 1955.

Mr. Buckley: Will the Chancellor take the opportunity tonight to dispel the fear of the chairman of the CBI, who is worried about the high interest rates that the Chancellor has brought into the economy? These are seriously undermining small companies. Is he aware that a £1 billion increase in costs to British industry is a direct consequence of the increase in interest rates that he has brought about since May? Does the right hon. Gentleman accept that, according to the CBI conference, his current policy is gravely undermining the Government's policy on business starts and expansion?

Mr. Lawson: That is untrue. The CBI recognises that the Government's policy has provided a better climate for business and industry to prosper than ever before. It knows that profitability this year is expected to be at the highest level since 1960, and it knows, too, that the Government's insistence on getting inflation down is the most important safeguard for British industry in competing throughout the world.

PRIME MINISTER

Engagements

Q1. **Mr. Battle:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 8 December.

The Prime Minister (Mrs. Margaret Thatcher): This morning the Soviet ambassador called on me to deliver a message from President Gorbachev. Later I presided at a meeting of the Cabinet and had meetings with ministerial colleagues and others. In addition to my duties in the House, I shall be having further meetings later today and will be addressing the annual meeting of the Per Cent Club.

Mr. Battle: Knowing the Prime Minister's fondness for photo opportunities with British tanks, can she now tell the House that she is prepared to go for the British Challenger II tank, which is the best value for the Army and the best deal for the taxpayer? Such an announcement would reassure 14,000 workers that they will still have jobs after Christmas. Is she going to blast the Leeds tank industry in the way that she sank Sunderland's shipbuilding industry?

The Prime Minister: A decision will be made on that by the end of the year. Naturally, the Army must have the best possible tanks for its purposes.

Q2. **Mr. Oppenheim:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 8 December.

The Prime Minister: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Oppenheim: Does my right hon. Friend agree that yesterday's troop reduction proposals by President Gorbachev, which have been warmly welcomed by one of the Opposition's leaders as a great initiative, would never been made if the Government had followed the one-sided disarmament proposals advocated by the Opposition and CND?

The Prime Minister: First, I am sure that the whole House would wish to join me in offering sympathy to the victims and the bereaved following the earthquake that afflicted the Soviet Union.

I can tell my hon. Friend that we have welcomed the unilateral reductions in forces and armaments proposed by Mr. Gorbachev as an important step towards securing a better balance of forces in Europe, in view of the Soviet Union's present overwhelming superiority. But we need to keep the matter in perspective. Even after the reductions, the Soviet Union will have 41,500 tanks compared with 16,500 for NATO, 35,000 artillery pieces compared with 14,000 for NATO, and 7,400 aircraft compared with 4,000 for NATO. Therefore, there will still be a major asymmetry in the Soviet Union's favour. There is still much tough negotiating to do.

Mr. Kinnock: First, I join the Prime Minister in offering our deepest sympathy to the people of Armenia at this time of great suffering and loss of life. I also strongly support the offer that she has made elsewhere to provide whatever help may appear to be necessary.

Mr. Gorbachev has taken another major and historic step towards the time when the use or threat of force will no longer be an instrument of foreign policy. May I ask the Prime Minister to ensure that, in deeds as well as in words, her responses match President Gorbachev's realism and vision?

The Prime Minister: First, I thank the right hon. Gentleman for his words at the beginning. We all join in extending sympathy to the Soviet Union. As he knows, we stand ready with the disaster relief unit at the Foreign and Commonwealth Office to offer any help that we can. We have had an urgent request from the Soviet authorities for the use of thermal imaging equipment, which was used so successfully to locate people trapped under collapsed buildings in the Mexico earthquake. We have offered to assemble a team of London firemen, who were also used in Mexico, together with the equipment, and we stand ready to fly them out to the Soviet Union later today. We have also had many other offers which we shall follow up.

With regard to what the right hon. Gentleman said, I described the remaining figures for conventional forces as a great asymmetry. As he is well aware, we were very anxious to get talks on conventional armaments going to try to secure asymmetrical disarmament. There is still plenty of scope to do that, and we shall be pursuing it together with NATO later.

Mr. Grocott: It is mean-minded.

The Prime Minister: It is very far from mean-minded. I am absolutely certain that President Gorbachev is very well aware that I am as determined to defend our way of life as he is to defend his. I repeat that the superiority of the Soviet armed forces over ours is more than two to one in their favour.

Mr. Kinnock: President Gorbachev said at the United Nations:

> "We are witnessing the emergence of a new historic reality, a turning away from the principle of super-armament, to the principle of reasonable defence sufficiency."

Will the Prime Minister take this opportunity to give us her view of what for Britain is reasonable defence sufficiency? Does it include the purchase of a new generation of nuclear weapons?

The Prime Minister: It consists of making an accurate assessment of the nuclear, chemical and conventional weaponry, which the potential aggressor still has, and making certain that we are in a position to deter aggression. I am quite ready to believe—indeed, I already know—that the Opposition would throw away the defence of this country. The approach that I have described is the one that we shall follow. We shall look at the weaponry that they have and make certain that our defence is strong enough to deter.

Mr. Hind: Does my right hon. Friend agree that British spending on defence is about 5·1 per cent. of gross national product, compared with 13 per cent. that the Soviet Union spends on defence? Does she agree also that President Gorbachev has made a virtue out of necessity in order to bring the standard of living of his people up to that enjoyed in the West?

The Prime Minister: We all know that the proportion of GDP spent on armaments in the Soviet Union is greatly in excess of what any democratic country can do. Our own is about 4·2 per cent. of GDP. In the Soviet Union it is very much more. I believe that the proposals made by President Gorbachev at the United Nations were made genuinely to reduce conventional weapons and the dissymmetry on his side, and no doubt also because, quite naturally, he wishes to raise the standard of living of people in the Soviet Union. Our task is to make certain that we always have a sure defence while trying to extend the hand of friendship across the European divide.

Mr. Ashdown: Will the Prime Minister assure the House that she recognises that President Gorbachev's remarkable speech yesteday could mark a significant historical turning point? Now that President Gorbachev's attention is rightly directed to the tragedy in his own country, I beg the Prime Minister to realise that she must use her influence to ensure that there is an effective and substantial response from Western leaders to maintain the momentum for international disarmament and to ensure that President Gorbachev's position in his own country is strengthened.

The Prime Minister: As the hon. Gentleman is aware, I was the first leader in the Western world to welcome Mr. Gorbachev's reforms. I welcomed them publicly because I believe that any possibility of enlarging freedom in the Soviet Union is to the advantage not only of the people there but of the whole world. I welcome the words that President Gorbachev used at the United Nations. He said:

"The principle of freedom of choice is mandatory."

I wish that all Opposition Members believed in that principle. He went on to say:

"Freedom of choice is a universal principle that should allow for no exceptions."

I agree with that, too. */Interruption./* I am responding. He went on:

"The new phase . . . requires de-ideologising relations among states. We are not abandoning our convictions . . . but neither do we have any intention to be hemmed in by our values."

I welcome all that. I was among the first to welcome his movement towards increased freedom and increased responsibility, but always, as he knows, making certain that our defence is sure. I agree with my hon. Friends. It is because of that—and the same view is taken by NATO colleagues—that we have got far more disarmament than we ever could have thought possible.

Mr. Churchill: In appreciation of President Gorbachev's most significant gesture at the United Nations yesterday, and out of humanitarian concern for the people of Armenia, will my right hon. Friend specifically offer an air-lifted field hospital and assistance from the Royal Engineers? Is she aware that the Manchester fire brigade would most certainly also wish to be associated with any civilian offer of thermal imaging and personnel?

The Prime Minister: As my hon. Friend probably heard earlier this morning, we will offer whatsoever we can to the limit of our ability. When we were informed of what they wanted, we responded immediately. The disaster relief unit in the Foreign and Commonwealth Office is standing by. Our ambassador to Europe has already been to the Commission. We have already had offers of help from the British Red Cross, and it is in touch. We have already—*/Interruption./* I am sorry that Opposition Members do not seem to be interested in the help that we are prepared to offer. We have already had—*/Interruption./* We have already had messages and offers of help from surgeons in this country, who have said that they could quite easily put together an operating team, if that is needed, to relieve the stress and strain in the Soviet Union.

Q3. **Mr. Tom Clarke:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 8 December.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Clarke: Is the Prime Minister aware that there is genuine and widespread concern in Scotland about the way in which we deal with Scottish affairs in the House? Does she accept that there is to be a concentrated and orchestrated attack on Scottish Question Time, because 27 English Conservative Members have tabled questions for the next Scottish Quesion Time? That makes a mockery of the failure to provide a handful of hon. Members to allow the Scottish Affairs Select Committee to continue.

The Prime Minister: Scottish Members play a very full part in all matters that are debated in the House. We are a united kingdom. I trust that the hon. Gentleman is not resiling from that. Is resiling from the United Kingdom a new Labour party policy? So long as we are a united kingdom, we should deal with our affairs as a united country.

Sir Anthony Grant: Does my hon. Friend agree that it is very much in the nation's interests that the Civil Service should maintain its traditional role of serving whichever Government are in power and that, if a civil servant wishes to pontificate on party political matters, he should resign from the service and stand for Parliament, like the rest of us?

The Prime Minister: I am sure that my hon. Friend will agree that we get extremely good service from the Civil Service, which, in general, upholds the highest traditions of the service. If that is not so, it is a matter for the head of the Civil Service to deal with.

Business of the House

3.30 pm

Mr. Frank Dobson (Holborn and St. Pancras): Will the Leader of the House tell us the business for next week?

The Lord President of the Council and Leader of the House of Commons (Mr. John Wakeham): The business for next week will be as follows:

MONDAY 12 DECEMBER AND TUESDAY 13 DECEMBER—Second Reading of the Electricity Bill.

At Ten o'clock on Tuesday the House will be asked to agree the Civil and Defence Votes on Account and the Winter Supplementary Estimates

Afterwards, motion relating to the Social Fund Cold Weather Payments (General) Amendment Regulations

WEDNESDAY 14 DECEMBER—Until Seven o'clock debate on a Government motion on British Shipbuilders.

Second Reading of the Transport (Scotland) Bill.

THURSDAY 15 DECEMBER—Second Reading of the Security Service Bill.

Committee and remaining stages of the Petroleum Royalties (Relief) and Continental Shelf Bill.

FRIDAY 16 DECEMBER—Private Members motions.

MONDAY 19 DECEMBER—Until Seven o'clock, Private Members motions.

Motion for the Christmas Adjournment.

Proceedings on the Consolidated Fund Bill.

Mr. Speaker, the House will wish to know it will be proposed that, subject to the progress of business, the House should rise for the Christmas Adjournment on Thursday 22 December until Tuesday 10 January.

Mr. Dobson: I thank the Leader of the House for his statement.

I welcome the Government's decision to provide two days of debate on the Bill to sell off the electricity supply industry, particularly as that will permit debate on the impact of the Bill on Scotland, although there should have been a separate Scottish Bill.

While welcoming the provision of time to debate the closure of the shipyards at Sunderland, may I ask the Leader of the House to reconsider the proposal to hold the shipbuilding debate before the commencement of the Second Reading debate on the Transport (Scotland) Bill, which is of sufficient importance to the people of Scotland to merit its starting and finishing at the normal times?

While on the subject of Scottish affairs, may I ask the Leader of the House to tell us what is happening about the Select Committee on Scottish Affairs? As my hon. Friend the Member for Monklands, West (Mr. Clarke) said, 27 Tory Members have shown themselves to be so interested in Scottish affairs that they have put down questions for oral answer at the next Scottish Question Time. Surely this display of interest in Scottish affairs should lead at least a few of them to be willing to do their duty and serve on the Scottish Affairs Select Committee, which the Standing Orders of the House required us to bring into operation more than a year ago.

Will the Leader of the House tell us when the House will have an opportunity to debate the report of the Fennell inquiry into the King's Cross Underground fire, which has wide significance for the safety of passengers everywhere and for the respective responsibilities of managers, regulatory inspectorates and the Government? I understand that the matter is to be debated in Government time in the House of Lords, and if the Government can find time for it in the other place, they ought to find time for it here.

Finally, will the Leader of the House confirm that any controversial Government legislation should, by tradition, be introduced in this House and not in the House of Lords? If so, can he guarantee that the Bill to introduce compulsory football club membership schemes will come before this House first? Some measures have gone through the other place first on the ground that their Lordships have special and direct experience of the topic in question. Surely the Government are not suggesting that the other place has special and direct experience of the shed at Stamford Bridge or the Stretford end at Old Trafford. This is an important measure and it should come first to the House of Commons, particularly because, as with many other Government measures, it impinges on the civil liberties of everybody, not just of those immediately concerned.

Mr. Wakeham: The hon. Gentleman asked me five questions about next week's business, and I shall do my best to give him five answers. I am grateful for what he said about the Electricity Bill. It is for the convenience of the House that there should be a two-day debate, and I am pleased that I was able to arrange it. I am also glad that I was able to arrange a debate on British Shipbuilders, which, as I announced, is to be held next Wednesday. I regret that that means that the Transport (Scotland) Bill debate will start later than we had originally intended, but I think that, through the usual channels, we shall arrange for the debate to go on past its normal hour of 10 o'clock. I shall look at the matter again, but I do not undertake to make any other arrangements.

As I have already informed the House, it is my intention to have a debate on the Scottish Affairs Select Committee before Christmas, and it may be for the convenience of the House if I say that the debate is likely to take place on Tuesday 20 December.

The hon. Gentleman is correct to say that there is to be a debate next week in the other place on the King's Cross fire. It is an extremely important issue and I know of the hon. Gentleman's constituency concern. I cannot undertake to find Government time before the Christmas recess, but the question of a debate can be discussed through the usual channels. There are several occasions when this matter could be raised; for example, in the debate on Monday 19 December.

It must be for the Government to determine into which House a Bill is introduced. I do not accept the hon. Gentleman's general constitutional judgment on these matters. The Bill to which he refers—the football Bill—has not yet been published and I am glad that he is anxious for us to make progress on this matter. I noted what he said, and I am happy for the matter to be discussed through the usual channels.

Sir Bernard Braine (Castle Point): My right hon. Friend will be aware that this week marks the 40th anniversary of the United Nations universal declaration of human rights. However, gross violations of human rights continue in many countries. In view of the implications for foreign

[Sir Bernard Braine]

policy, and of the rising concern on both sides of the House about this abomination, will my right hon. Friend arrange an early debate on human rights?

Mr. Wakeham: I recognise my right hon. Friend's concern—which probably goes back further than 40 years—for human rights wherever he finds them not being maintained. His record is second to none in the House. There will be opportunities to raise this question before the House rises for the Christmas recess. I am sorry to say that I do not believe that it will be possible to find Government time for a debate. As my right hon. Friend will know, my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs has written to all hon. Members on this very important matter.

Mr. James Wallace (Orkney and Shetland): I endorse the comments of the Father of the House, and I am disappointed by the right hon. Gentleman's reply.

The training White Paper announced this week said that training and enterprise councils would have large sums of money to dispose of and should have a clear framework for their operations. Will that involve a statutory framework, and do the Government propose to introduce legislation to implement this proposal?

What is the nature of the motion that the Leader of the House will ask the House to debate on 20 December about the Scottish Select Committee?

Mr. Wakeham: On the hon. Gentleman's second point, I am not at present able to announce the terms of the motion on the Scottish Select Committee. I recognise the hon. Gentleman's concern and I shall do my best to table the motion in good time for hon. Gentlemen to study it before the debate.

There are a number of substantial issues in the training White Paper. There will be opportunities to debate many of the issues, especially on the Second Reading of the Employment Bill. Nevertheless, it may be possible to find time in the new year for a debate on the White Paper itself, but I would prefer to discuss that through the usual channels.

Sir Hal Miller (Bromsgrove): Will my right hon. Friend consider making arrangements for a Minister from the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food to make a statement to the House before the recess? I notice from the Order of Questions that there will be no opportunity to question a Minister from that Ministry on the subject of the damage being done to the egg industry. I regret that the matter was treated with some levity in the House during questions on Monday. The egg industry is in a serious position because of the ill-considered—if considered at all—remarks of a junior Health Minister. Could a Minister from the Ministry explain to us the position of the nation's flock of poultry and the food value of the eggs that they produce?

Mr. Wakeham: I thought that when my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Health answered questions on Monday he was correct. He gave serious answers to serious questions. My hon. Friend must try to keep this matter in perspective. I recognise the seriousness of the matter for the egg industry, but there is a serious health risk. There have been 46 reported outbreaks associated with eggs, and 9 billion eggs are consumed each year. The problem must be put in that perspective. I shall, of course, refer the matter to my right hon. Friend the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food.

Mr. Michael Foot (Blaenau Gwent): I reinforce what was said by my hon. Friend the Member for Holborn and St. Pancras (Mr. Dobson) about the shocking proposal—if it has ever been a proposal—to start the football identity cards Bill in another place. Will the right hon. Gentleman take into account the fact that there was a debate in the House on that matter and that almost every speech, from both sides of the House, was against the Bill? The Bill infringes the civil liberties of British people, and the idea of introducing it in another place is absurd. Doing that will only add to the difficulties of getting any such measure through. Will the right hon. Gentleman, here and now, give us the undertaking that it will not be introduced in another place?

Mr. Wakeham: I am grateful for the right hon. Gentleman's assistance and guidance on how I can get my legislation through the House. I do not think that I can add to what I have said. If we look back to when the right hon. Gentleman was in government, we see that important legislation was started in the House of Lords. It is not constitutionally acceptable to say that that is not a proper thing to do. I have undertaken to have discussions through the usual channels, which I believe is the best way to proceed.

Dr. Alan Glyn (Windsor and Maidenhead): In view of recent events, will my right hon. Friend consider having a debate on international terrorism and on how best countries can combine to combat this terrible threat?

Mr. Wakeham: My hon. Friend raises an important matter. There was a debate on some of the issues this week, and there will be further stages of that legislation, when my hon. Friend will be able to raise points which he believes to be important. There will also be one or two other opportunities shortly when these matters could be raised. I wish that I could be more forthcoming.

Mr. Greville Janner (Leicester, West): May I associate myself with the plea by the Father of the House for a debate on human rights? I know that the Jewish community in this country would wish to associate itself with the expressions of sympathy for the people who are suffering in the Soviet Union. I know, too, that other hon. Members would wish to raise the problems that remain for refusniks who are not allowed to leave and to plead with President Gorbachev that by the time he visits London—which we hope will be soon—there will be no further refusniks, and the Jewish people, along with all other minorities, will be able to practise their religions in freedom in the USSR.

Mr. Wakeham: I am grateful to the hon. and learned Gentleman for what he has said and I recognise the considerable part of his life that he has devoted to that particular issue. I am sorry that I cannot be more forthcoming about a debate on such matters, but I have no doubt that we shall find ways to raise them, quite properly, in the House.

Sir Michael McNair-Wilson (Newbury): As the Anglo-Irish Agreement has been in existence for approximately three years and is currently under review, can my right hon. Friend say when he expects to find time

for the House to make a contribution to that review? As we shall consider the possibility of a setting up a Scottish Select Committee before Christmas, has he given any further thought to creating a Select Committee for Northern Ireland?

Mr. Wakeham: I have no specific proposals to put before the House for a Select Committee for Northern Ireland, but discussions are going on about other Northern Ireland matters and I am always willing to listen to any views that come from any part of the House. The Anglo-Irish Agreement has much potential to benefit all law-abiding people in both parts of Ireland and in Great Britain. As I have told the House before, my right hon. Friend is anxious to hear any views that hon. Members and others wish to put forward, and we accept that the House as a whole should have the opportunity to express its views. The review will continue over several months, and the best time for a debate is a matter of judgment.

Mr. Andrew Welsh (Angus, East): Although I welcome the fulfilment, at long last, of the Leader of the House's promise for a debate on the Scottish Select Committee, I find it utterly objectionable that such an important Scottish matter should be treated in such a last-minute fashion by being debated just before the Christmas recess. Will the right hon. Gentleman assure us that the motion that he tables will be a positive one and that it will refer to the clear breach of Standing Orders by the failure to provide a Select Committee for Scotland.

Mr. Wakeham: I give the undertaking that it will be a positive motion, and I believe that it will be a suitable basis for debate, but I cannot go into the terms of it at the moment.

Mr. Bill Walker (Tayside, North): When my right hon. Friend considers the terms of the motion—I know that he will give serious consideration to it—on the Scottish Affairs Select Committee, will he bear in mind that more than eight out of 10 taxpayers living in the United Kingdom live in England and that those taxpayers have an interest in what happens in all of the United Kingdom, as do the Members representing their constituencies? Will he also bear in mind that the vast majority of tourists who visit Scotland come from England and that we Scots want the terms of the motion to make it clear that the United Kingdom is an integral and important part of this unitary Parliament?

Mr. Wakeham: My hon. Friend makes some extremely valid points. I hope that he will be able to catch your eye, Mr. Speaker, and have the opportunity to develop them in the debate that will take place. I cannot give any further indication of the exact terms of the motion, but I shall bear in mind what my hon. Friend and the hon. Member for Angus, East (Mr. Welsh) have said.

Mr. Tam Dalyell (Linlithgow): May I make a valid point on behalf of all Back Benchers of all parties? Can it possibly be true that Back-Bench rights have been eroded to the extent that the Consolidated Fund Bill debate now starts at 10 o'clock? There used to be a time when the Consolidated Fund debate was sancrosanct, other than when there were the most urgent statements, which Mr. Speaker approved, and it started at 3.30 pm. Our rights were then eroded by the Adjournment debate and now we have private Members' business and the Adjournment debate followed by the Consolidated Fund debate starting at 10 o'clock. Are Back-Bench rights to be upheld, or not?

Mr. Wakeham: Compared with some of the questions that the hon. Gentleman has asked me, that is a fair one and I shall do my best to give him an answer. It is not unprecedented for the Consolidated Fund debate to start at 10 pm. The business that I have announced has been arranged for the general convenience of the House. I am sure the hon. Gentleman appreciates that it is not always possible to satisfy the demands of each and every Member. I recognise that the present arrangement is not totally convenient.

Mr. Michael Latham (Rutland and Melton): May I raise with my right hon. Friend a matter that I have raised on several occasions over the past two years and on which nothing discernible has been done? It is disgraceful that many of our constituents have to queue in the rain or in cold weather to get into the House. This happens day after day. It is their Parliament and they want to visit it. Will my right hon. Friend please read early-day motion 133, which is supported by hon. Members of both sides of the House?

[That this House is ashamed of the conditions in which parties of constituents visiting Parliament are required to wait; notes that they often have to wait for lengthy periods unprotected from rain or cold at the Norman Porch; recognises that a combination of lack of space at the Norman Porch and of the existence of only one security screening machine means that there is nothing that the staff on duty can do to alleviate these deplorable conditions and demands that an alternative system be introduced; recommends that consideration be given to entry by the foot-gate to Westminster Hall at the car park end where there is space for our constituents to wait in the dry and where there is room for a better screening system; and points out that many of these parties are of elderly people or school children who have to remain in wet clothes for the rest of the day.]

Let us have no more procrastinating on this matter. If the other place will not do anything about it, let us start the line of route in Westminster Hall.

Wakeham: I am sorry that my hon. Friend is disappointed. I recognise that there has not been much progress to meet his point. Discussions are taking place between both Houses with the aim of arriving at mutually acceptable arrangements to improve admission to the line of route. I am sure that the possibility of reversing the route will be considered. I am aware that that is referred to in an early-day motion.

Mr. Martin Redmond (Don Valley): Will the Leader of the House give an assurance that the football identity card that is being talked about will be discussed only in this Chamber as a provision in a hybrid Bill?

Mr. Wakeham: I cannot give any such undertaking to the hon. Gentleman. The rules of order are not primarily matters for me. I am sure that the Government will proceed in due order.

Mr. Harry Greenway (Ealing, North): I ask my right hon. Friend for an early debate on local government finance. I wish to raise in the House the difficulties of several hundred of my constituents who have been summonsed by Ealing council to pay their rates, although

[Mr. Harry Greenway]

they have been paid already. They include old people, disabled people and many extremely poor people. The fact that they are required to pay a £22 summons fee for rates that they have paid already is causing the greatest fury. There should be an early debate in the House in view of this injustice.

Mr. Wakeham: My hon. Friend will have noted that next Monday there will be two opportunities which, with his usual ingenuity, he could use to raise the matter that he has drawn to the attention of the House.

Mrs. Maria Fyfe (Glasgow, Maryhill): Opposition Members cannot understand the difficulties of the Leader of the House in establishing a Select Committee on Scottish Affairs. Surely the past 18 months have provided sufficient time to frame an appropriate motion. When the right hon. Gentleman starts to find Conservative Members to serve on the Committee, will he take into account the nature of the questions that were tabled for this month's Scottish questions? It gave great offence to the people of Scotland that none of the questions tabled by Conservative Members related to the fiasco of the conditional benefit system, to low pay for the young, to the regrading of nurses, which was a disgrace to the Government in the eyes of those in Scotland, to mounting debt, whether in respect of mortgages or rents, and to all the other issues that are of genuine concern to the people of Scotland. Most of the questions by Conservative Members were about how they and their pals could get their snouts into the trough at the expense of the people of Scotland. Will the right hon. Gentleman take these factors into account when choosing Conservative Members to serve on the Committee?

Mr. Wakeham: The setting up of a Select Committee on Scottish Affairs is more complicated than the hon. Lady would have us believe. The Labour party was unable—I understand why—to accept the proposals that I put to it. If it had accepted them, the Committee would have been set up a long time ago. I cannot accept what the hon. Lady said about Scottish questions. It is in order for Members on both sides of the House to ask questions of any Minister. Some questions, such as those on the Forestry Commission, can be answered only by Scottish Ministers.

Mr. Hugo Summerson (Walthamstow): Bearing in mind that London's streets are becoming more and more choked by traffic, we urgently need a clear policy statement by the Government on ways of dealing with the problem. Such a policy will have to prevent private cars from coming into London and provide for a huge increase in efficiency in public transport. Will my right hon. Friend find time for a debate on this matter as soon as possible before the streets of the capital become clogged completely and nothing can move?

Mr. Wakeham: I am sure that my hon. Friend could raise that matter during the Consolidated Fund debate or during the debate on the Adjournment motion on 19 December. I recognise the importance of the matter that he has raised, and I shall refer it to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Transport.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I am always reluctant to curtail business questions. I shall call those hon. Members who have been seeking to intervene.

Mr. Dick Douglas (Dunfermline, West): Will the Leader of the House give us an idea of his thinking on the motion that he is to table on Tuesday 20 December? It is extraordinary that, having gone through this great episode, we have not so far seen the terms of the motion. Will it be a positive motion, along the lines that the Leader of the House wants to set up a Select Committee? Will it be possible to amend it? Will he give us some straight talking rather than the obfuscations that we have embarked upon so far?

Mr. Wakeham: It will be a positive motion and it will be possible for it to be amended, as I understand it.

Mr. Ron Brown (Edinburgh, Leith): As the Lord Advocate has made it clear that he will not say whether the poll tax, or community charge, is legal, in other words whether it contravenes the 1707 Treaty of Union, may we have a debate to discuss the issue, bearing in mind that that individual is not responsible to the House, and also that back home in Scotland working-class people, Socialists, trade unionists and others are fighting back against the Government and against a regressive tax which they do not accept?

Mr. Wakeham: I do not accept much of what the hon. Gentleman has said. His premise is not accepted for one minute. However, I shall refer the matter to my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland. If the hon. Gentleman's question needs an answer, he will get one.

Mr. Paul Boateng (Brent, South): Now that the English rate support legislation has passed through the House at a cost of some £8·8 million to the hard-pressed ratepayers of Brent, will the Leader of the House ask his right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment to make a statement in the House on the unique service of a section 114 notice by the director of finance of the London borough of Brent? Will he ask his right hon. Friend the Secretary of State to make a statement about Brent's financial crisis and whether he will meet the Members of Parliament of all parties who represent Brent, and also Brent's leadership, to resolve the crisis and return to the people of Brent some of the £52 million that the Government have taken from Brent since 1979?

Mr. Wakeham: I do not accept anything that the hon. Gentleman has said in his question. However, I understand why he asked it in that way. I shall refer the matter to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment. It is likely that he may wish to make a statement on the rate support settlement, but not necessarily on the point that the hon. Gentleman raised.

Mr. Richard Caborn (Sheffield, Central): Will the Leader of the House ask the Prime Minister to make a statement next week on the Coventry Four? As the right hon. Gentleman will know, many Opposition Members were very concerned in 1984 and 1985 when that case went through the courts. Reports in yesterday's *Guardian*, and an article in today's *Guardian* headed

"Fresh facts support PM's critic",

contain serious allegations that the Government are breaking the United Nations arms embargo on South

Africa. The allegations also state that daily reports were given to No. 10 by Her Majesty's Customs and Excise and that for diplomatic reasons the South Africans were aided and abetted to leave Britain. I am sure that the Prime Minister, because of her recent speeches about terrorism, should come to the House to clear her name by saying that the allegations are wrong.

Mr. Wakeham: I do not accept for a minute that there is any necessity for the Government to say anything more. I shall refer the hon. Gentleman's point to my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister.

Mr. Robert N. Wareing (Liverpool, West Derby): When the Leader of the House consults through the usual channels on the football identity card legislation, will he bear in mind that at a meeting of the all-party committee on football yesterday the crackpot idea of identity cards caused controversy between Labour Members and Conservative Members and was highly controversial among Conservative Members as well? Will he also bear in mind that that committee, which meets regularly and discusses the problem, is overwhelmingly composed of Members of this House? It would seem, therefore, that before the Bill is introduced in the other place, their Lordships should be suitably advised by those of us from this place who know what we are talking about on this issue.

Mr. Wakeham: I do not accept the constitutional point that is implied in the hon. Gentleman's question. Nor do I accept that just because a Bill is controversial the Government have got it wrong. The Government have introduced many highly controversial Bills, which have become Acts of Parliament which have brought great benefits to the country, but which have not necessarily been introduced in the House of Commons.

Mr. Frank Haynes (Ashfield): The Leader of the House will be aware that tomorrow we are to have a debate on the multi-fibre arrangement. Can we really have such a debate when, for the Government, it will be no more than a talking shop? We want a debate and some action, because 1,200 jobs in Mansfield and Ashfield have been lost over a few weeks. We want to know what the Government will do about the hosiery and knitwear industry, which, since 1979, they have halved. We want hosiery and knitwear jobs in our constituencies. We want to save the industry. Let us have a debate during which the Government will make some promises to save the industry.

Mr. Wakeham: We are to have a debate tomorrow in which I hope the hon. Gentleman will take part, and, if possible, I shall listen to what he has to say. However, I can guarantee that a Minister will set out the Government's position, and that he will listen to and answer hon. Members' points.

Mr. Tony Lloyd (Stretford): Will the Leader of the House return to the question of Mr. Haseldine, the Foreign Office official? May we have a statement from a Foreign Office Minister making clear whether proceedings under the Official Secrets Act are seriously contemplated against that individual? Will he at least pass on the message that such proceedings would be met with a sense of outrage by many Opposition Members?

Mr. Wakeham: I find that remark somewhat curious. Mr. Haseldine has been suspended on full pay from his duties and the Foreign Office is investigating the matter. If a disciplinary offence has been committed, the available disciplinary penalties range from admonition to dismissal, and it would not be proper for me to comment further at this stage.

Mr. Jimmy Hood (Clydesdale): Will the Leader of the House ask his right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Employment to give the House a report next week on the ballot rigging in the Nottinghamshire coalfield, where a branch secretary, Mr. Stephen Knowles, was found to be interfering in the ballot on the wages issue and has since been relieved of his job as the branch secretary?

Mr. Wakeham: I doubt whether my right hon. Friend will make a statement on that, because it is not a matter directly for him. Nevertheless, I shall refer it to my right hon. Friend.

Mr. Alan Meale (Mansfield): Bearing in mind the needs of the elderly and the fact that thousands of pensioners die every month at this time of the year, will the Leader of the House find time for a debate before the recess on that subject so that we can try to find some solutions before more pensioners die?

Mr. Wakeham: On the face of it, I should have thought that the debate that I announced for Tuesday would be appropriate for the hon. Gentleman to make the points that he wishes.

Mr. Harry Ewing (Falkirk, East): May I try to use my persuasive powers on the Leader of the House to encourage him to find time for a debate on an important subject—the offer made by Mr. Gorbachev on the reduction in troops and tanks? Can the House be given an opportunity soon to debate what the United Kingdom's response should be as part of the Western Alliance's response to the offer made by President Gorbachev? This is an historic and important matter and the House should be given an opportunity to express its view.

Mr. Wakeham: I recognise that this is an important matter. I cannot promise a debate in the immediate future, but the House will want to debate that and I shall bear the hon. Gentleman's point in mind.

Mr. Tony Banks (Newham, North-West): While I would not describe the Leader of the House as the Vinny Jones of the Dispatch Box, he has gone right over the ball on the football identity card scheme. Surely the point is whether the legislation is controversial, not whether it is important, and this is controversial legislation. If the Leader of the House is not prepared to have the Government change their mind about introducing that legislation in this place, may we at least have a debate so that their Lordships will know how the House feels about the proposals?

Mr. Wakeham: When the hon. Gentleman wears that smart tie, he seems to be more aggressive than usual. I think that he calls himself an agency Whip these days. Surely I cannot be more friendly than to say that I shall have discussions through the usual channels. The hon. Gentleman is getting over-excited.

Mr. Max Madden (Bradford, West): Will the Leader of the House arrange for the Secretary of State for Education and Science to make a statement revealing who will pay the running costs of any city technology college built in

[Mr. Max Madden]

Bradford? Is the Leader of the House aware that yesterday the chairman of Dixons told me that he had no intention of paying the running costs, which will be more than £1 million a year? If it is to be taxpayers' money, it will mean £1 million a year less for renovation and repairs urgently needed by existing schools. If Bradford ratepayers are to be left to pick up the bill, it is monstrous that they should not be given an opportunity to say whether they want a college. Will the Leader of the House sort out that mess before next Tuesday's meeting of Bradford council, at which the matter is to be debated?

Mr. Wakeham: No, I cannot promise to do that. The hon. Gentleman, one of the Bradford Members, is also one of the bad losers in the House. I shall refer his serious point to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Education and Science, and if there is a need for a statement he will certainly make one.

Mr. Jeff Rooker (Birmingham, Perry Barr): Will the Leader of the House ask the Secretary of State for Social Security to come to the House next week to make a statement on the Department's refusal to co-operate with Birmingham city council and the fire brigade following the disclosure a couple of weeks ago that two dozen men were living in what was alleged to be a hostel but was in fact a wooden and corrugated iron shed, the landlord of which was being paid £55 a week per person by the Department? The fire brigade has since closed down and condemned that hostel.

The investigators asked the Department, which was paying out more than £1,000 for the premises, for which other premises it was paying out such sums of money so that they could investigate their safety. They did not ask the claimants' names, only for addresses, but the Department refused to give that information. That hostel was located in Hay Mills in Birmingham and it is alleged that the social security office recommended the claimants to take a bed in a hut in a garden.

Mr. Wakeham: I am not in a position to confirm what the hon. Gentleman has said, but if the matter is as he puts it, it does not sound satisfactory. I shall refer the matter to my right hon. Friend. We shall then decide how best to proceed, and I shall be in touch with the hon. Gentleman.

Mr. D. N. Campbell-Savours (Workington): Is the Leader of the House aware that, despite a procedural block, I have managed to table a series of questions relating to the Coventry Four? Will he assure me that Ministers will answer those questions in detail, if only because public opinion will want to know what happened, and the more the Government choose to equivocate in their answers, the more suspicion they will leave in the minds of the British people?

Mr. Wakeham: The hon. Gentleman puts his point of view, but my right hon. Friends will answer the questions in the way that is appropriate and right. I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for his advice.

Mr. William McKelvey (Kilmarnock and Loudoun): Will the Leader of the House acknowledge that Opposition Members have conducted themselves in a dignified and patient manner with regard to the Select Committee on Scottish Affairs? Will a positive motion be tabled on this matter next week, I hope in Government prime time—

Mr. Wakeham: Yes.

Mr. McKelvey: I am glad that the Leader of the House acknowledges that. Does he understand that if a solution is not found, the dignified patient approach that many of us have taken may disappear?

Mr. Wakeham: I hope that there was not meant to be any element of threat in the hon. Gentleman's remarks, because that would not be the way to proceed. I make no complaint about the views of the hon. Gentleman or of his right hon. and hon. Friends. The hon. Gentleman knows the difficulties involved in setting up the Select Committee, and so do I. I have offered solutions and time for debate; but my solutions were not acceptable to the Opposition, nor was the time that I allowed for debate. I think that I can now provide proper time for a debate. The right process is to have that debate and to see whether the matter can be resolved, one way or another. That will be for the House to decide.

Mr. Sam Galbraith (Strathkelvin and Bearsden): Will the Leader of the House find time for a debate on the method by which oral questions are selected? Is he aware that in yesterday's ballot for Scottish questions, those by Conservative Members could be identified because they were on different coloured paper? That made it difficult for selection to be completely random. I am sure that the Leader will want to condemn that practice. May we have a debate on that matter?

Mr. Wakeham: I would also condemn any suggestion that those responsible for selecting questions do not conduct themselves in a proper and efficient manner. I acknowledge that not only must selection be done properly, but that both sides of the House must be satisfied that that is so. I shall make inquiries.

Mr. David Winnick (Walsall, North): Is it not a matter of public anxiety that there is so much Prime Ministerial pressure on the Foreign and Commonwealth Office to appease the apartheid regime that an information officer at the Foreign and Commonwealth Office came to the conclusion that he was willing to sacrifice his career because he believed that the truth ought to be told? Should not the Prime Minister, or at least the Foreign Secretary, make a statement before the recess, and is it not the case that, once the new Official Secrets Bill becomes law, the official in question will have no defence in claiming public interest?

Mr. Wakeham: The difference between the hon. Gentleman and me is that I like to express views when I know the facts, whereas he prefers to express views when he does not know the facts. The matter is being investigated and I have nothing further to say.

Mr. Alex Salmond (Banff and Buchan): The Leader of the House will be aware of the critical nature of the Council of Ministers meeting on fisheries this weekend, given that thousands of jobs are at stake. What provision will be made next week for an early statement or, better still, a debate, bearing in mind that last week's debate was severely truncated and that the ministerial responses were completely inadequate?

Mr. Wakeham: I recognise that the hon. Gentleman has made an important point. My right hon. Friend the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food may wish to make a statement early next week if that is deemed appropriate. I shall certainly find time for one if that is what he wants.

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): Will the Leader of the House ask the Secretary of State for Transport to make a statement tomorrow, or early next week, about the fire aboard the P and O ferry European Endeavour at half past 10 last Friday? That fire raged for three hours and was the result of all the cost cutting, fatigue and incompetence of the scab crews. Is it not high time for a statement and a debate on that matter? Despite Zeebrugge and all that happened there, P and O, which lined the pockets of the Tory party, is getting away with nigh on murder. It is the third fire since the strike and the lock-out began. Surely to God there should be an inquiry into the matter.

Mr. Wakeham: Yes, but I do not know what good it would do the hon. Gentleman, who approaches these matters with an open mouth and his eyes and ears shut.

Mr. Bob Cryer (Bradford, South): Will the Leader of the House consider allowing a debate on the Foreign and Commonwealth Office matter? Some right hon. and hon. Members have no confidence in the Foreign and Commonwealth Office's ability to do anything other than cover up Mr. Haseldine's allegations. If one was to translate his allegations to the situation concerning Father Ryan, it would mean that four of South Africa's most wanted terrorists, who were here to get arms to use to maim and butcher black people, were released with the connivance of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, to return to their county, having had serious criminal allegations made against them, for the convenience of the Prime Minister because she was about to meet the hated Botha, the representative of the apartheid regime. There is a strong case to answer and many right hon. and hon. Members have no confidence in the Foreign and Commonwealth Office doing anything but shoving this dirt under the carpet.

Mr. Wakeham: The hon. Gentleman makes his wild accusations, but impresses no one except his hon. Friend who sits on his right. I have indicated that it is a disciplinary matter and that it is being investigated in the proper manner. It is right that I should say nothing further.

Consolidated Fund Bill

4.15 pm

Mr. Speaker: I have a short statement to make about the arrangements for the debate on the motion for the Adjournment, which will follow the passing of the Consolidated Fund Bill on Monday 19 December.

Right hon. and hon. Members should submit their subjects to my office not later than 9 am on Thursday 15 December. A list showing the subjects and the times will be published later that day. Normally, the time allotted will not exceed one and one half hours, but I propose exercising discretion to allow one or two debates to continue for longer, up to a maximum of three hours.

Where identical or similar subjects have been selected by different right hon. or hon. Members whose names are drawn in the ballot, only the first name will be shown on the list. As some debates may not last the full time allotted to them, it will be the responsibility of right hon. and hon. Members to keep in touch with developments if they are not to miss their turn.

Mr. Tam Dalyell (Linlithgow): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. You gained the Chair with the good will of us all, and not least among the many reasons was that you said that you would be the protector of Back-Benchers' rights. In the opinion of one hon. Member—myself—you have done your best over many years to do so.

There is a non-party issue for the House of Commons to consider. Is it proper that the Consolidated Fund Bill —which until recent years was considered sacred and a time when some of your predecessors would not even allow statements at 3.30 pm because they felt that the Consolidated Fund should start straight away—should be eroded gradually and by a trickle, first, by Adjournment debates, then by long statements, and now by starting at 10 o'clock at night? Several right hon. and hon. Members feel that they are being given even less opportunity to raise matters in prime time. This is a matter that you, Mr. Speaker, ought to consider as a matter of principle.

Mr. Speaker: I share the hon. Gentleman's concern, but, as the Leader of the House said, it is not unprecedented. The Consolidated Fund Bill gives Back-Bench Members a precious opportunity to raise matters of interest to them, and perhaps the hon. Gentleman should draw the matter to the attention of the Procedure Committee to see whether, in future, a definite arrangement can be made to ensure that Back-Bench time is preserved.

Mr. Max Madden (Bradford, West): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. On the business statement——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I shall deal with points of order on the business statement after the statement by the Secretary of State for Wales.

Welsh Rate Support Grant 1989-90

4.17 pm

The Secretary of State for Wales (Mr. Peter Walker): With permission, Mr. Speaker, I should like to make a statement about the Welsh rate support grant report 1989-90 and the supplementary reports for 1986-87, 1987-88 and 1988-89, which I have today laid before the House.

I am today announcing the details of the 1989-90 settlement to the Welsh Consultative Council on Local Government Finance. Copies of the text of my statement to the consultative council, together with a number of key statistical tables, have been placed in the Library of the House.

As required by the Rate Support Grants Act 1988, in each report total expenditure—a crucial factor in determining entitlement to block grant—has been treated for each authority as equal to a "relevant amount" determined according to specific rules, and based on information with me by 6 July 1988.

The supplementary reports for 1986-87, 1987-88 and 1988-89 update grant entitlements and are intended to be the final reports for those years. Authorities have been notified of the total expenditure figures on which the reports are based, and it has been open to them—and remains open to them—to make representations about the figures that I have used. If, under the rules, I am able to agree that an authority's expenditure figure should be changed, that authority's grant entitlement will be recalculated accordingly.

My hon. Friend the Minister of State announced my proposals for 1989-90 to the House in July, and these have since been the subject of consultations with the local authorities and their associations. In making the report, I have taken account of the views that they have expressed.

The main elements of the 1989-90 settlement are as follows. Provision for relevant expenditure will be set at £2,057·8 million, some £124·7 million or 6·5 per cent above 1988-89 budgets and 8·6 per cent. above relevant provision. Provision for current expenditure is set at £1,785 million, an increase of £86·6 million or 5·1 per cent above 1988-89 budgets and 8·8 per cent. above current provision. Aggregate exchequer grant is set at £1,316 million, an increase of £63 million or 5 per cent. above the amount made available for 1988-89, and £68·6 million or 5·5 per cent. over the amount to be paid out in respect of 1988-89. Specific and supplementary grants total £267 million. Domestic rate relief grant remains unchanged at 18·5 p in the pound, and in aggregate is £27 million. Block grant totals £1,021·9 million, an increase of £50·7 million or 5·2 per cent. over the amount paid in respect of 1988-89. It is fixed at this level.

The final year of the rate support grant system will be 1989-90, and in the interests of stability—and with the full agreement of the local authority associations—I have decided to retain the same block grant mechanisms as those used in the present year. Certain minor changes in methodology have, however, been made at the request of the associations.

The settlement provides stability and it also provides a firm indication of grant entitlement. Authorities will know when they are setting their budgets what they will receive in the way of grant support. It is a realistic settlement which enables councils in Wales to contribute to the accelerating economic and social regeneration of the Principality. I am sure that they will do so in a responsible manner by keeping control of spending, budgeting for the low rate rises that are clearly attainable and continuing their encouraging progress towards greater efficiency. They know that this is in the interests of their ratepayers and their electors. I fully expect them to grasp the opportunity.

Mr. Barry Jones (Alyn and Deeside): The Secretary of State mentioned 5 per cent., but 10 per cent. is more like the real figure. The statement is a clever sleight of hand. Its flaw is that it ignores the rise in inflation and interest rates. Current expenditure is £37 million short and districts will find that they are £7 million down on block grant. Worse, block grant declines as a proportion of the aggregate Exchequer grant. The Government still dictate on specific grant, and the casualties will be housing benefit administration, schools services, environmental health, recreation and leisure services and the crucial local authority efforts in economic development to create jobs. It will be hard to keep rate rises down to reasonable levels.

Is the Secretary of State aware that the settlement is very unsatisfactory and that much has changed since the July statement? The Government say that a settlement based on a GDP deflator at 4 per cent., RPI at a similar 4 per cent. level and interest rates at 9·5 per cent. is still sufficient to meet the needs of local government. However, the GDP deflator is now an estimated 5 per cent., inflation is 6·4 per cent., and forecast to rise to 8 per cent. next spring, and interest rates are 13 per cent. Is that not a definition of strain on local authority budgets?

I remind the right hon. Gentleman that the Secretary of State for Education and Science has proposed a 5·1 per cent. pay settlement for teachers next year. Does the right hon. Gentleman understand that, as teachers' pay constitutes more than a quarter of most county budgets, the difference between the provisional 4 per cent. and 5·1 per cent. is very significant? The Secretary of State said just now that, if under the rules he was

"able to agree that an authority's expenditure figure should be changed, that authority's grant entitlement will be recalculated accordingly."

I know that the Secretary of State is aware of the concern in Cardiff. The city council met every requirement—and better—yet it stood to lose £2·3 million as a result of the retrospective arrangements that were announced on 7 July, which were then legalised in the recent Rate Support Grants Act 1988. I must also report to the House that Torfaen borough was a major victim and lost more than £300,000.

Is the Secretary of State aware that the aggregate figures will not be sufficient to cover the increasing cost of preparing for the implementation of the poll tax and meeting the requirements of homelessness? I want to make a plea to the Secretary of State for a rethink by the Welsh Office on this defective settlement, on the ground that, with inflation at 6·4 per cent. now and estimates that in 1989 it will be 7 per cent. or even 8 per cent., inflation will push spending well above the Government's proposed figures. I understand that even the Chancellor of the Exchequer thinks that inflation may rise as high as 9 per cent. in August 1989. This is the last rate support grant settlement and, like all of them since 1980, it is unsatisfactory, to say the least.

Mr. Walker: I admire the courage of the hon. Member for Alyn and Deeside (Mr. Jones) in putting those views because the rate support grants for which I have been responsible have been very different from those that were drawn up before this Administration came to power—*[Interruption.]* Here we go. During the last three years of the Labour Government, at the time when the hon. Member for Alyn and Deeside was at the Welsh Office——

Mr. Ron Davies (Caerphilly): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. Will you confirm that the subject that we are now discussing is, specifically, the statement that the Secretary of State made to the House? You would restrict us to questions on the statement, so surely the rules of the House and the rules that govern you require the Secretary of State to restrict his remarks to the precise terms of the statement.

Mr. Speaker: That is correct, but the right hon. Gentleman is answering questions that have been put to him.

Mr. Walker: I intend to make the comparison between our record and that of the Labour Government. I understand why Opposition Members want to do anything to stop that comparison being made. The comparison is simply that, in the last three years of the Labour Government, rate support grant fell by 16 per cent. in real terms. Had that trend continued, the rate support grant today would be £640 million, not £1,049 million. Therefore, if we had followed their example, Wales would receive £409 million less than it is receiving. Opposition Members have no right to ignore those comparisons.

To summarise, as a result of this year's and last year's rate support grants, the 8·8 per cent. increase in current provision for 1988-89 has to be considered alongside the 8·2 per cent. increase in gross capital provision, giving a combined increase of 8·7 per cent. over 1988-89 and no less than 15·4 per cent.—or £298 million—over the two years in which I have been responsible for the settlement. By any standards, this is a reasonable and sensible settlement.

I hope that it will also be recognised throughout the Principality that, as a result of the settlement, 67 per cent. of the cost of local authority expenditure in Wales comes from central Government and 19 per cent. from non-domestic rates in the form of business rates. Only 14 per cent. of all local government expenditure in Wales comes from domestic ratepayers. There are other parts of the United Kingdom that would like to be in that position.

Sir Anthony Meyer (Clwyd, North-West): Is it not clear that, as expected, my right hon. Friend has managed the best settlement possible for Wales? Is it not also clear that the question whether there have to be substantial rate rises will largely depend on the ability of local authorities to concentrate on doing the jobs that they were elected to do and in standing up to claims from public sector unions?

Mr. Walker: That is certainly true. There is scope for that. I am grateful to the local authorities in Wales for looking into the Audit Commission's proposals. It pointed to a potential saving of £40 million. I know that good work is being done in that direction. The increase in interest rates does not necessarily result in a similar increase in costs for local authorities. The 3 per cent. increase so far in interest rates has resulted in a 0·91 per cent. increase in the pool rate for local authorities. Much of their borrowing is on fixed terms. We believe that this is a reasonable and sensible settlement. Prudent and sensible local authorities will have perfectly reasonable rate levels.

Mr. Richard Livsey (Brecon and Radnor): Does the Secretary of State not realise that the economic goal posts have moved since last July to nearly 6·5 per cent.? That must surely have an effect on local authority budgets in Wales. What allowance has he made for the poll tax set-up costs? We understand that only 50 per cent. of those costs are to be allocated to councils, which I regard as completely inadequate. What is the Secretary of State doing about Tai Cymru's budget, now that the district councils have practically no housing functions left to them? When does he expect to make an announcement? Capital expenditure in some of the rural counties is very tight indeed, particularly because of bridge repairs, such as those in Powys where half the bridges need attention. Is the Secretary of State making any allowance for that and for sparsity factors?

Mr. Walker: I repeat that, taking the two years for which I have been responsible, the total increase has been substantial. It will provide important assistance for all the tasks that need to be done. The inflation of 6·4 per cent. in recent months is mainly due to the increase in the mortgage interest rate. That does not have an effect on the retail prices index as it affects local authorities. Therefore, it is not a fair comparison.

Mr. Gwilym Jones (Cardiff, North): I congratulate my right hon. Friend on his statement, which I am sure will be widely welcomed in Wales. Once again he has achieved for Wales a far better settlement than has been achieved for England. May I take it that his reference to the revision of local council entitlement strongly suggests that at last a common sense response has been made to Cardiff's plea for grant entitlement for the last financial year rather than the bureaucratic response that has greeted it so far? What steps does my right hon. Friend intend to take to ensure that more of the capital receipts are used to repay the debts that have been incurred rather than spent, which would result in extra expense for Welsh ratepayers?

Mr. Walker: New proposals will be made next year about the treatment of receipts and the repayment of existing debt. They will have an important impact. The change that took place in Cardiff and the manner in which the present system was broken off was a disadvantage to Cardiff. However, it has been to the advantage of a whole range of district and county councils. Some were advantaged while others were disadvantaged. My hon. Friend will be pleased to know that the total rate support grant for Cardiff is to be increased from £15·8 million this year to £19·8 million next year.

Mr. Roy Hughes (Newport, East): Does the Secretary of State appreciate that Newport borough council is worried about the amount allocated for preparatory work in connection with the introduction of the poll tax? If that fear is well founded, will the Secretary of State ensure that our local authorities are suitably reimbursed?

Mr. Walker: The figures suggested by local authorities for capital costs have been met in our assessments. As for revenue costs, local authorities submitted figures that we recognised were wrong. We went back to them and said that they needed a lot more than they were asking for; we

[Mr. Walker]

more or less doubled that figure. However, they consider that they should have still more. There is a difference of opinion between us about current costs. However, the majority of the expenditure—the capital cost figures—has been agreed.

Dr. Dafydd Elis Thomas (Meirionnydd Nant Conwy): We welcome the Sectretary of State's statement that local authorities can still make representations to his Department about the calculation of the settlement. We shall encourage local authorities to do so. However, will he confirm that this percentage increase in the block grant is not enough to meet the manual workers' settlement of 8·7 per cent.? That is a low-paid sector of the Welsh economy. Pay settlements will put pressure on local authorities.

Will the Secretary of State also confirm that the settlement falls short of the needs that were set out by the sub-group of the Welsh Consultative Council on Local Government Finance? The demands that were made to him by that group are £30 million more than has been granted. The Secretary of State is aware of my personal interest in the level of supplementary grant to the national parks. That is an important though minor part of the environmental protection of the Welsh countryside. Will he confirm that the settlement will put pressure on local authorities? Would he not be a more honest Secretary of State if he were to accept that fact?

Mr. Walker: In the 27 years that I have been a Member of Parliament, under both Labour and Conservative Governments and Lib-Lab pacts, I have never known local authorities to say that the settlement was just what they wanted, that they had been given just the right amount of money and what a super Government they were. Nevertheless, they are rather nearer to saying that this time round than was the case under certain other Administrations.

I shall write to the hon. Gentleman about the national parks and give him specific figures.

Of course there is pressure because of wage increases. If wage increases are given at 8·2 per cent.—well above the rate of inflation—they will have an impact on local authority expenditure, but I do not believe that all those increases should be met by direct Government grant. Local authorities must constantly continue to look for improved efficiency.

Mr. Donald Coleman (Neath): Reference has been made to the upward movement of interest rates and inflation since the original statement in July. Will the right hon. Gentleman tell the House—so that we can plainly understand it—what, in money terms, is the effect of the settlement? Furthermore, what recompense can local authorities expect to receive?

Mr. Walker: I have just explained that to date the effect of the increase in interest rates is far less on local authorities, because much of their borrowing is at fixed interest rates over the long term. Therefore, the pool rate is important. At the moment it is running at about one third of the increase in interest rates. There have been periods recently when interest rates went down, but local authorities did not suggest that there should be a cut in the grants that were being made because interest rates were lower. Such fluctuations have an impact—sometimes to the benefit of local authorities and sometimes against them.

Mr. Win Griffiths (Bridgend): Bearing in mind the controversy over exactly how interest rates will affect local authorities and what is the real effect of the retail prices index on local authority costs, what indicator does the Welsh Office use when assessing the effect of inflation on local government? The housing waiting lists in Wales are growing. How does the Secretary of State intend to meet that challenge? Will it be through the local authorities or through Tai Cymru? There is a huge waiting list in my local authority, Ogwr, for central heating conversions. Many of the people on the waiting list are sick and elderly. Does the Secretary of State recognise that, despite the fact that he believes that he has been generous over this settlement, many needs in Wales are still not being met?

Mr. Walker: Of course many needs are still not being met. The hon. Gentleman specifically mentioned housing. He knows that the total expenditure on local authority housing repairs and improvements in recent years has been at record levels. This Conservative Government have spent over £700 million on both private and public housing. Of considerable advantage in the coming year will be the use of receipts for council house repairs. Those receipts have risen quite sharply this year, and they are likely to rise again during the coming year.

Mr. Donald Anderson (Swansea, East): Are not those receipts destined to fall because of the natural limit at which housing sales will proceed? In view of the inadequate provision both for inflation and for wage settlements, is the Secretary of State deliberately forcing local authorities to increase rates in a way that will make them even more unpopular, thereby paving the way for the poll tax?

Further to what my hon. Friend the Member for Newport, East (Mr. Hughes) said about the preparatory costs for the poll tax, is it correct that the Welsh Office estimated the costs for the two years 1988-89 and 1989-90 to be about £9 million—of which £5 million is being provided by the Welsh Office through grants—but that actual expenditure will be nearer £14 million? Will the right hon. Gentleman accordingly revise the grant in line with the actual rather than the estimated expenditure by Welsh local authorities?

Mr. Walker: There is a difference between us on current expenditure and assessment of costs, but there are similar figures for capital expenditure. I do not accept the figures given by the hon. Gentleman. If, as is the hon. Gentleman's theory, I had wanted to introduce a rate support grant increase designed to put up rates in preparation for the poll tax, I could have followed the example set by the previous Labour Government during their last three years and introduced a rate support grant nowhere near the rate of inflation. That is what the Labour Government did, and it resulted in a reduction of 16 per cent. over three years. I have not done that. An increase in both current and capital provision of 15·4 per cent. over two years is not doing what the hon. Gentleman suggested.

Mr. Gareth Wardell (Gower): Is the Secretary of State suggesting that he will fully meet the costs of administering the poll tax?

Mr. Walker: I am not saying that I will send local authorities a cheque to cover whatever they might want to spend on administering the poll tax. I shall make a genuine assessment of what it should cost if it is carried out efficiently.

Mr. Dafydd Wigley (Caernarfon): Will the Secretary of State answer the question put to him by my hon. Friend the Member for Meirionnydd Nant Conwy (Dr. Thomas), and confirm whether, earlier this year, he received a report from the expenditure sub-group of the Welsh Consultative Council on Local Government Finance, which established a figure for the needs of Wales £13 million above what the right hon. Gentleman has announced today? Has he told that sub-group that he disagrees with its analysis, or does he accept that there will be either a reduction in services or an increase in rates?

Mr. Walker: There is bound to be a group that suggests that everything that it can think of should be paid for. As I have said, during the 27 years that I have been in this House that has happened with every rate support grant, and it is likely to continue to happen. That sub-group did not include in its calculations the potential for improved efficiency. It did not, for example, suggest, as the Audit Commission has said, that there was potential for improvements in efficiency worth £40 million. There is a balance between the two.

Mr. Ron Davies (Caerphilly): The Secretary of State has already acknowledged that the settlemant will be much less than that asked for by the local authority associations. Does he also acknowledge that it is, in fact, less than they need? That is the vital question. It is only a 5 per cent. settlement. The Secretary of State has deliberately evaded all questions about inflation and interest rates. Will he now say unequivocally on what rate of inflation and what rate of interest the settlement was predicated? Has he made any contingency arrangements for increasing the settlement in the likely event of further increases in interest rates next year?

Mr. Walker: I should be interested to know whether the Opposition are, for the first time, saying that the rate support grant should give an exact increase in line with the prediction for inflation——

Mr. Davies: I did not say that.

Mr. Walker: It is what the hon. Gentleman is suggesting should happen. As we know from my right hon. Friend the Chancellor's recent statement, the reality is that, apart from the effect of mortgage interest rates, the current rate of inflation is about 5 per cent.

Mr. Rhodri Morgan (Cardiff, West): I wish to press the Secretary of State on the question about Cardiff and the missing £2·3 million. He has already been questioned by my hon. Friend the Member for Alyn and Deeside (Mr. Jones) and by his hon. Friend and my neighbour the hon. Member for Cardiff, North (Mr. Jones). The right hon. Gentleman appeared to be offering half an olive branch to Cardiff when he said that authorities' grant entitlement could be recalculated. Does he recognise that cross-party representatives, including his colleagues on Cardiff city council, are firm in their view of what happened to that £2·3 million? Will Cardiff get back that missing £2·3 million in the forthcoming rate support grant entitlement?

Mr. Walker: I am sure that the hon. Gentleman has studied the matter in great detail and will know that we decided to draw a line, on a particular date, to end the present system, based upon the budgets received. It so happens that Cardiff considered that that settlement, compared with the budget that it was putting in thereafter, left it disadvantaged. We now have figures from all the districts in Wales, of which 11—including Cardiff—are disadvantaged and 15 are advantaged, some of them by very small amounts. We had to draw a line to end the present system, and some councils benefited and others did not.

Mr. Barry Jones: For the last time, I ask the right hon. Gentleman whether he will do the decent thing by Cardiff city council and say that it can have its £2·3 million?

Mr. Walker: We made it perfectly clear that the line had to be drawn. Does the hon. Gentleman want those councils that have been advantaged to have their money clawed back? Cardiff city council's rate support grant in this settlement is going up substantially, as is shown in the figures that I have given to the House. That will be of great benefit to Cardiff in the coming year. Indeed, based on the grant figure that it will receive, I do not expect its rates to rise by very much.

Prime Minister's Question Time

4.46 pm

Mr. Gavin Strang (Edinburgh, East): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. You will no doubt have noticed that during Prime Minister's Question Time, in order to prevent hon. Members from asking questions about the historic unilateral troop cuts announced by the Soviet leader yesterday, the Prime Minister deliberately quoted at inordinate length from Mr. Gorbachev's speech in the United Nations yesterday. I accept that the right hon. Lady is entitled to do that, but it is not the first time that she has clearly indulged in a practice designed to reduce the number of hon. Members asking questions. Prime Minister's Question Time is, arguably, the most precious time in the House and extends to just two 15-minute sessions a week. If the Prime Minister intends to persist with such behaviour, should you not raise the matter with her, Mr. Speaker?

Mr. Speaker: I am not responsible for what is said from the Dispatch Box, provided that it is in order. It is permissible for Ministers and the Prime Minister to read their answers.

Mr. Alan Williams (Swansea, West): Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. I realise that you are in a difficult position when a Minister persists in abusing Question Time, as the Prime Minister has done during the last three or four sessions of Prime Minister's Question Time. The right hon. Lady has read statements rather than make statements to the House on which she could be questioned.

When Opposition Members ask questions—which is all that they can do—you sometimes intervene, Mr. Speaker, and say that we must try to be brief. In view of the Prime Minister's growing and persistent abuse, is it not possible for you to point out to her that it is precious Back-Bench time and that she, too, should learn to be succinct and not abuse our proceedings?

Mr. Patrick McLoughlin (Derbyshire, West): Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. When considering the conduct of Prime Minister's Question Time, you might also wish to consider the conduct of the Leader of the Opposition, who was called four times and thus prevented other hon. Members asking questions. It is a little rich for Opposition Members to complain that they do not have time to ask questions when, in fact, they continually persist in shouting down my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister when she is answering questions.

Mr. Dafydd Wigley (Caernarfon): Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. May I, as somebody who is neutral in the main argument—although I am hardly on the side of the Prime Minister—say that Mr. Speaker Thomas and Mr. Speaker Lloyd, I think, used to allow injury time at Prime Minister's Question Time for three or even four minutes beyond 3.30 pm if there was a feeling that there had been any abuse. Is that not a possibility open to us when the Prime Minister makes the sort of statements that she has done on a number of occasions recently?

Mr. Strang: I am grateful for your answer, Mr. Speaker, but the issue here is the length of time that the Prime Minister takes to quote from speeches. If we were to take that to its logical conclusion, the Prime Minister could stand at the Dispatch Box and read a statement for 10 minutes. Surely in those circumstances she should be pulled up.

Mr. Speaker: That would be considered an abuse, but I have not so far noticed an abuse of that sort. A certain scope is given to both Front Benches at Question Time. It is true, as I hope the House will agree, that I am anxious to call as many Back Benchers as possible, and that is helped by brief questions and answers.

Orders of the Day

Water Bill

Order read for resuming adjourned debate on Question [7 December], That the Bill be now read a Second time.

Question again proposed.

Mr. Speaker: I must announce to the House that today I propose to limit speeches to 10 minutes between 6 and 8 o'clock. I hope that those who speak after 8 o'clock will also limit their speeches to that time, so that every hon. Member who wishes to be called can be accommodated.

Mr. Donald Coleman (Neath): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. Water is a matter of enormous significance to us in Wales, yet I notice that, apparently the Secretary of State for Wales is not going to participate in this important debate, and that it is being left to the Minister of State. Is there any way in which you, Mr. Speaker, can arrange for the Secretary of State to take part in this vital debate?

Mr. Speaker: That is not a matter for me. I do not designate who speaks from the Front Bench.

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett (Denton and Reddish): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. Will you confirm that this debate is adjourned from yesterday? If you look at *Hansard* you will see, and since you were in the Chair you will also recall, that at 10 o'clock you had to interrupt the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State towards the end of his speech because of the 10 o'clock rule, which allows him to return to the Dispatch Box now to complete his reply to yesterday's debate. In particular, he did not answer the questions from amenity groups about the recreational use of land or about charges. If he had wanted to answer these questions he would have the right to complete his speech at the Dispatch Box this afternoon.

Mr. Speaker: Technically, that is correct, but I can only call Members who seek to catch the eye of the Chair.

4.53 pm

The Minister of State, Welsh Office (Mr. Wyn Roberts): I want to devote a proportion of this opening speech in this second day of the debate to the changes that the Bill will bring about in Wales. Many English Members will be interested because they obtain their supplies from Wales. As the House will know, water is a sensitive issue in Wales, partly because we can supply it to others cheaper than we can buy it ourselves. Our geography, which provides for an abundance of rain, requires that our water charges, related as they must be to distribution costs, are relatively high. But I shall return to charges later.

In general, the provisons of the Bill apply equally to both Wales and England. The Bill will create in Wales private-sector undertakers to provide clean, wholesome water and take away dirty water through the sewerage system. I am confident that the privatisation of the utility functions of the water authorities in Wales will allow the provision of a more efficient operation to the benefit of Welsh consumers.

Mr. Dafydd Wigley (Caernarfon): The Minister suggested that he thought that the Bill would be helpful to Welsh consumers. Given that the average equated water rate for 1988-89 in Wales is 108p compared with 50·95p in Severn-Trent—over twice the level—will he say whether that gap will close when the Bill comes into effect?

Mr. Roberts: As I hope to show, privatisation of the utility function of the authority will make for greater efficiency and will contribute towards the reduction of prices, but there are other factors to be taken into account.

The Bill will also establish the National Rivers Authority to take over the other functions of the water authorities.

This split of the present water authorities, a split of interests that were often in competition, will not, as has been suggested by some, break up the system of integrated river management. It will sensibly divide the functional provision of water and sewerage services from the present regulatory and promotional roles. It will lead to a better system of benefit to us all.

Our proposals for a National Rivers Authority have been widely welcomed by all the major conservation groups and reflect the Government's commitment to the protection of the water environment. The NRA's functions will include water pollution control, water resource management, flood defence, fisheries and recreation—all matters of considerable importance in Wales.

The NRA will be an England and Wales body, but its real presence and the impact of its policies will be in the regions. The NRA regions will be based on the boundaries of the present water authorities, and there will be one region covering the present area of the Welsh water authority.

The main NRA committee in each region will be the regional rivers advisory committee which will encompass all the main interest groups and be able to make representation to the authority about the way in which it carries out its functions in its region. The authority will appoint the members of that committee.

The NRA will discharge its land drainage functions through regional flood defence committees, successors to the current regional land drainage committees. These will be based on the same areas as the existing RLDCs and will be constituted on similar lines.

I can assure the House that the provisions of the Bill do not fundamentally alter the present position with regard to land drainage and flood protection. The chairman and a number of other members of the regional flood defence committee will be appointed by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales.

The National Rivers Authority will also be advised in its regions by regional fisheries advisory committees, appointed by the NRA, which will also determine how many local advisory committees it requires. In doing that, it will take into account the views of the interested organisations. Those concerned with fisheries will also have a voice on the regional rivers advisory committee, so those interested in fisheries will be able to pursue local needs and problems as well as considering the broader, more general issues.

The responses to the consultation paper on the National Rivers Authority published in July 1987 showed that few were in favour of a separate NRA for Wales. Respondents were more concerned to ensure that they would receive a good quality service.

My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales will have a considerable interest in NRA functions in

[Mr. Roberts]

Wales. To help him, the Secretary of State for Wales will appoint a special NRA committee to advise him on Welsh issues, related to NRA policies and activities. The special committee will advise on matters related to the whole of Wales, including that part currently served by the Severn-Trent water authority and will include the chairmen of the various regional committees for the area currently served by the Welsh water authority. This special committee will be chaired by the Secretary of State for Wales' appointee to the NRA. We consider that the chairman of Severn-Trent's regional river advisory committee should also be a member, and there is a case for one or two more independent members.

Mr. Dafydd Elis Thomas (Meirionnydd Nant Conwy): The Minister is aware of my keen interest in reducing the number of quangos in Wales to reduce public expenditure. Will he explain the proposed structure and where it is set out in the Bill because so far I have failed to find it? Perhaps it is in an appendix. Will he confirm that the NRA will be accountable to the Secretary of State for the Environment and that the structure in Wales is that the NRA advisory committee will advise both the Secretary of State for Wales and the NRA? In other words, the NRA is an English body accountable to the Secretary of State for the Environment and another Welsh quango will advise the Secretary of State about his response to the NRA.

Mr. Roberts: I thought that I had made the position absolutely clear. The Secretary of State for Wales will appoint a member of the National Rivers Authority. The Secretary of State will have a special committee that will be chaired by that appointed member of the NRA. On that committee, which will be non-statutory, there will be the people that I have mentioned who are themselves chairmen of statutory bodies. As I said, there will be a case for other independent members. We shall be looking for an efficient and effective NRA that will secure in Wales improvements in environmental water matters.

The new water plc that succeeds Welsh Water will be responsible for the supply of water and the removal of effluent. The Bill will also provide new powers allowing the Secretary of State to set out clearly in regulation the quality of the water that the new undertakers will be obliged to provide. There is no doubt that if the trends that faced the Government in 1979 had continued, the proposals in the Bill to establish private sector water and sewerage undertakers would not now be before the House. That the proposals are before us is the result of Government policies and of the work of the various managements of the water authorities who have successfully implemented Government policies. Welsh Water's management has played its part.

As Welsh Members said yesterday, much time has been spent in the House discussing the many aspects of the performance of the Welsh water authority, but the authority's performance has stood up well to scrutiny, and I pay tribute to what it has achieved. When the Bill is enacted, the successor company to the Welsh water authority must, of course, concentrate on the core businesses of water and sewerage, but it will also be able to develop other business activities with less restraint than in the past.

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett (Denton and Reddish): The Minister has spoken about the existing water authority. Could he tell us a little about the conflicting demands for use of the rivers by canoeists and fly fishermen? To what extent will those conflicts be resolved by charges? He will be aware that on the Conway and on other rivers in north Wales there has been almost open warfare between canoeists and fly fishermen over who should use them. How will these changes improve that argument?

Mr. Roberts: I look forward to debating that matter in Committee because it will make for an excellent Committee debate. I am coming to various aspects of the points that the hon. Gentleman has raised in this debate and that he raised yesterday when my hon. Friend the Minister responsible for sport replied to him. However, we can go over the ground again if he wishes.

We recognise that the new public limited companies will be natural monopolies. Safeguards for the customer are therefore necessary and the Bill provides for regulatory arrangements. Some conditions, including the general duties to provide water and sewerage services and compliance with the quality standard set for water supplies, will be enforced by the Secretary of State. But additionally, the Bill establishes the Director General of Water Services who will be independent of Ministers and accountable to Parliament. His role will be to protect consumers by monitoring the performance of the water companies against the conditions of their licence, to set charges limits and to ensure that the water companies carry out their functions efficiently and effectively. Customers will be directly represented in the regulatory system by a network of regional customer service committees reporting direct to the director general.

Mrs. Ann Clwyd (Cynon Valley): What assurances can the Minister give customers that disconnections in Wales will not increase under the privatised authority? He will know that under the present arrangements the Welsh water authority is top of the league for disconnections to customers. What assurance can he give that things will not get worse under a privatised industry?

Mr. Roberts: The hon. Lady will have to wait for the terms and conditions of the licence that will be given to the water plc. At present, Welsh Water appoints seven local consumer advisory committees, one to match each of its original operating divisions. This structure differs from that operating in the areas of the nine English regional water authorities.

Under the Bill the customer service committees will be appointed by the director general and will be totally independent of the undertakers that they will monitor. There will be two such committees operating in Wales, one covering the Severn-Trent area and the other covering the Welsh water authority area.

Schedule 4 of the Bill allows customer service committees, with the approval of the director general, to establish local and other sub-committees. In a statement to the House on 5 February 1986, the then Secretary of State for Wales, my noble Friend Lord Crickhowell, gave a commitment that the customer service committee operation within the area of the Welsh water authority could be assisted by divisional committees. We hold to that view, although I should add that the number of sub-committees required will need to take into account the structure of Welsh Water's successor company and the

changed responsibilities of the committees in Wales because of the establishment of the National Rivers Authority.

The membership of the committee in Welsh Water's area will be the same as its English counterparts, with members drawn from broadly the same interest groups represented on the present local consumer advisory committees. The customer service committees will represent to the director general the views of the customers on the operations of the water undertakers. The hon. Member for Cynon Valley (Mrs. Clwyd) will be interested to know that they will have a statutory duty under clause 26 to investigate complaints and to consult companies about matters that seem to the committee to affect the interests of consumers. They have a vital role in the regulatory system.

I want to touch upon three issues of particular sensitivity in Wales—land, public access and charges.

The privatised water and sewerage undertakers must have the freedom to dispose of land surplus to their operational requirements. This is the present practice. The Welsh water authority has the right to dispose of surplus land, and the Government have consistently encouraged the water authorities to dispose of land surplus to their requirements.

Dr. Thomas *rose*——

Mr. Roberts: I can assure the hon. Member for Meirionnydd Nant Conwy (Dr. Thomas) that such disposals are currently taking place. No company, whether private or public, will wish to dispose of land that it requires for operational purposes. By getting rid of land that is required—for instance, as a gathering ground for water—might raise the danger of an adverse effect upon the quality of supply, and water undertakers can be penalised if water is not up to the specified quality.

Much of the land held by Welsh Water is in national parks or in environmentally sensitive areas. The value of any such land to a prospective purchaser depends on the receipt of planning permission for development. I find it difficult to visualise a situation in which planning permission would be more easily obtained than it is now, especially in our national parks or in other areas of outstanding natural beauty. Such sites will continue to be subject to stringent planning controls, and land in other areas will remain subject to local planning controls.

Dr. Thomas: The Minister knows that I represent more national parks than any other hon. Member. I am therefore deeply concerned about the implications of what he has said. Will he give an assurance to me and to the hon. Member for Brecon and Radnor (Mr. Livsey) who represents the Brecon Beacons national park that no land will be disposed of in the national parks by the successor utility to the Welsh water authority or any other authority before consulting the national parks authority? Is it the Government's intention, in privatising water utilities, to privatise land holdings in national parks which are environmentally sensitive?

Mr. Roberts: I cannot give the hon. Gentleman the assurance for which he asks because, as I have said the existing authorities have the right to dispose of land and the successor companies will have a similar right. Obviously, we are seeking to assess the value of the land, and that will have to be taken into account in fixing the price for shares on flotation.

The majority of us who are interested in the protection of the environment have nothing whatsoever to fear from the proposals in the Bill and should welcome the additional safeguards provided. That has not of course stopped the numerous scare stories that have come to the surface in recent weeks. Water authorities, once privatised, it is said, will not care for the environment. They will be so concerned to make profits that everything else will go by the board. They will charge exorbitant prices for facilities and even, according to the *Daily Post* of 25 November, charge for admission to national parks. Anyone who has studied the provisions of the Bill will realise that that is certainly not intended and I am surprised—indeed appalled—that such stories should appear.

As my hon. Friend the Minister responsible for sport pointed out in his closing speech last night, clause 7 of the Bill places duties on both the National Rivers Authority and the privatised undertakers in relation to conservation of the environment, the development of water and land for recreational purposes and the preservation of public rights of way and rights of access.

Moreover, clause 9 provides for a code of practice which the Secretary of State may produce to give practical guidance to undertakers and promote best practice. The code, a draft of which will be available in the new year, will be taken into account by the Secretary of State in exercising his powers under the Bill and in assessing the performance of any particular water or sewerage undertaker.

The Bill allows for charges to be made for recreational facilities, but facilities are not free now. At present, costs not recouped from specific receipts are paid for by all customers through the environmental services charge, which is quite significant in Wales. That will no longer be available, and it is only right and proper that those who use facilities should pay for them. But the charges must reflect the standard of the facilities offered and the availability of alternatives. Another constraint is the simple practicality of collecting and enforcing charges. The water undertakers will have a public image to project and undoubtedly, as other private companies have sought to do, will seek to show the community that they are worthy and effective custodians of the water environment.

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett: I well understand that if the water authorities do something to improve the opportunity for people to enjoy facilities there is an argument for making charges. Will the Minister guarantee that there will be no charge when canoeists use a river and the water authority does nothing to facilitate that activity? Will he guarantee that there will be no charges on people who walk over land which is not a public right of way, but traditionally the water authorities have allowed people to walk over it, if nothing is done to improve the facilities?

Mr. Roberts: In his earlier intervention, the hon. Gentleman posed the problem with which I am only too familiar of the conflict between canoeists and anglers. As I have said, we would be well advised to discuss that in Committee rather than on the Floor of the House. With regard to his other point, as he knows, I have referred specifically to where there are rights of way, where there are facilities that have cost money and have to be charged

[Mr. Roberts]

for. We have covered that point. I am sure that if one pursued it in detail, as I know the hon. Gentleman is so capable of doing, we shall have to examine very carefully specific areas such as those he mentioned.

The level of water charges in Wales has always been a contentious subject. I do not intend to go into the reasons for that today, except to say that charges in Wales are set, as they are throughout England and Wales, at the lowest possible level to maintain and improve services to the customer. We are all concerned with protecting the environment and that cannot be achieved without cost.

Mr. Allan Roberts (Bootle): Does the Minister accept that the water services charge is a precept upon the rates of local authorities by the water authority at the moment, and that the change that takes place under the Bill is that the National Rivers Authority will be responsible and will use taxpayers' money instead of ratepayers' money? The Government believe in cutting public expenditure and not contributing the money that we expect. That is why we think that they will be caught. The White Paper and the Bill state that charges will be increased to maximise income.

Mr. Roberts: I do not think that the hon. Gentleman has got it quite right. He knows how the NRA will be financed. It will receive Exchequer support. However, whatever service is provided must be paid for somehow. Currently, in some places many services are covered by the environmental services charge.

If we are to have bathing waters that comply with European Commission requirements, if we are to meet demand for wholesome water at constant and reasonable pressure, if we are to be free from polluted waterways and foul flooding to a greater degree than in the past, those higher standards need to be paid for, regardless of whether the undertakers are in the private or the public sector. Because of the discipline of the private sector and the market, privatising the industry may well mean that those necessary charges turn out to be less than they would have been otherwise.

There is considerable interest in Wales in this measure and we intend that it should benefit the people of Wales in all the ways possible under its provisions. They can become share owners and have a real stake in the new company. They can own Welsh water in a way that they have never owned it before. There are all sorts of ways in which the Welsh people can participate actively in the new arrangements and ensure that this measure is of benefit to them and to Wales as a whole.

5.17 pm

Mr. Barry Jones (Alyn and Deeside): The Minister of State is right in saying that water is a sensitive issue in Wales, so why does the Secretary of State not address the House on what is arguably the most important measure to affect Wales this year? Why is the Secretary of State absent? Why has he left the Chamber?

The Welsh water authority has 1 million customers, 3 million consumers and 4,600 employees, and the overwhelming majority of them are against privatisation. The Minister of State proposes a course of action that does not have the backing of the people in Wales. Nor has he been persuasive today.

The hon. Member for Brecon and Radnor (Mr. Livsey) yesterday promised vehement opposition. He said that before the industry had been put into the public domain there had been horrendous problems related to health. I agree with him. That memory remains in Wales, and that is why there is no body of support and why the measure is totally friendless in Wales, as there is a generation still active in public life in the Principality which suffered great privation between the wars. That generation tells those who will listen about the chaos and inaction, and about dysentery and other diseases, that were prevalent when standards were low.

Yesterday, my hon. Friend the Member for Gower (Mr. Wardell) denounced Her Majesty's Government for their hypocritical acts in pulling the plug on the water industry. My hon. Friend's chief point was that, by imposing artificially low ceilings on the Welsh water authority's capital investment and borrowings, the Government have created a backlog of remedial works that will cost enormous amounts of money to clear. My hon. Friend should know—he chairs our Select Committee. Opposition Members do not believe that that money will be available in the right amounts on the right terms.

Last night the hon. Member for Glasgow, Govan (Mr. Sillars)—a Scot—said that the nation's resources were to be stolen. There is certainly an echo of that assertion throughout Wales. Welsh public opinion is deeply hostile to the Bill.

In a passionate speech in the same debate last night, my hon. Friend the Member for Wakefield (Mr. Hinchliffe) asked about the consequence of metering on the poorest families and the largest families. They are often the same. They must economise on water. I emphasise my agreement with the remarks of my hon. Friend when he said that there is deprivation in Wales and that the Welsh Office must face the issue when the Bill is considered in Committee.

Again, from the Opposition Front Bench, my hon. Friend the Member for Copeland (Dr. Cunningham) dealt with the crux of the Bill which is that, faced with the priority of making profits, it is extremely unlikely that the vigorous policy of environmental improvement that is urgently needed will appeal to privately owned water companies. I can truthfully report to the House that that is the fear in Wales.

When he wound up the debate, my hon. Friend the Member for Bootle (Mr. Roberts) touched on another crucial feature. He said that there were contradictions in the Government's stance. They must persuade the City that, first, there are no destabilising uncertainties about costs attached to environmental controls, and, secondly, that there are genuine additional environmental safeguards, backed by cash. So far in the debate, we have not been persuaded. My hon. Friend the Member for Bootle was shrewd to make that point. We in Wales are sceptical of the Government's supposed good intentions, and we are cynical because of the Government's record so far.

Last night, too, my hon. Friend the Member for Burnley (Mr. Pike) said that the Government had skilfully and ruthlessly removed from the water industry almost everybody who might have opposed its privatisation. Will the National Rivers Authority impose centralisation to such an extent that Wales will lose? Will the Welsh authority plc be able to attract the necessary capital to

tackle the huge challenge that remains in polluted areas? That was the gravamen of the complaint by the hon. Member for Caernarfon (Mr. Wigley).

Mr. Win Griffiths (Bridgend): On the question of paying to deal with pollution, the Welsh water authority has a programme for cleaning up beaches which is due to be completed in about 15 years. Is it not a good idea to warn potential purchasers of water authority shares that action could be taken against the Government to bring beaches into line in a much shorter period than the 15 years that are currently planned? The Commission is recorded as being prepared to consider that proposal.

Mr. Jones: My hon. Friend has made an apposite point. The warning is serious. Swansea bay may be the exemplar of my hon. Friend's accusation.

Last night my hon. Friend the Member for Denton and Reddish (Mr. Bennett) made a balanced contribution to the debate. He sensitively referred to the drowned valleys and destroyed communities of yesteryear. Those communities were damaged or obliterated so that the big cities of England could benefit.

The Bill increases resentment. The people of Wales do not want the Bill, but the Prime Minister and her ideologues want to impose it upon us. Yesteryear saw insensitivity for the benefit of English cities. The Government's actions tomorrow will be insensitive, and they will be for profit. That is an insensitive approach, and it is one of the main reasons why there is so much resentment in the Principality.

"The time has come when we must stop taking our water resources for granted. Water is too scarce; it costs too much to collect, transport and distribute any longer to be wasted, polluted or fenced off from recreational use. The Government's proposals are, therefore, radical and far-reaching. They are designed to create the conditions and to provide the necessary modern machinery for the cleaning up of our rivers, the improvement of our sewerage and sewage disposal arrangements, and the safeguarding of the nation's water supplies for the remainder of this century."—[*Official Report*, 2 December 1971; Vol. 827, c. 679.]

Those are not my words; they were the words of the Secretary of State for Wales. They were uttered on 2 December 1971, when he was Secretary of State for the Environment, when he made social and economic history by proudly introducing in a statement the forerunner of the far-reaching 1972 water industry legislation.

The right hon. Gentleman is the Secretary of State for Wales, but he is the man who begat the last great water reorganisation. He was then a young Heathite Cabinet Minister, pledged to interventionism. As a Cabinet Minister, he saw the right hon. Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup (Mr. Heath) sack the right hon. Member for Cirencester and Tewkesbury (Mr. Ridley), the present Secretary of State for the Environment, who was then an Under-Secretary of State for Trade and Industry. *[Interruption.]* Yes, it happened. The present Secretary of State for the Environment lost office because, even then, he was a market forces man.

The Secretay of State for the Environment (Mr. Nicholas Ridley): Of all people, as a member of the Labour party, the hon. Gentleman must know the difference between resignation and being sacked.

Mr. Jones: I am grateful to the right hon. Gentleman for that gracious intervention. I remember that after he left office he behaved true to form on the Committee considering what became the Counter-Inflation (Temporary Provisions) Act 1972 and demonstrated that even then he was a market forces man.

The logic of the 1971 statement by the now Secretary of State for Wales was that of social ownership of a vital public utility. By his statement, the right hon. Gentleman established quangos. He ackowledged the importance of local authorities and gave them substantial water authority places. How times change in British politics. The sacked then Under-Secretary of State for Trade and Industry, who left office gracefully—he was not sacked, he said—now dictates to the Secretary of State for Wales. The sacked then Under-Secretary of State, who left office gracefully, is today's Cabinet market forces apologist.

Today is a sad day for civil servants in Wales. They do not want the Bill. They know its flaws, they know its risks and, doubtless, they have advised against it. I do not think that they had to argue long with the Secretary of State for Wales.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: The hon. Gentleman has no basis whatsoever for saying that the loyal civil servants in the Welsh Office, which has been loyal to successive Governments, are against the Bill. If he has a shred of evidence, will he please produce it?

Mr. Jones: That intervention would have been so much more effective if the Secretary of State for Wales had been able to make it. Where is the Secretary of State for Wales? Nothing that the Minister of State has said today has any ring of conviction or of truth.

When the right hon. Member for Cirencester and Tewkesbury introduced this matter in the Cabinet, I suspect that the Secretary of State for Wales went pale before he went red with rage. At that Cabinet meeting, and certainly at that Cabinet Committee meeting, I do not think that the Secretary of State for Wales shaded his advice. I believe that he called for a rethink. What he probably said was on these lines: "Leave well alone. Privatising the water industry is a step in the dark. We have better things to do, and with better political returns."

Mr. Ridley: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Jones: I shall not give way at the moment. I am grateful for the presence of the Secretary of State for the Environment, if we cannot have the Secretary of State for Wales. Where is the Secretary of State for Wales? If the right hon. Gentleman will tell me where he is, I might later allow him to answer some of the questions that I intend to put.

Mr. Ridley: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Jones: Later.

Before I was interrupted, I was saying how I saw that Cabinet meeting.

Mr. Ridley: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Jones: No, later.

If the right hon. Gentleman can contain himself and listen to me, I was saying that the Secretary of State for Wales was probably saying: "We have better things to do, and with better political returns. Privatising the Welsh water authority will be seen as an affront by most Welsh people. Lately, the Principality has gone through a very rough patch. Nationalism in Wales has little support, but all parts of Wales have a high degree of national

[Mr. Jones]

consciousness. They are already cynical about the advantages of those in the south-east and about what is called the City and speculation."

The right hon. Gentleman probably went on: "This measure will stir up policial trouble for us. The Welsh like their water authority even though they criticise it. I created the Welsh water authority, so I should know, should I not? The party in Wales has some difficult seats to defend. Frankly, the privatisation of water is political suicide in Wales."

I suspect that the right hon. Gentleman went on in this way: "Do you not think it would also be disastrous in the regions, for example, in the north-west and in Yorkshire? Why make such an ideological fetish of privatisation, Nick?" However, the Prime Minister said, summing up: "Peter, we are not going to be moved. Nicholas and I are not for turning." No one else in the Cabinet supported the Secretary of State for Wales.

Before turning to the next business, the Prime Minister probably then said: "Peter, if you and Ted created the water authorities, Nick and I will be bound to sell them off to the highest bidder."

Mr. Ridley: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for giving way at the end of his description of the Cabinet meeting at which the Secretary of State for the Environment is alleged to have presented his proposals for privatising the water industry. At the time, the Secretary of State was my right hon. Friend the Member for Mole Valley (Mr. Baker) and the Secretary of State for Wales was my noble friend Lord Crickhowell. The hon. Gentleman has cast the characters two years out of date, which shows his extraordinary historical ignorance.

Mr. Jones: Lord Crickhowell is under a kind of house arrest in the other place. I had hoped that the Secretary of State would tell the House where the Secretary of State for Wales is. I am sure that this little drama was enacted before the Gracious Speech was finalised.

Mr. Ron Davies (Caerphilly): The Secretary of State referred to the previous Secretary of State for Wales. Does my hon. Friend feel it somewhat amiss that that individual, who was then a member of the Cabinet that gave birth to these proposals, is now receiving £40,000 a year as the chairman-designate of the National Rivers Authority? Does my hon. Friend agree that if that happened in local government the individuals involved would now be in prison?

Mr. Jones: My hon. Friend signed the appropriate early-day motion at the time.

There was unease yesterday among Conservative Members about the effectiveness of the National Rivers Authority, the proposed watchdog for pollution. To put it bluntly, the hon. Member for Devizes (Sir C. Morrison), always his own man, asked:

"What guarantee is there that the Treasury will be less mean than usual?"

There is no guarantee. The hon. Gentleman went on:

"Without that . . . the NRA may not be able to live up to its responsibilities, especially in monitoring the effect of pollution along the 25,000 miles of rivers, in coastal waters, on ground water and in estuaries".—[*Official Report*, 7 December 1988; Vol. 143, c. 362-63.]

I should warn fishermen in the Principality to watch the situation carefully.

The Minister of State referred to the National Rivers Authority, but I must tell him that both the Wales TUC and the Welsh Consumer Council sought a Wales National Rivers Authority which would have been accountable to our own Secretary of State. The regional aspect of the hon. Gentleman's speech was not at all persuasive.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: Of the 51 responses to our consultation document, only nine were in favour of a National Rivers Authority for Wales.

Mr. Jones: I have quoted the two substantial bodies of opinion.

Mr. Wigley: The hon. Member for Alyn and Deeside (Mr. Jones) has raised an important matter that has not been clarified by the Government, either today or yesterday. I am referring to the responsibility for river water in Wales. Will it remain a Welsh Office function if the National Rivers Authority is answerable to the Department of the Environment? There will be an almighty tangle in terms of answerability if the Bill remains as it is.

Mr. Jones: The prospects for complications are considerable and the hon. Gentleman's point is well made.

When will the Minister of State make a statement on the impact of the changeover on Welsh industry? Industrialists in Wales will be under pressure on prices from day one. Privatisation could mean that the control of water supplies and sewerage services to Welsh customers will, for the first time, pass to non-Welsh organisations, chiefly because the shares in the new water company are likely to be held by finance houses in London or abroad. Welsh public opinion will not accept that.

Last year the Welsh water authority was top of the league for cutting off water supplies to defaulting families. Between 1984-87 and 1987-88, the cut-off rate escalated. That came through with startling clarity in an answer to a question tabled by my hon. Friend the Member for Cynon Valley (Mrs. Clwyd). Our fear is that the new company, driven by profit reasons, will drive up the cut-off rate dramatically. I remind the House that Wales manages to top the league tables of poverty, ill health, pollution and dereliction, and that there is a public health consequence in respect of cut-offs, as there is in respect of the imposition, should it occur, of metering.

I should like to set out the size of the task ahead of us if the measure goes forward. There are 10 Welsh lakes and 90 miles of Welsh rivers without fish. The Welsh water authority has more coastal sewage discharges than any English water authority region. The majority of the authority's discharges to tidal waters are short outfalls discharging crude, untreated sewage. Some 40 per cent. of these outfalls are more than 40 years old and a few date from the 19th century. The Welsh water authority has a greater number of small, older outfalls than any other water authority, and many of them were designed with little attention to environmental effects. In Wales, there are also hundreds of private sewage discharges, but these now come under the control of the water authority.

Mr. Tim Devlin (Stockton, South): I have not been in Wales for some months, but if what the hon. Gentleman

says is true, does it not make sense to separate the function of licensing pollution discharges and being the water authority? Is that not what is achieved by the Bill?

Mr. Jones: The point that I am making, by giving highly relevant and impartial information, is that we do not believe that the great task ahead can be tackled by the plans which the Government have so far outlined, and which the Minister adumbrated with regard to Wales.

The Wrexham and East Denbighshire water company is a statutory water company. I make my remarks about it in the knowledge that in Wales even the remotest prospect of our most basic commodity falling under foreign control will raise the nation's hackles. Does the Welsh water authority have any shares in the Wrexham water company? Does that authority harbour the objective of taking the Wrexham water company over on privatisation? Are any of the French water companies negotiating with the Wrexham water company for the possession of shares? I have established that Wrexham water company shares have increased in value since December 1987. The 4·9 per cent. consolidated ordinary voting stocks have increased in value by nearly six times this year.

These are the justifiable queries of those who have a care for this statutory company. I hope that before the end of the debate there will be some answers. I also want to know whether the Wrexham water company is vulnerable to a stock market raid during the complex flotation period.

I can illustrate my case against this privatisation by the briefest of references to a previous privatisation measure —the selling off of the bus industry. Examples may be drawn from the lamentable consequences of the Government's legislation on that. I shall attempt to illustrate the defects of this legislation by telling the House that shareholders of Crossville Wales are being asked to back a £6 million takeover of the North Wales Bus Company, a bid that will earn them a massive 300 per cent. profit on every share. This company was privatised for around £3 million, and 15 months later it will be sold off for around £6 million.

National Express, the country's biggest operator of long-distance coaches, has offered to buy Notiontreat Limited, the holding company of Crossville Wales, for £30 cash for every £1 ordinary share. The three directors, who own just over half Crossville Wales ordinary shares, are recommending that the offer be accepted. They have irrevocably undertaken to accept the offer. The chairman of the company has 48,000 shares, the commercial director and the engineering director have 26,000 shares. A sale at £30 a share would make the chairman's holdings worth, instead of £48,000, £1·3 million. The other two directors would see their holdings worth £754,000.

Let me give the House a warning about why this privatisation legislation should not be accepted. The fourth director of Notiontreat, who took no part in the board's deliberations on the offer, is not joining in the board's recommendation to accept the offer, as he is also a director and chairman of National Express, which is making the takeover offer. However, that member had more than 4,000 ordinary shares in the North Wales company and I understand that they have been transferred to close family. They will be worth about £122,000 if the annual general meeting accepts the offer.

Why do I refer to that effect? My reason is summed up by the divisional officer of the Transport and General Workers Union, Mr. Jim Morris, who said:

> "I don't blame individuals, but the Government who created such a situation. This is privatisation at any price. We always said National Bus Company was being sold at a knock down price. The price being asked for individual companies was giving them away."

That must be the case in the bus industry, and we fear that it may be the case with the water industry. We fear a rip off, and the *Daily Post* of today was doing a public service in publishing that information.

This is a land Bill. The Welsh water authority owns over 91,000 acres. When last in Wales was such a huge acreage sold off in one fell swoop? In the history of Wales, this proposal is of considerable social and economic importance. It is offensive to Welsh people that a great, successful and viable utility, a strategic resource, is to be sold. Some 9,700 acres make up the water surface. Approximately 63,000 acres surround the lakes and reservoirs. The Welsh water authority owns some of the wildest and grandest land imaginable, and the authority also owns 385 acres of important and valuable urban land. It has planning consent for nearly 10,000 acres across Wales. At the moment it is seeking planning consent for another 2,000 acres. There may be a number of other sites for which planning consent will be sought in due course. The Welsh water authority owns land worth tens of milions of pounds, and I want the Minister to tell us how much, on the basis of its land holding alone, the authority is worth.

Land with planning permission is worth a fortune. Land of scenic beauty in the late 20th century is worth a fortune. Land with scenic beauty alongside water reaches is worth even more. At the moment the authority is a sensitive developer and exploiter of the land, but the Bill opens up the possibility of speculation by people and forces with fewer scruples. There is even the prospect of windfall profits for the new owners. I remind the Minister that the Brecon Beacons have breathtaking beauty. Snowdonian scenery is awesome, and the Welsh marches are charming walking countryside. There is a welcome in our green valleys. There is access to the hillsides as well as a welcome, and we are telling the House, "Do not change a successful formula." I think that the people of Wales should know that the Labour party will return the water companies to social ownership.

There is widespread dismay in Wales that the Government have arrogantly proposed this measure without a shread of support from our people. Welsh consumers expect a surge in the price of water. We are contemptuous of a Government who impose the measure on Wales but not on Scotland. We support the environmentalists, who fear commercial pressures on the landscape. The Bill sets up a monopoly that will have no competition. The Bill appears to set no specific water quality standards. It hands over some of the most important assets in Wales to private enterprise, and probably at a rip-off price.

Nobody believes that there will be sufficient capital investment to tackle outstanding pollution problems. Even at this late stage, I ask the Government to omit Wales from the legislation. For the people of Wales, this legislation is retrograde. Everybody expects the new company to put profit before investment and exploitation before quality. No local authority, no church, and no voluntary

[Mr. Jones]

organisation in Wales supports the Bill. It is completely friendless. The Bill is a 343-page long political suicide note. It will cost the Government dear in Wales. We know that it will lose them national political power. We have no hesitation in urging all hon. Members to vote the Bill down tonight.

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I believe that you have a responsibility to safeguard the interests of individual hon. Members. As no Conservative Member has risen to provide an alibi for the Secretary of State for Wales, I wonder whether you have been told why he is not here to defend the contrast between his 1971 position and his position today.

5.50 pm

Mr. Chris Butler (Warrington, South): Most of my remarks are not concerned with Welsh Water at all, but I listened carefully to the speech by the hon. Member for Alyn and Deeside (Mr. Jones) and I found it interesting. He called for a Welsh National Rivers Authority, which would cover the whole of Wales. I remember the passage of the Wales Bill—of which the hon. Gentleman was an enthusiastic supporter—through the House. It proposed that the Welsh assembly should deal only with the area covered by the Welsh water authority, not with the area covered by the Severn-Trent water authority. Therefore, the hon. Gentleman appears to have changed his mind on the matter of Welsh Water.

He also advanced a new concept, which was that the Welsh water authority was a popular establishment in Wales. That is certainly news to me. I understood his point about the history of the planning of water and that the establishment of a water supply was tainted with incidences of disease, because I remember my father telling me when I was young of his experience as a GP in the south Wales valleys. However, the quality of water depends not so much on its ownership, but on the statutory framework within which the relevant authorities are run.

In 1886 there was a cholera outbreak associated with a bakery that was noted for its especially fine quality bread. Sanitary inspectors were called in. They found that there was a connection between the local privies and water reservoirs that were used in the bakery. They closed off the connection and the cholera outbreak subsided. However, this was followed by public outrage because the quality of the bread deteriorated.

Mr. Rhodri Morgan (Cardiff, West): It had no taste.

Mr. Butler: Quite so.

My hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State for the Environment told me in a written answer:

"All public supplies of drinking water in the United Kingdom are safe to drink."—[*Official Report*, 26 October 1988; Vol. 139, c. 228.]

On the very next day, in *The Daily Telegraph*, it was reported that Thames Water admitted that its water contains five times the legally permitted level of polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons, which are well known carcinogens derived from the coal tar linings of water pipes. Thames Water said that it would cost £1 billion to put right, and a sombre official admitted, "Someone's got to pay for this".

My hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State for the Environment in a reply on 3 November said that there was unlikely to be

"any significant health risk from drinking water which occasionally exceeds the standards".

But how significant is significant? After all, the levels are five times those permitted by European Community law and presumably those standards are devised on the advice of experts. How occasionally is occasionally? After all, the coal tar is in the pipes all the time. The North West water authority is engaging in urgent research to find out whether its water, too, is contaminated with PAHs.

I question whether all public supplies of water are safe to drink. We know that 85 water supplies in Scotland exceed the European Community lead limit, that in 61 out of 168 samples the carcinogen trichloroethylene was found at levels above the World Health Organisation's permitted limits, and 4 million people in this country drink water contaminated with nitrates at above the limit permitted by the European Community maximum of 50 mg per litre.

I am especially worried about the quality of water in the London area. I try not to drink London tap water. I find it rather disgusting. I drink mineral water and I believe that my habit is shared by many others because sales of mineral water keep rising dramatically. The Select Committee on the Environment took evidence that 30 per cent. of people have water which is extracted from lowland rivers. We use our rivers as sewers, so those poor people are drinking water which is 10 per cent. sewage. The Thames, too, is used as a sewer. We know of sewage works which are so old and decrepit that they disgorge their contents directly into the Thames.

There are also doubts about the quality of the ground water in the Thames valley area, which is used for gravel and sandpit digging. Once those pits are dug, they are filled with domestic and building refuse. The end result is that the dilute and disperse policy in this very permeable area is a recipe for pollution of our ground water with leachate. Increased extraction of water from the upper Thames area will only add to the strong pressures of ground water running through landfill areas. There were no controls on leachate dumping prior to 1974 and cowboys were rife in that area. There is still inadequate control of building rubble, which produces methane and also contains nasties such as lead and asbestos, which themselves can leach out. We know of landfill areas that are leaching direct into water courses that lead to the Thames. The Halcrow report, published last week, said:

"Landfill sites continue to be a major potential threat to ground water quality."

In my constituency there is a 390 acre landfill site just opened by Cheshire county council. It will have a clay bund which is meant to contain the many millions of gallons of leachate that it will produce. However, I question the sense of Cheshire county council in placing that site where it has, because it is directly between the two major water courses of the north-west—the Mersey and the Manchester ship canal. Worse than that, Cheshire county council has placed it directly over a major aquafer which feeds a large part of the north-west. I believe that it feeds part of Wales, too.

The North West water authority sent me a letter saying:

"It is recognised that landfill sites always produce leachate and that even engineered sites can and do leak . . . It is considered better to risk the resources in one area for a long period rather than have several short-term risks scattered about."

That is hard cheese for Warrington, which must shoulder the risk for many other areas.

It is against that general background that I welcome the establishment of the National Rivers Authority. I welcome the appointment of my old boss, Lord Crickhowell. Those who know Nick well will realise that bureaucratic incompetence and insensitivity will wither before him. He has an immense task. The river quality survey on which the Select Committee on the Environment reported said that the quality of rivers over the past five years had deteriorated. The DOE expects no change in that before 1990.

In the North-West water authority, area between 1980 and 1985, 266 km of river length deteriorated in quality. The Mersey remains probably the most polluted estuarial area in Europe. In 1986, 22 per cent. of all sewerage works were breaking their own sewage discharge consents for 95 per cent. of the time.

In many respects the Halcrow report is extremely disturbing. It says that monitoring and investigation are insufficient to enable an understanding of the distribution and behaviour of many important contaminants. It says that the level of nitrates in water is likely to rise and that the level of pesticides in water will be a serious problem.

In my view:

"The creation of a National Rivers Authority within a privatised water industry offers excellent opportunity for conservation, protection, monitoring and overall management of ground water resources to be co-ordinated nationally."

Those are not my words but those of Sir William Halcrow, and I agree with him.

The public sector's record of protecting our water is not one of which we can be proud.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Harold Walker): Order. It being 6 o'clock, speeches between now and 8 o'clock must not exceed 10 minutes, and I very much hope that those following will not exceed 10 minutes either.

6.1 pm

Mr. Roy Hughes (Newport, East): So far this debate has tended to have a Welsh flavour, which is understandable because water has always been an emotive subject in Wales. As a consequence, I feel that we have a right to expect the organ grinder himself to be present rather than to leave the debate to the Minister of State, Welsh Office.

I believe that the Bill is summed up by a cartoon that I saw in one of the newspapers a few days ago. The caption posed the question, "Who owns the rain?" That cartoon illustrates the absurdity of the Government's proposals. Water is essential to life on this planet. Surely it is logical and sensible for it to be in public ownership. Nevertheless, we must face the situation and ask what the future pattern of ownership is likely to be.

We already know that three French water companies have taken substantial holdings in 28 statutory water companies. There is little doubt that their attention will now turn to the privatised water authorities. My hon. Friend the Member for Alyn and Deeside (Mr. Jones) has already said what could happen to the Wrexham water company. What will the Government do to prevent takeovers and asset-stripping? If the Government's past record is anything to go by, it will be precious little.

We are told that water authority land holdings throughout the country amount to 435,465 acres and that 97,000 acres of that land is in Wales. Much of it is unspoilt. It is not difficult to reach the conclusion that that land will be vulnerable to new pressures. The report published by the Council for the Protection of Rural England and the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds has said:

"Following privatisation, pressure for residential, commercial and recreational development is likely to increase very sharply."

It would seem that with the privatisation of water, as with Royal Ordnance, the Government are selling a property portfolio, not an industry.

There is already talk of development and windfall profits. It has not escaped my notice that the Government are proposing to write off no less than £5 billion debt from water undertakings. In other words, that will be a gift to future shareholders. For years I have campaigned for the writing-off of the paper debt on the Severn bridge, the very gateway to Wales. But that campaign has been like knocking one's head against a stone wall. When I compare the Government's skinflint attitude with the generosity that is being shown to future shareholders in the water industry, it makes me cynical about their intentions.

We know that when water is privatised there will be no competition. Therefore, what will happen to prices? In recent years the Welsh people have been plagued by rocketing water charges. Now there is speculation about a further 50 per cent. increase, and Ministers have made little, if any, attempt to refute such a suggestion. Stemming from such price increases there is every likelihood of a marked upward trend in disconnections.

The Government have said that privatisation will lead to a boost in investment. But there is a big question mark about that. In any case, such arguments come a bit rich from a Government who have set such tight external financing limits for the water industry that they have had the effect of forcing up prices and curtailing urgently needed investment.

Britain has been named the dirty man of Europe. In recent months there have been revelations about sewage, pesticides and nitrates gushing out into our water. In turn the Government, not before time, have shown concern about the environment. Perhaps the threat of European prosecutions has had something to do with that. Likewise, that newfound Government concern may assist the salesmanship needed to convince the public of the merits of privatisation.

Admittedly, the Government propose the establishment of a National Rivers Authority, but it is, of course, a 6,000-strong quango. Among other things, the NRA will seek to control water pollution; yet environmental groups, whose interest in such matters goes back a long way, say that it will have neither the regulatory teeth nor the resources to do that job properly.

It is suggested that clauses 49 and 50 are vague and imprecise and that no specific water quality standards have been written in. The Government's proposals, enshrined in the Bill, are littered with contradictions. Water is a natural monopoly, and there can be no competition within any water authority area. That monopoly should provide for guaranteed profits, but massive investment is needed.

There is a public demand for improved drinking water quality; likewise, there is an urgent need to repair and replace our crumbling sewerage system. The NRA will not be able to prosecute the water companies until 1992, but 20

[Mr. Roy Hughes]

per cent. of sewage treatment works currently break the law. The Government recognise that immediate insistence on higher standards would frighten off investors.

The overriding motive of every private company is profit for the shareholder. It is argued that capital will be easier to raise on the private market, but such funding will require quick and massive return. With the Government's proposals, reluctant investors will be concerned about the costs that face the industry; and increasingly hostile consumers will be faced with ever-growing bills.

Proper investment could be provided by the taxpayer at less cost than raising capital on the private market, and control would rest directly with the Government. We are fully committed to the social ownership of the water industry, with proper provision of local services and accountability to the consumer. Water is a vital natural resource that should remain in public hands. The Bill is an abomination. It is bad for the environment and for the customer. If Wales cannot be omitted from it, the Bill should be thrown out this evening.

6.10 pm

Mr. Nicholas Baker (Dorset, North): All who speak in this debate will be heavily influenced by their local experience of the water industry, and none more so than the hon. Member for Newport, East (Mr. Hughes), who spoke mellifluously and passionately. As a mere Englishman, I feel somewhat of an intruder into a Welsh day on the Water Bill.

I appreciate the opportunity of contributing to a debate on privatisation. I support the concept of privatisation for no reasons of dogma. I believe that it will enable us to run businesses in a better way, to provide better services to the customer, and those who run the businesses will suffer less interference from politicians. I resent the suggestion that private companies are less able to perform key functions in our society than publicly-owned companies. Companies engaged in defence contracts and companies that now participate in the previous 18 areas of privatisation are good evidence of the wrongness of that view.

It is easy for us in Parliament to set out a system for regulating and controlling private companies which are engaged in areas of activity, such as the water industry, and I am glad that the Bill is setting about that task. But there is another reason why I am in favour of privatisation where it is appropriate, and it is one that I have not heard mentioned so far. I believe that companies in the private sector are better able to accommodate change than public sector undertakings. They are better and quicker at expanding and contracting, as the need for their services or as the market for their product demands. We have the history of nationalised industries. A recent example is the sad tale of British Shipbuilders. I think that the House will recognise the truth of what I am saying.

At various times all businesses need to expand and contract. If they operate in a private capacity, they are better able to do so. Our company law provides a framework that is designed to enable companies to grow and contract. Large national undertakings, by their very structures, are less able to do so. Therefore, I welcome this further measure of privatisation. The advantages enjoyed by private companies will apply in this instance. In addition, they have the advantage of being able to raise capital on the market. I am less terrified by the prospect of publicly-owned water companies than some Labour Members. That is because the water to my house is supplied by a private company. Water in Dorset is provided by the Bournemouth District Water Company, and it does an extremely good job. It does so safely and securely in conjunction with Wessex Water.

I have some worries about the Bill, and I shall present them to my right hon. and hon. Friends on the Treasury Bench. First, I hope that we shall not over-regulate water companies to the extent that they are not marketable. It would be extremely dangerous to the supply of good quality water if the shareholders did not wish to invest in the companies on privatisation day.

Secondly, I am worried about price increases. Whether we pay for water services and necessary environmental controls as taxpayers or as consumers, it is necessary for charges to be increased, irrespective of whether the undertakings are privatised. The water industry has suffered from a lack of investment over many years. Indeed, that was a subject of our discussion yesterday. There is an urgent need for more investment, and that has been recognised by Labour Members. Of course, we shall have to pay for that investment. I hope that we shall not be too timid about facing the prospect of price increases. If the water industry is in private hands, it should be possible to keep necessary price increases lower than would otherwise be the case. That is another reason why I favour the privatisation of the industry.

My third worry is based on the need for a special share. Wessex Water, the authority that has overall responsibility for the water that is supplied to and around my home, has efficient management, effective controls and good assets. I suspect, however, that it and other water authorities will be especially vulnerable in the period following the flotation. There should be a special share to enable the authorities to overcome the flotation and the move into the private sector. The special share could be of infinite duration, subject to revocation by the Government if that is considered to be in the public interest.

Fourthly, I am troubled about connection charges. I live in an area with a high-growth population, and the infrastructure has not been properly planned to accommodate the growth. Water consumption is increasing at a dramatic rate. The efforts of the water authorities to accommodate the increased demand are laudable, but they have been maintained only with the greatest difficulty. Water authorities have no control over development and the plcs will not have that control in future. If the infrastructure is inadequate, planning authorities should reject applications for development unless the developer is willing to finance the cost of new sewers and water supply. My right hon. and hon. Friends should maintain a connection charge to ensure that developments in areas with a high-growth population, such as the one that I represent, do not outstrip the ability of the water companies to supply proper services.

Fifthly, great fears have been expressed about the sale of assets. Mention has been made of 450,000 acres of land. I have no objection to the assets being sold. That may be in the interests of maintaining, if not improving, the quality of the job that is done by the water authorities, which are required to provide a good supply of high-quality water and other services. However, the assets must not be sold in defiance of existing planning procedures. I hear the fears expressed by the Council for

the Protection of Rural England and the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds. If I thought that there was any ground for believing that the normal planning procedures would somehow be avoided, I would be seriously concerned. I hope that those of us who have mentioned this issue will be given the assurance that we seek.

The Bill is an environmental measure. I welcome the creation of a National Rivers Authority. Our former colleague Sir Phillip Holland may wince at the creation of another quango, but the NRA is necessary, and it will have a very important job to do.

I end on a local point, which I believe has national applications, with which the NRA will have to deal. The demands on our rivers and water resources have increased and are increasing so greatly that in some parts—and my area is one—the ecology and environment of rivers is under threat. Water authorities have so far coped quite well. In 1969 the River Allen where I live in Barnsley—which, as everyone will know, is in the county of Dorset—had a water abstraction rate of 1·5 million gallons a day. This year, the abstraction rate is 5·5 million gallons a day. Of course, the river level has fallen. The ecology and the natural environment of the wildlife that depends on the river are being depleted and there is a threat of damage. There is a very strong need for an NRA. Its enforcement powers must be strong. If I were selected to serve on the Standing Committee——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. Mr. John Cartwright.

6.21 pm

Mr. John Cartwright (Woolwich): I want to register a very strong objection about the basis on which water authority assets are to be sold off under the terms of the Bill. In 1974 local authorities saw their water service assets transferred to the new regional water authorities without receiving a penny in compensation. They received only an assurance that there would be a majority of local authority representatives on the boards of the new authorities. That assurance from a Conservative Administration was torn up in 1983 by another Conservative Administration when the so-called commercial business men's administrations took over the water authorities.

The privatisation that we are discussing will remove the last vestige of any democratic involvement in the running of those essential services. More important, it will put the Government in the very happy position of selling for billions of pounds valuable assets for which they paid absolutely nothing. Conservative Members often quite rightly object to the concept of nationalisation without compensation. I suggest that privatisation without compensation is just as unacceptable.

The case in principle for privatisation rests on the belief that market forces will generate greater efficiency by ensuring that competition makes management more sensitive to the needs of the consumer, makes it improve its service to the consumer and makes it hold down prices to retain the loyalty of its customers. That may work in many areas of industry and commerce, but, as we know, it is absolutely impossible to achieve that in terms of water and sewerage services.

The Government accept that there is no possibility of genuine competition in water and sewerage services. Therefore, they dreamed up the concept of what they call comparative competition. Yesterday the Secretary of State for the Environment said:

"the customer will be able to make comparisons between each of the companies."

That produces a marvellous mental picture of a typical constituent in a high-rise block of flats in my constituency staying up late at night poring over the detailed figures trying to decide which company can offer, in the words of the Secretary of State,

"the best management to deliver exacting environmental and water quality standards at a lower price."—[*Official Report*, 7 December 1988; Vo. 143, c. 338.]

Anyone who believes that that will happen is not living in the real world.

Even if my mythical constituent, gazing at the world from his 24th storey flat in his tower block, bothered to take an interest in the concept of comparative competition, what possible good could that do him? If he finds that he is being badly served by Thames Water plc, he cannot switch his water suppliers like he changes his supermarket or pub. He certainly will not have any power to influence the operation of water plcs. Under the Bill, customers will be completely captive, bound hand and foot, to a private profit-making monopoly. The Bill bestows on private companies an effective power to levy taxes. That is a distinctly medieval concept. However, since that is brought to us by the same team that gave us the poll tax, perhaps I should not be surprised by that approach.

This debate has already generated a good deal of concern about the impact of privatisation on the level of water charges. Yesterday the Secretary of State spoke about a 7·5 per cent. to 12 per cent. increase in prices in order to fund the capital improvements. On television a couple of weeks ago the Minister of State did not deny that the overall price increases would be between 50 per cent. and 90 per cent. by 1993. The Minister appears to be showing dissent. However, he is quoted to that extent in the *Daily Mail* which is not known for its virulent opposition to this Administration.

Other people have suggested that the price increases will be a great deal more. We know that consumers will have to meet the costs of renewing aging Victorian systems, improving water quality and providing higher environmental standards. In addition, they may well have to meet the overall costs of water meter installation. Privatisation will bring the added burdens of having to pay dividends to shareholders and to meet the cost of corporation tax. Against that background, only the Secretary of State would have the nerve to say that this is a good Bill for the consumer.

Like Opposition Members, I am concerned about the impact of rising prices on the poorest families. We know that the social security changes have brought problems because there is no longer a specific allowance for water charges which must be met from the general social security benefit. We know that some poorer consumers have difficulty paying by instalments because the existing water authorities are not flexible about accepting instalments from those who do not have bank accounts.

The most worrying spectre of rising prices is the prospect that there will be more water disconnections for non-payment. We have already experienced an increase in the number of disconnections. If the consumers advice bureau in Bath, not an area noted for being deprived, can report 35 disconnections in one week in September, we know that the situation is serious. Given the risks to health

[Mr. John Cartwright]

and the obvious hardship, we simply cannot accept that private profit-making companies should be given unfettered power to disconnect consumers.

In the 1970s I was involved in the battle to stop gas and electricity disconnections. Major hardships were involved. However, at least there was the possibility of an alternative in terms of heating or lighting one's home if one was disconnected by a fuel board. However, there is no possible replacement if one is deprived of one's water supply.

Last night the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State tried to assure us that a code of practice would be at least as extensive as the present one. That simply is not reassuring. The present arrangements do not stop vulnerable families from being disconnected from their water supplies. Our experience of the gas and electricity authorities shows us that codes of practice are simply not the answer. They do not prevent hardship.

Water disconnection is a massive power. It is a much more severe punishment than many meted out by the criminal courts. It simply must not be exercised by junior officials in water companies. Water debt should be pursued through the courts like other debts and disconnection should be considered only in the most rare and extreme circumstances.

I want to consider now the consumer protection machinery. The Minister of State, Welsh Office who opened the debate today tried to suggest that the Bill represented a universal and very effective system of consumer protection. I dispute that. The concept of a director general who has the twin roles of regulating an industry and trying to protect consumers has not worked well so far for British Telecom. That model does not inspire a great deal of confidence in the hearts and minds of consumers. The arrangements for a chain of consumer committees takes us back to the consumer consultative committees of the old nationalised industries. There was no great public confidence in those either.

Given the monopoly of water plcs and their tremendous powers, it is essential that consumers feel that they have a genuine body, free and independent of the industry and properly resourced, which can fight on their side—a watchdog that has the power to bite as well as to bark.

In many ways the Government's case has not been made out. They have not been able to show that, simply because they are private, the water companies will be able to offer any better service to consumers than we now enjoy. The improvements that we shall see in water quality and environmental standards are welcome, but the Government have not shown that those improvements cannot be achieved by the existing water authorities.

The Bill offers no guarantee of effective competition. It offers no guarantee of effective protection for the consumer. It involves real danger for the poorest families in our society and I and my right hon. and hon. Friends will oppose it in the Lobbies tonight.

6.31 pm

Sir Giles Shaw (Pudsey): I cannot follow the hon. Member for Woolwich (Mr. Cartwright) in his antagonism to the Bill. My hon. and learned Friend the Minister for Water and Planning will, I trust, accept that I shall be a strong supporter of it, despite some of the difficulties that have been associated with it. Let me declare at the outset an indirect interest in so far as one of the companies to which I am a consultant numbers among its clients the Water Authorities Association. However, my direct interest in the industry stems from a long time ago.

Private sector involvement in water supply has probably been one of the most consistent influences whoever happened to own or direct the water authorities. Private sector involvement came very much through the municipalities and the cities; from councillors who took an active part in ensuring that their particular city had a substantial and effective water system.

That was certainly so in the West Riding of Yorkshire where, for example, the city of Bradford was run by citizens who, as elected councillors, came from the wool industry and created the massive reservoir system, scouring industry and all the other essential ingredients to form the basis of the textile industry in West Yorkshire. They were essentially private sector individuals taking a role in municipal supply.

When I joined a rural district council in West Yorkshire I remember being told by a local councillor, "Right lad, there's a lot in't drain, but remember there are no votes in it". To a certain extent he was right because the problem with the municipally-owned water industry is that since the 19th century, when the citizens who made the big decisions to invest in public water supply had all the infrastructure put in, there has been little reassessment, replacement and replenishment of the infrastructure. So it was that after the period between the wars and immediately after, the municipal owners of the public water supply found a run-down system.

Then followed the reconstruction of the water industry through statutes passed by the House, in which my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales played a major part. The current water authorities who invested in replenishment, struggling within the public sector to try to find sufficient resources within the external financing limits and Treasury restraints, have done as well as they reasonably could. If we want major changes in water and sewerage standards, better control of pollution and the environment, and better conservation, new sources of capital investment must be found and a speedy and effective solution found. The Bill provides a balanced arrangement for achieving that.

I say "balanced" because the crucial element is the setting up of public sector control—the National Rivers Authority—in such a way that the private sector can flourish to the extent required to maintain the investment level in the improvement of the assets. In my judgment, the balance is just, but only just, there. My hon. Friend has designed a system of control of the water industry through the NRA which is infinitely more rigid than it is for any industry that has so far been privatised.

My hon. Friend will share my anxiety about whether shareholders will have sufficient confidence to ensure that the industry has the asset backing that it most sorely needs. If there is to be such confidence, the operations of the NRA must be sensitive to the costs being imposed upon the industry by statute, EEC directive, the director general and the reasonable public accountability process that has been built into the NRA and the advisory committees so that the monopoly that remains does not abuse its power. The power of the NRA, a monopoly in its own right, must not abuse the private sector either which is struggling to provide a public utility for all our citizens.

I want to ask some direct questions. The first is in relation to the cost pass through provisions, which have been, I think, adequately dealt with in the Bill. However, I noted from what my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State said yesterday that he was anxious to demonstrate that the major cost for the revised anti-pollution programme would have to be carried by the plcs. He pointed out that the £2·4 billion was part of the pollution programme.

I am sure that neither my hon. and learned Friend the Minister nor my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State would wish the House to assume that the only significant increase in costs would come from those programmes which would be costed out at between 7·5 per cent. and 12·5 per cent. total increase in charges. That surely is not so. The cost associated with the pollution programmes, which, as is shown in *Hansard*, run on different time grades —1992, 1995, and the year 2000—may enter the industry's price stream at that level. But the industry, under direct Government pressure, has started to make significant improvements in its investment, all of which will have to be paid for through the cost price mechanism. We should be under no illusion that, although the pollution programme may cost £2·4 billion, significantly more millions of pounds require to be spent to maintain the existing system of supply, to improve the investment record and to cure a number of the problems already associated with a system that still shows signs of strain when under pressure.

The NRA is to be responsible for land drainage operations and coastal defence work. The House may well be aware that those two important responsibilities have to date been carried by the water authorities. In most areas, certainly those with long coastlines such as Yorkshire, the problem of coastal erosion and the massive danger of inundation or other such disasters results in an authority having to have flexible borrowing powers and usually substantial reserves. The same could well be true of land drainage. I think particularly of the problem in Anglia. It is also true in parts of Yorkshire and parts of north Lincolnshire. Will the NRA's borrowing powers be sufficient and sufficiently flexible to deal with those issues?

Schedule 1, paragraph 18, says:

"The Authority may, with the consent of the Secretary of State or the Minister and the approval of the Treasury, borrow temporarily in sterling by way of overdraft or otherwise from a person other than the Secretary of State or the Minister, such sums as it may require for meeting its obligations and carrying out its functions . . . The Authority shall not be entitled to borrow otherwise than under this paragraph."

May I have an assurance from my hon. and learned Friend the Minister that that borrowing power is comparable in every way to that currently enjoyed by water authorities in discharging the same functions; for example, land drainage investment and cost, and flood protection investment and cost? I detect in schedule 1(18) the mortmain of the Treasury having rather more inflexibility than that function of the National Rivers Authority deserves.

Much has been made also of the fact that under the new regime, which we hope will be successful, companies can be more flexible in what they do, can extend their operations to a number of other activities, and can generally behave like the French. I am all in favour of that but hope that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State and my hon. and learned Friend the Minister will take note of one further point. If that objective is to be realised, it is essential that some kind of golden share arrangement is made to protect water authorities in handling the crucial five-year period between vesting and privatisation and arriving at the full potential for their powers. I hope that my hon. and learned Friend will address that aspect too, because I doubt that the new authorities will be able to behave like the French unless they are given a measure of protection from predation by French investors during the period in question.

Under the Bill, the future will be safe for private water supply, which will improve in both quality and environmental access. But I am concerned to see that the plcs will have the flexibility to develop as I trust the House wishes to see them develop, and that initially at least they will have a measure of protection to ease them on their way.

6.41 pm

Mr. A.E. P. Duffy (Sheffield, Attercliffe): I wish to ask two questions. First, what impact is privatisation likely to have on the scale of water charges in Yorkshire? Secondly, how adequate will the National Rivers Authority be in its monitoring role in Yorkshire?

There is already a strong upward thrust towards increased water charges there. As Yorkshire water authority investigates the condition of its underground assets, it finds that more work needs to be done, calling for as much as £400 million investment in the forecast period. Moreover, the authority is under increasing pressure from environmentalists and others to improve the quality of its rivers. That can be done only by spending enormous sums on improving sewage treatment works. Only half of Yorkshire water authority's current capital programme is committed to water quality improvements, with most of the remainder going on the maintenance and repair of underground assets.

To meet the Government's new requirements without prejudicing those programmes will mean increased charges to customers or increased borrowing from the Government. However, over the past four years the Government have reduced the amount that the authority may borrow to fund its capital investment programme, at precisely the time when its needs are increasing. The burden inevitably falls on customers in the form of increased charges. Twice this year I have appealed to the Minister for some relaxation of the borrowing rules, but he reminds me that Government policy is for water authorities to move away from investment based on borrowing. For 1988-89, the Government set an external financing limit on Yorkshire water authority of only £40 million, yet its accumulated deficit is more than £500 million. Last year, the servicing charges on that debt accounted for nearly half of its operating profits. It can only mean, as the chairman of Yorkshire water authority confirmed recently, that if all the money must be raised from charges,

"then we might have to face a 27 per cent. charges increase next year."

And that comes on the threshold of privatisation.

Over the past five years, Yorkshire water authority has given investment priority to improvements in drinking water quality. Even today, about 1·25 million customers receive discoloured water through their taps. Further capital expenditure may also be affected by two incipient problems that water authorities need to monitor closely, especially in Yorkshire. The first relates to aluminium in

[Mr. A.E. P. Duffy]

purification processes; the second to the presence of nitrates in drinking water, which hon. Members on both sides of the House have mentioned.

While a causal link has yet to be made between aluminium for purification and Alzheimer's disease, the contingency must be met in Yorkshire, one of the worst affected areas, where more than 800,000 consumers are supplied with water that may contain aluminium levels above the legal limit. The same contingency thinking—and this is where money is involved—must be applied to nitrates. Some fertilisers, such as those containing nitrites, find their way into streams and aquafers, and ultimately into domestic water supplies. Yet one quarter of south Yorkshire's drinking water comes from rivers, such as the Derwent, around York, which are fed by streams and rivulets running through agricultural land. Sheffield and Rotherham benefit from the mixing of Pennine water with Derwent supplies. Not so as one moves eastward, along the south Yorkshire valley, where high nitrate levels occur in, for example, the Doncaster area. Yorkshire water authority insists that nitrate levels are below the EEC's maximum permissible concentration—but for how long?

On 3 October 1988, *The Guardian* reported:

"Bottle-fed babies may run a greater risk from nitrates in water than the Government has publicly accepted, according to a confidential Department of Health report."

The potential problems of aluminium and nitrates in water need to be borne in mind and may call for more capital resources than is currently envisaged.

Even though Yorkshire water authority's accumulated debt will be written off, it faces such a huge outlay as the result of upgrading sewers and pipes to meet new standards, investing in new equipment, and the need to provide against future water supply problems—and therefore such enormous capital levels and service charges —that a dramatic increase in Yorkshire water prices following privatisation appears unavoidable.

I turn to the role of the National Rivers Authority. Nowhere was the passage of the Control of Pollution Act 1974 received more eagerly than in south Yorkshire, as it gave rise to the expectation that its rivers would become cleaner. However I understand that by 1988 river quality worsened throughout south Yorkshire, and plans to return fish to poisoned waters have been postponed—perhaps until the next century. Yorkshire water authority chairman, Gordon Jones, admitted to me in correspondence that hundreds of kilometres of south Yorkshire's rivers are still polluted.

Sheffield city council is committed to the regeneration of its east end, yet the designated area is flanked by the rivers Don and Rother, probably the dirtiest in Britian in their local stretches. Hard though it may be to imagine today, the Rother and Don valleys once provided some of the finest countryside in all England and inspired Sir Walter Scott to write "Ivanhoe". The Rother and Don catchments were also renowned for their excellent fishing and kingfishers. I recall from my boyhood the heronries and swimming clubs that existed there.

In a letter dated 28 December 1980, I asked the Department of the Environment what estimate has been made of the effect of its spending cuts on Yorkshire water authority's plans to clean up south Yorkshire's waterways. In his reply of 29 January 1981, the then Under-Secretary of State for the Environment, the hon. Member for Pudsey (Sir G. Shaw), who has just spoken, described my inquiry as unnecessarily gloomy, and claimed

"the overall trend in river quality is improving."

Two years later, according to a survey produced jointly by the then South Yorkshire county council and Yorkshire water authority, more than half the county's rivers were still of "poor" or "bad" quality and would cost more than £100 million to clean up. That programme was never put in hand. Instead, a 19 per cent. cut in the capital programme for 1979-80 that we bequeathed to the Government meant that 32 of south Yorkshire's 46 major schemes were affected and three were scrapped.

In May 1982, South Yorkshire county council urged the Government to implement the Flowers commission recommendation that national funds be made available to tackle the problems of river pollution arising from abandoned mine workings. In April 1987, Gordon Jones made the same plea to the Department of the Environment —also in vain. Today, perhaps as a result, south Yorkshire's rivers remain among the filthiest in Britain. Every day, tonnes of toxic chemicals and materials pour into the waterways—often illegally and out of area. Pollution on this scale is no longer confined to south Yorkshire, nor to industry. Pollution from farms has also risen steadily in Yorkshire and Humberside in recent years. The Yorkshire water authority recently announced a crackdown on illegal pollution, but environmentalists and the trade unions involved in the water industry remain sceptical. They fear that the NRA will have insufficent resources and expertise to deal effectively with massive pollution problems.

The number of pollution control staff has been cut substantially since the water authorities were set up in 1974, but, over the same period, the amount of time-consuming monitoring work required has increased in line with ever-stricter regulations. In Yorkshire Water's southern division, for example, which is the area with the highest concentration of polluted rivers in the country, there are more than 1,800 registered dischargers over hunderds of miles of rivers, yet there are only 17 pollution control staff. Will the staffing levels for the NRA be significantly higher than the total pollution control complement that is presently available to the 10 existing water authorities? The privatisation of water is a depressing prospect for Yorkshire in respect of water charges and pollution. The Bill is entirely inappropriate to the needs of south Yorkshire.

6.53 pm

Mr. Gerrard Neale (Cornwall, North): It is tempting to take up the points that were raised by the hon. Member for Sheffield, Attercliffe (Mr. Duffy). I am certain that if he discussed the matter with any company that has recently been privatised, he would discover that there is relief among management that it now only has to make out a good commercial case for borrowing money on the open market, whereas previously a commercial case was insufficient and a political case had to be made—among political cases that were irrelevant to it—to obtain the sanction for cash from the Government. In that sense, privatisation offers a great deal of hope to the public sector part of the water industry.

I should like to take up some of the points that were made by the hon. Member for Woolwich (Mr. Cartwright) who, unusually for him, made a speech that did him some

disservice. He seemed to throw all his weight against the Bill, and he did not utter one good word for it. He gave the impression that there is no need to change the statutory framework for the water industry. I must tell him that if he talked to any of the 20,000 consumers in the Camelford area of my constituency, he would find that they have no confidence in the existing statutory framework, but they find a great deal of hope in the provisions that have been included in the Bill.

People in the Camelford area would tell the hon. Gentleman—and other hon. Members—that they realise, of course, that it is impossible to have a competitive water supply. In all logic, there can be only one institution supplying water, whether private or public. What has concerned them is the monopoly of power over that supply. Opposition Members have extolled the virtues of the public sector over the private sector. I beg them to obtain a copy of the inquiry report into the Lowermoor treatment works incident on 6 July. If they can still feel confident about the public sector water industry after reading that report, I should like to hear from them individually. It was an appalling chapter in the public water industry.

The events that followed the dumping of 20 tonnes of aluminium sulphate into a tank of water that was prepared for going into the mains and the subsequent chapter of incidents surrounding the discovery of the events that led up to it were unbelievable. People in the Camelford area are considerably reassured by the fact that the inspectorate powers of the Department of the Environment will be increased by the Bill. After the incident, it was evident that, had it not been for the Department's officials keeping a close eye on what South-West Water was doing, consumers would have received less information and the matter would not have been brought under proper control. If my hon. and learned Friend the Minister can give an assurance that the inspectorate will be manned by experienced people and properly funded, that will reassure not only my constituents, but people in the rest of the country.

The Minister is also aware of the incredibly slap-happy way in which the water authority moved quickly to discharge the contaminated water into local rivers and streams. That led to the wholesale killing of fish and was a flagrant breach of all that one would expect from a water authority. If there was ever a case for the establishment of a separate authority, such as the National Rivers Authority, that was it. I am certain that my hon. and learned Friend the Minister is correct in ensuring that that authority is set up.

Other hon. Members have spoken about the authority's funding and powers, and I hope that the Minister will consider those points carefully. My hon. Friend the Member for Pudsey (Sir G. Shaw) said that we must be careful to ensure that private investors have the proper incentives to invest in the companies. I agree, but we must remember that people have to drink the water, so they must have confidence in it.

If the water authorities are to be policed properly, a strong National Rivers Authority is needed. In view of the flagrant breaches in my constituency, people will be reassured by the fact that criminal sanctions are included in the Bill. It is right and proper that if a water authority —or individual within it—is party to water that is not of wholesome quality being put into the system, criminal sanctions should apply. There is a maximum sentence of two years' imprisonment for that. Perhaps my hon. Friend will also consider adding to the Bill a provision for a maximum of two years' imprisonment for anyone who recklessly publishes information that leads people to consume water when it is unsafe for them to do so. That should be punishable by a prison sentence if the circumstances require it. We must ensure that all people working in the water industry have a clear understanding that they have a personal as well as corporate responsibility to supply wholesome water.

I want to reinforce a point that I have made separately to Ministers, which has come out of the incident in north Cornwall. There appears to be no statutory responsibility —and I stress the word "statutory"—for the water authorities to inform the local health authority and the local environmental health authority when it can no longer supply wholesome water. No certain information was given to those authorities in Cornwall, because there was no statutory obligation to do so. Therefore, they did not treat the incident as seriously as they should have done. I hope that my hon. and learned Friend will re-examine that particular aspect and make it a statutory duty for the water authority, in any case in which it cannot supply wholesome water but has, nevertheless, allowed unwholesome water to get into the system, to tell the local health and environmental health authorities. I ask my hon. and learned Friend, in view of the Camelford incident, to give me an assurance in his winding-up speech that he will keep a close eye on the incident and ensure that the Bill covers health matters, which are the responsibility of the Department of Health. The Minister has greatly reassured me, on behalf of my constituents, and for that I thank him. I thank also my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State. They have both been of great help.

My final point is not entirely related to the Bill, and I hope that the House will forgive me for making it. During this incident in north Cornwall, it became clear that a large number of people were using hot water to cook their vegetables or to make coffee and tea.

Mr. Robert Key (Salisbury): And to cook eggs.

Mr. Neale: Yes, and to cook eggs.

The contaminants in water affect the hot water system much more seriously than they affect the cold water system. It was news to me that no water authority is responsible for supplying wholesome water by means of the hot water system. I hope that my hon. and learned Friend will consider a short advertising campaign to draw attention to such dangers. It would greatly benefit water consumers.

I welcome the Bill. It will greatly improve consumers' water supply.

7.1 pm

Mr. Harry Barnes (Derbyshire, North-East): The last four speakers on the Government Benches said that they approve of the Bill, but they all expressed reservations about it. They fall into two groups: those who stress the role of the National Rivers Authority and who believe that its role is important, and those who are worried about its role and stress the values of privatisation. When those two elements are added together they create the nonsense that is to be found in the Bill.

The hon. Member for Dorset, North (Mr. Baker) argued in favour of privatisation. In his ideological speech

[Mr. Harry Barnes]

he stressed the wide-ranging benefits of the Government's privatisation policy. He referred in particular to the shipyards. I suggest that he ought to look at what is happening elsewhere. The dry docks in Malta are among the best docks in Europe. They are under public control and a system of worker self-management. Workers are elected to the board of management and have an influence on management decisions. Such ownership provisions need to be examined, considered and developed by hon. Members.

We discussed Wales earlier this afternoon. Last night the hon. Member for Antrim, South (Mr. Forsythe) joined in the discussion, as was his right, although the measure does not apply to Northern Ireland. The poll tax will not apply to Northern Ireland either. If the poll tax and what was described last night as the water poll tax were to be introduced in Northern Ireland, where there is vast unemployment, social disruption and division, they would add to the unhappiness of the people of that Province. If the Government understood that point, they would realise what is wrong with such highly divisive measures for the rest of the United Kingdom.

What will happen to the revenues that are raised when the water industry is sold off? We have gone past the stage when we were selling off the silver. We are now selling off the commodes and other basic necessities. The money that has been raised so far has been used to carry unemployment, to help to maintain it and to cut the labour market. It has also been used to cut taxes, which has led to an import-led consumer boom and the current economic crisis. The Government have flogged off the people's assets and then thrown the money down the drain. That includes this measure, which will result in fewer drains and a less effective public sewerage and water supply.

The Prime Minister tells us regularly that the Government have no money—that they have only the taxpayers' money. If that is a simple truism—it is perhaps too simple—it is also true that the Government have no water or any public utilities. The water industry belongs to the people, but its assets are being sold off to groups within society instead of society being given the opportunity to control them. Water belongs to everybody. It does not belong to a special few. A special few will benefit initially from it, but eventually there will be a decline in public health standards if water is privatised. That will create vast problems, and more taxpayers' money will be needed to overcome them.

Conservative Members ought to consider the history of the water industry. They should consider Edwin Chadwick's report of 1842. He stressed the unsanitary conditions in which the labouring population were living in 1842 and the importance of making public provision for sanitary conditions. If inadequate provision is made for sewage disposal, it will affect all classes of society. Edwin Chadwick believed that all classes, including the middle classes, needed a good public supply of water.

There is a statue of Joseph Chamberlain in the Members' Lobby. He instigated many forms of public provision in Birmingham during the 1870s. He upheld the old Victorian attitude of public and civic pride. In 1894 he said:

> "It is difficult and indeed almost impossible to reconcile the rights and interests of the public with the claims of any individual company seeking as its natural and legitimate object the largest private gain."

These will be called old-fashioned, collectivist ideas. They could not be described as Socialist ideas, because Edwin Chadwick and Joseph Chamberlain were not Socialists. But what of the modern, with-it, dynamic, go-ahead Government who are introducing this measure? The ideas of Chadwick and Chamberlain are supposed to be yesterday's ideas. The Government say that they have new, fresh ideas to offer to us. However, they are old hat, ancient ideas.

The concept of a National Rivers Authority to regulate private industries is taken from economic theorists such as Alfred Marshall in 1890. In "The Principles of Economics" he said that natural monopolies, such as the railways, had to be regulated and that certain conditions had to be laid down for them. All that the Bill means is that 1890 limited provisions are to be introduced. That is in keeping with this Government. Their political ideas go back to Thomas Hobbes in the 17th century, who thought that everybody was selfish and grasping, to the Combination Acts of 1799 and 1800 in relation to the workers at GCHQ and to 14th century medieval provisions for a poll tax.

The Bill is just as bad as the poll tax measure. It means that those who were paying less for their water than others will have to pay more. A larger number of people, living in small houses, will need to use more water than a smaller number of people who live in large houses, and they will have to pay high water rates. This modern, with-it, dynamic Conservative Government are as old-fashioned and old hat as anything that has ever emerged from the Benches in this House.

Just what is this fantastic people's capitalism that we are being offered? Whatever the industry, if the shares are spread among people so that there are tiny bits all over the place, and if a cartel is allowed to have only 4 or 5 per cent. of the shares, who will control the industry? It will be controlled by the small groups who get together. The dissipated masses with their bits of shares will not run the company; it will be run by small, elitist groups. As time goes on, the little people will sell to the big people. Year after year, the top companies listed in "The Times 1,000" book buy smaller groups and split areas among themselves to concentrate capital. Even if people's capitalism could work, it could do so only on market principles where profitability would be the only criterion, and it would not be one of the many criteria that are required for the proper use of resources.

7.11 pm

Mr. Hugo Summerson (Walthamstow): Unlike the hon. Member for Derbyshire, North-East (Mr. Barnes), I shall not look back and attempt to give the House an inaccurate history lesson. Instead, I shall look forward to the establishment of the National Rivers Authority, which is an excellent idea. I hope that it will satisfactorily perform its role.

Exactly what powers will the NRA have? On 30 November in my constituency a train carrying oil and paraffin in tankers was derailed. Some of the oil and paraffin got in to the River Lee and it was polluted. Will the NRA have the power to tell British Rail that that section of track is dangerous and must be made safe so that similar pollution incidents do not occur through the

derailment of trains? That is not as far-fetched as it might sound. The particular section of track is on the Gospel Oak to Barking line, and I am sure that many hon. Members know that it is one of the worst equipped and managed lines in the country.

I have a strong constituency interest in the Bill because there are six reservoirs in the Lee valley, which take up about one quarter of the land area in my constituency. There is also the River Lee, a flood relief channel, a canal and the Coppermill works—a large water purification plant owned and run by the Thames water authority, which stores 50 tonnes of chlorine gas on site. Because it is a highly dangerous substance, the site is designated by the Health and Safety Executive. Will the NRA have the power to regulate the storage of such chemicals?

I wish to refer to two rivers that I know well—one in the north and one in the south—that I consider to be examples of mismanagement, and explain what I hope will be achieved through privatisation and the establishment of the NRA. The River Skerne lies in the north and may not be familiar to hon. Members. It rises in the north of County Durham, runs through the pit country and through Darlington, and empties into the River Tees a mile or two further south. I know that river well because I was born and brought up in that area. When my father was a boy it was a beautiful, clear stream supporting many types of fish. One day, about 50 years ago, my father went to the river and found a black, stinking ditch. Pit washings from pits in the north of the county had been put straight into the river, which ran black for decades and supported no life. Today, the river apparently runs clear, but it has a nasty smell, has scum and foam on the surface and appears to support no life. The river is a classic example of mismanagement and water authority indifference over many decades. It is a disgrace.

The River Kennet is in the south, and I am fortunate to fish there from time to time when I can scrounge an invitation. The water keeper is concerned about the amount of water that the river carries, because it has declined over the years as a result of abstraction. That problem can be solved only by the metering of water supplies. There is currently no link between cost and consumption. There can be dripping taps in homes, hoses can be turned on to wash the car or to water the garden and then left running, but the bill does not reflect that increased use of water. More and more people and more and more businesses are using water and there must be some form of metering so that people can see how much they are using and understand that they will be charged for the amount that they use. That already happens with other essential utilities such as gas and electricity, so there is no reason why it should not apply to water.

There appears to be great uncertainty about funding. On the national news at 6 o'clock there was an item about a sewer collapse in Bristol. The spokesman for Wessex Water said that it faced difficulties because limits had been placed on its spending and only limited funds were available. He said that he looked forward to the time when the industry was privatised so that it could be released from the constraints imposed by Government. We sit here and talk a great deal, but we are just politicians. What do we know about running the water industry? We should give it to those who know about it—to the experts and to those who can raise the money and put it to good use.

The Bill will forge a strong link between the shareholder, the consumer, the taxpayer and the Government. For that reason alone, it will be warmly welcomed.

7.20 pm

Ms. Joan Ruddock (Lewisham, Deptford): In a recent poll 82 per cent. of those questioned expressed anxiety about water pollution and only 5 per cent. believed that a private industry could be trusted to regulate itself and control pollution. Nothing that we have heard during the debate leads us to believe that those people were wrong. The Bill is not an expression of the wishes of our people; it certainly is not an expression of the wishes of my constituents.

Although water quality is uppermost in people's minds, many other matters concern them. As has already been said during the debate, water authorities control and maintain not just tap water but sewage, lakes, rivers, beaches, reservoirs and discharges from factories. It is highly irresponsible to be tampering with the existing monitoring arrangements and to be dramatically changing the way in which water authorities are run, at a time when water quality is declining.

Pollution incidents are up by 50 per cent. since 1980, not because of carelessness or a lack of awareness or vigilance on the part of most of those responsible for monitoring and control, but because of Government inaction and a lack of public resourcing. As a result, levels of nitrates, nitrites and aluminium compounds in particular are rising in our drinking water, with a consequent deleterious effect on health.

Within my water authority, Thames Water, there are a dozen areas that suffer from unacceptable levels of nitrites. In Lewisham, samples have shown that on 13 occasions between 1985 and 1987 there were unacceptable levels of pesticide residues. Clearly, the polluters who are responsible for this contamination must be investigated and controlled. However, it is impossible to believe, as Conservative Members have suggested, that putting things right will be achieved more effectively by private companies committed to making profits. On the contrary, everything in the Bill makes improvements in water standards less and less likely. Let us take as an example the agency arrangements which exist in local authorities. Clearly, the Government intend to replace them with private contractors who will take over the sewerage and drainage systems. Those arrangements will put us further at risk from polluted supplies, and the possibility of increasing water-borne diseases.

The rapid repair and sensitive maintenance of sewerage systems are imperative to the prevention of pollution and the maintenance of good standards of public health. The ending of existing agency arrangements would mean that faults would have to be reported to a remote, private water company. The body of knowledge and expertise that exists within local authorities is not duplicated anywhere in the private sector.

The involvement of environmental health officers is particularly important and there is widespread concern that changes in agency arrangements that would make environmental health officers more remote from the managers of sewerage systems could seriously jeopardise the vital work of rodent control in sewers. Perhaps the

[Ms. Joan Ruddock]

Minister is not aware that the rodent-borne disease Leptopirosis has caused several deaths in London in recent years.

There are other fears relating to the land sales and asset stripping activities that we are all sure will follow this privatisation. Thames Water owns more than 4,000 properties and 17,000 acres with a value, we are told, of £1 billion. Clearly, they were worth many more billions when planning permissions were obtained. For Londoners, many of those holdings have a significance far beyond their potential commercial value. They have an environmental worth for wildlife and for recreation. They are the green lungs of those of us who live in the congested and squalid inner city. Privatisation and the inevitable maximisation of profit could result in those facilities being lost for ever.

The Government's green veneer is already transparent. They fail to understand the need for open space to be maintained if we are not wholly to destroy wildlife in London, with all the appalling consequences that that holds for our urban environment. Some things cannot be bought and sold to the highest bidder without a disproportionate cost to society.

I am concerned about the people in my constituency who already face enormous difficulties paying their water bills. We do not live in the prosperous south-east. The average wage in my constituency is two thirds that in the south-east, and 12 per cent. of my constituents are unemployed. The social security changes have brought greater and greater hardship and an increase in the number of water supply cut-offs.

The supply of clean water is regarded by the world community as a basic human right and we want to retain that right. I want it particularly for the people in my constituency who cannot compete and cannot pay. It is a mark of the increasing cynicism and inhumanity of this Government that they put profit-making above that right. In doing so, they risk damage to human health and a further deterioration in our natural environment. We can be certain that the arguments put by the Opposition are the arguments best understood by the people of this country and of its capital city. They do not want water to be bought and sold by those who can best compete. They believe in basic human justice and rights. A clean water supply should be the right of every person and every nation.

Whatever happens in the vote tonight we shall have expressed the hopes and aspirations of the people, and their view that this vital commodity should not be subject to the market place as the Bill envisages.

7.24 pm

Mr. Derek Conway (Shrewsbury and Atcham): The hon. Member for Lewisham, Deptford (Ms. Ruddock) made a calm and reasoned speech and I congratulate her on that—such is the tenor of most of her speeches—but in fairness I must point out that some of her reasoning was wrong. She was right to speak of her concern for her constituents, a concern we all have, but she must accept that her constituents have long memories. It is not enough to say that all that is to come is appalling and all that has gone before is good. Her constituents will recall, as mine do, the price increases under the Labour Government and that during their tenure of office, capital investment fell by a third. Those are the words, not of a Tory Back Bencher, but of the Select Committee on the Environment. When the hon. Lady comments to her local newspapers, I hope that she will remind them of the historical background that has led the Government to introduce the Bill.

I welcome the Bill, although it will increase our mailbags and increase anxiety in all quarters. The general public read all sorts of stories in the press, including scare stories, and I hope that the tenor of the debate and the opening remarks of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State yesterday will allay the fears that many constituents have at a time of change. I doubt whether the concern is justified.

The general public appreciate that the job of the Opposition is to try to scaremonger about the denationalisation programme and to say how wonderful nationalisation was and how wicked the Tory party's privatisation scheme is. The public have not fallen for that line in many general elections, because they are not fools and they have memories. Our constituents know that all has not been heaven under the nationalised scheme, and that when they knock on the door of a nationalised industry they can never get a name or have any effect. What pressure can they bring to bear? Many of us have found that when constituents come to our surgeries about a private company it is easier to get redress, action or sympathy from it because private companies are more sensitive to the pressure of the media or to being brought into the public forum of this place than is often the case with nationalised industries. One merely has to travel on a British Rail train that is running late to know how effective one can be in controlling a nationalised industry.

We must be concerned about accountability. The provision for a Director General of Water Services gives more than adequate protection for consumers, as my right hon. Friend explained in detail yesterday. The director general will have to take account of the public view, and he will be able to protect consumers from unjustified price increases, monitor whether there has been a reduction in services and advise Parliament accordingly. I am sure that as a result of that monitoring of performance we shall have a much more effective service than has been possible to date.

I used to live in an area serviced by one of the 29 private boards, and I do not recall that many people knew whether they were being served by a private water company or by a water authority. I do not think that the general public know for a moment. Opposition Members keep telling us about polls, but I wonder whether any have been conducted in those 29 areas to find out how many of the general public know who serves them and whether they believe that the service is different from the one that they will have. I doubt it. The same will be true when the 10 water authorities are privatised.

There has been a great deal of discussion about the NRA, which I particularly welcome. It is a progressive step. While there is general howling in the press, which likes to depict the Tory party as being unconcerned about the environment, this is a major contribution to allay the concern that is felt across the House. Why is it always the wicked Tories who want to see a nuclear holocaust that will wipe out our nation's families? Why is it that we are said to want to see the destruction of the ozone layer, resulting in a hideous future for our children and do not want to see Britain's children brought up in a safer and

more pleasant land? [HON. MEMBERS: "Hear, hear."] Some Opposition Members say, "Hear, hear". It is families with children who support the Tory party, not the strange hangers-on that keep the Opposition from getting anywhere near the trammels of government. We have as much concern as any other political party, for our children and grandchildren, and people know that.

The Opposition have engaged in scaremongering about the Bill and about the effectiveness of the National Rivers Authority. Our people do not believe the Opposition, and that has been clearly shown in one election after another. The control of water pollution requires positive measures, and those measures must include far more effective control of effluent discharge. Those matters are of concern to all hon. Members. Sadly, some of the 10 water authorities have been responsible for such discharges. I hope the House will accept that it is not a matter of all that is private is evil, and all that is nationalised is good, because the facts do not prove that. The Bill gives the National Rivers Authority the backing that it needs to get to grips with the problem.

I have a personal and constituency interest in the effectiveness of the National Rivers Authority in dealing with flood defences. All too regularly the part of the Severn that runs through Shrewsbury in my constituency bursts its banks. It is a matter of grave concern to my constituents that when severe weather hits that part of the country the flooding will go too far. From time to time Shrewsbury's main roads are flooded. I look forward to lobbying the NRA for the action that has not been taken by the state-owned corporation. We may have better success now that things are looking a little brighter.

I understand that 90 to 95 per cent. of United Kingdom homes are now connected to the sewerage system, but many villages in my constituency are nowhere near that percentage. During the recess I met my local borough council to look over its plans for the villages. The council thinks that it will be 100 years before some of those villages are connected to the main sewerage system. They have not fared very well under the present regime, and I hope that they will fare better under the new one. Meanwhile, the people in those villages wait patiently.

Another of the great scare stories put about by the Opposition is that prices will double or treble. I understand that about £1·3 billion will be needed to update our sewerage systems and to improve the quality of water. I understand that a doubling or trebling of prices would produce £6 billion. Clearly, some of the stories put about by the Opposition have not been subjected to a great deal of research. At the end of the day, people will see that the Opposition have been crying wolf on this subject, just as they have cried wolf on so many others.

One hopes that the Bill will receive its Second Reading and then enter a protracted Committee stage. I hope that this two-part Bill will be considered in great detail. I am sure that our constituents will be relieved to know about all the consideration that the House will give the Bill. I hope that hon. Members will deal with the detail of the Bill and not engage in filibustering. This is an important matter. Sometimes people are right to criticise the method by which we consider Bills in Committee, where some hon. Members feel that they have to continue talking in order to clock up the hours. I am sure that will not be the case with this Bill and that the Opposition will put forward genuine points of concern, in the certain knowledge that the Government will more than satisfy genuine public concern.

According to public opinion research polls, a ratio of 5:1 does not welcome the proposal. However, that is not the response that I have had in Shrewsbury, and I suspect that it will not be the response to my hon. Friends. The measure will make a big difference to the quality of water. The National Rivers Authority is long overdue and will be welcomed by the House. The Minister has some difficult and long nights ahead of him. The Bill will bring about great improvements in the provision of water, and I hope that the House will support the measure.

7.34 pm

Mr. Tom Pendry (Stalybridge and Hyde): Legislation on the water industry would be timely if it addressed the many gigantic problems that face that crucial industry after a decade of under-investment. This tardy Bill will do nothing to ensure that the millions of pounds needed to repair our decaying sewers and to improve the quality of water will be provided.

In my region of the north-west it is estimated that £5 billion is needed over the next 25 years to address the problems that have accumulated in water supply and sewage treatment. Nothing in the Bill convinces me that such investment will be made. The Bill will do nothing to ensure that the quality of water is improved. As the hon. Member for Hornsey and Wood Green (Sir H. Rossi) said, it took the Government an inordinate time to reply to the third report on pollution by the Select Committee on the Environment. That shows the low regard that the Government attach to trying to improve water quality.

The Select Committee sought assurances that were not given. It asked that under a privatised system water authorities would be treated in the same way by the new rivers authority as farmers and industrialists who were guilty of acts of pollution. As we know, the existing controls are far too weak. It is time that polluters paid the full cost of the damage that they cause to the environment. Privatisation seems to be an opportunity for backtracking on existing pollution controls, even though those are inadequate. In pollution cases courts award nominal costs and that makes prosecution financially unviable. In 1984 the report of the Select Committee on the Environment said:

> "Safe, healthy water supplies are totally dependent on effective water pollution control."

Four years on and facing privatisation we are no nearer to imposing such controls. The Department of the Environment and the Water Authorities Association figures show that there has been a 50 per cent. increase in river pollution. Why do the Government not address themselves to problems such as that instead of inflicting on people this piece of political dogma? On 25 November *The Times* leader lined up with the Opposition on this question when it said:

> "Anxieties about the quality of drinking water have grown and river quality has diminished. It is clear that the Government has got it wrong."

For members of my union, the National Union of Public Employees, the problem is not academic, because as quality gives way to profit and cuts, their jobs will be at stake. I am sponsored by that union and I feel as outraged as its members about the consequences of the Bill.

[Mr. Tom Pendry]

The water industry requires investment but after privatisation it is the consumer who will pick up the tab. I hope that the Minister will assure the House that the burden will be passed to shareholders as well as consumers. The Minister should spell out how he thinks water charges will move, especially in my region in the north-west which faces the heaviest rebuilding burden of all the regions.

I am glad to see that the miniature for sport, as he is effectively known, is in the Chamber. He is not wearing his Charlton Athletic tie. It is probably a rambling club tie or some sort of "sexy" tie. Millions of people will be offended by the restrictions on major sporting and recreation facilities that will result from the Bill. In Committee on the Bill about water metering I received no assurances from the Minister. He of all people should have been in the vanguard of those assuring sporting and leisure activity communities about the way in which they will be protected, but he did not do that. I do not know what the Prime Minister has got against the Minister with responsibility for sport. The poor lad has tried to defend the indefensible in measures such as identity cards for football supporters and now this Bill. All those measures come from on high, and he has to carry the can. We feel for him.

I have received representations from many individuals, constituents and organisations who are up in arms about the Bill's implications for sport and recreation. The fine print of the Bill—or the lack of it, if that is possible in such a weighty document—could decimate water recreational and sporting pursuits on water industry and neighbouring land. Clause 7 deals with recreation, but it is no more than a grotesque parody of section 20 of the 1973 Act which places on the water authorities a duty to open up their land for ramblers and other peaceful countryside use.

Mr. Christopher Hawkins (High Peak): Hear, hear.

Mr. Pendry: I am glad that I have the support of the hon. Member for High Peak (Mr. Hawkins) who knows something about this matter.

The water authorities responded well to that duty giving access to most of their extensive land holdings. Clause 7 lifts many phrases from the 1973 Act, but they are simply hollow gestures. Clause 7(3) places a duty on the water undertakers to make their land available for recreational purposes. That has already been interpreted as a way of exploiting available land in an uncontrollable way. Roderick Paul, chief executive of Severn-Trent, said:

"I accept that we have not had to develop the skills required for pleasure-type exploitation. Where there is a scope for that, we might franchise it."

Will the Minister responsible for sport comment on that as soon as possible?

Mr. Christopher Hawkins: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Pendry: Time is pressing, but I shall give way to the hon. Gentleman.

Mr. Hawkins: I want merely to support the hon. Gentleman. The important thing about clause 7 is that, although legal rights of way will be protected, all the access agreements that have been signed voluntarily have no protection. I have one of the largest national parks in Britain in my constituency and there is no protection in the Bill for those rights of access to the Peak district and the Pennine way. I hope that the Minister will ensure that that point is considered seriously in Committee.

Mr. Pendry: I am glad that I gave way, although I hope I shall not be penalised. I hope that the Minister is aware that the open and free nature of mountains and woodlands provide a strong attraction to many citizens. Walking in the countryside is still one of the most popular outdoor pursuits. Some 8 million regular ramblers use our open countryside each week. Perhaps the Secretary of State should follow that example and take a walk—many of us would suggest a very long walk and would like him to take the Minister of State and the Under-Secretary with him.

Charging for access to our countryside is anathema. It is odious and alien to the British way of life. It should be clearly and unambiguously ruled out, not sneaked in at the back of a clause which promises greater access, but in reality removes it.

The code of practice in clause 9 provides no more comfort. Like clause 7, it applies to water authorities but not to enterprise subsidiaries and subsequent landowners. It is weak and ineffective and should be replaced with adequate safeguards. The Bill does not even touch on the thorniest point, the extent to which the Government want the NRA to contract out work. How on earth can the NRA conserve the use of land and water if it gives its regulatory functions such as quality monitoring to others, perhaps even to the water companies which may be polluting the water. The Bill cuts across all recreational users of the countryside. Organised sporting pursuits will be threatened too. The Central Council of Physical Recreation rightly wants to enshrine in the Bill a strong code of practice for both water companies and the NRA. In particular, there needs to be maintenance of current recreational facilities and pricing must take into account the financially disadvantaged groups. That was never touched on by the Minister who opened this debate.

What is needed and is sadly lacking from the Government is consultation with interested parties before such legislation is drafted. Unless the Government talk and, more importantly, listen to groups ranging from the Council for the Protection of Rural England to the regional sports councils, all the developments in recreation during the past decade will be wiped away. In my constituency it would be a tragedy if the paths and riding trails with facilities for the disabled and the water sports in the Longdendale valley were lost in a tide of political dogma. For those reasons and many others, I shall vote against the Bill tonight.

7.44 pm

Mrs. Gillian Shephard (Norfolk, South-West): I very much welcome the opportunity to contribute briefly to the debate. I apologise to the House for the fact that I was unable to be present earlier today, although I was here yesterday. I perceive that, regrettably, there is in the House an urban-rural divide in attitudes to the Bill. In my constituency the supply of water and its management have a peculiar significance, composed as it is partly of fen land, which requires carefully regulated drainage, and partly of light land, which requires considerable irrigation if it is to produce crops at all, and containing an important source of domestic water for a large part of East Anglia at Denver sluice. In addition, part of my constituency is deliberately

flooded each year. Washes constitute an important flood defence mechanism. Therefore, it is easy to understand why the passage of the Bill is being watched closely by my constituents. Many of its provisions touch their lives very closely.

Many of my constituents will be as astonished as I was to learn that 96 per cent. of the population of Britain are connected to a sewer—as some of the background material quaintly puts it. I have lived half my life unconnected to a sewer, as have many of my constituents, and can only say that a considerable proportion of the remaining 4 per cent. of the population must live in Norfolk or, more particularly, in south-west Norfolk.

Rural people do not take water for granted. It is not something which they simply drink and wash in, but something which they understand is necessary for their working lives and for their environment.

Mention has been made of the political dogma behind the Bill. I assure the House that in south-west Norfolk it is not regarded in any way as a political problem, but as a deeply practical problem that affects everyone. The establishment of the National Rivers Authority and the office of Director General of Water Services and the powers that they will have will provide better protection for the consumer and for the environment than we have enjoyed hitherto, provided that those bodies are adequately funded. As has been pointed out, the fact that water authorities have responsibility for sewage disposal and for pollution control has always seemed to be anomalous. It is certainly a system that has lacked credibility with the public. Clearly, the functions should and will be divided, according to the proposals in the Bill.

The office of Director General of Water Services is welcome, as he will be directly accountable to Parliament for the regulation of charges, the standard of services to the public and the proper provision of the infrastructure of water services. It will be important for the public to feel —as they do not in my constituency at present—that the buck for charges and the service provided stops with someone. I sincerely hope that the director general and his customer service committees will prove to have effective teeth. It will be interesting to see precisely how, if the Bill gains its Second Reading tonight, he will be equipped with those teeth.

In East Anglia we are served by a very large water authority. Until the last couple of years its response to the public and its accountability have left a great deal to be desired. We also have a statutory water company, and there are not many fears in my county about changes affecting the water authority. When it was first established, the point that stuck in most people's minds was the size and splendour of the headquarters which, as its first task, it was setting up for itself. Many people in my area will be glad to have a more cost-effective and cost-conscious water authority.

It is clear that, given their dependence on private land drainage, and on water abstraction for irrigation and flood defences, members of the agricultural community are carefully watching the Bill and its contents. Their attention is focused on the nitrate content of water. As hon. Members and farmers know, if no action is taken, nitrate levels in the United Kingdom will reach unacceptably high levels by the end of the century. East Anglia has one of the highest nitrate levels in the country and, incidentally, the lowest incidence of cancer of the bowel. High nitrate content must be tackled by a partnership between agriculture and water services.

Provisions for the compulsory establishment of protection zones already exist in the Control of Pollution Act 1974, although I believe that they have never been used. No one would argue that such powers should not be retained as a fallback, although, where possible, restrictions on agriculture should be voluntary. The National Farmers Union has promised its fullest co-operation with the new water authorities. As yet, clause 104, which deals with that point, contains no suggestion about how objections might be considered or, if necessary, a local inquiry mounted. I hope that the discussions that are taking place between the industry, the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food and the Department of the Environment will result in such provisions being included in the Bill.

Farmers are defensive about nitrate levels in water. They accept that more intensive agricultural production is to blame for increased nitrate levels. However, they make the point that they should not be penalised for increasing production when successive Governments have urged them to do so.

As I have said, the NFU has offered to co-operate fully with the Government and the new water authorities to reduce nitrate levels, by a joint approach. There will need to be treatment by the water industry to deal with the problem, and changes in agricultural practice which have been introduced over the past five years to reduce the problem at source. It will be a major task for the new water companies and agriculture to consider ways forward.

No doubt some changes will be based on the range of desk studies that were jointly commissioned by the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food and the Department of the Environment in 10 varied localities. The Ministry believes that if farmers are obliged to restrict agricultural activities beyond what could be regarded as good agricultural practice they should be compensated. The Ministry has promised that the arrangements will be announced during the passage of the Bill. The matter is regarded with some interest and not a little anxiety.

If the Bill receives a Second Reading, it will provide an improved service for people in the area that I represent. I do not believe that there is heartfelt support for the way in which water is provided at the moment. People consider that water authorities are not accountable. If they telephone them, they speak to an answerphone. They consider that the authorities have been altogether too lavish in the provision that they have made for themselves, whereas they should always have been concerned about the consumer and the uses of water, a commodity which, as I have tried to explain, deeply affects the economy of my constituency. I hope that the Bill will be successful this evening.

7.54 pm

Mr. Elliot Morley (Glanford and Scunthorpe): The Bill opens a Pandora's box of issues relating to monopoly of supply, quality, the environment, rights of access, and, not least, consumer rights. It is worth remembering that the history of the delivery of safe, clean water in this country is with local authorities. Originally, the free-market system failed, and local authorities had to rationalise it and ensure quality of delivery. I have not heard any mention of the

[Mr. Elliot Morley]

fact that, in 1974, many local authorities passed on a great deal of valuable land to water authorities. I wonder whether those local authorities will get any share of the proceeds of the sale of land which many of them bought with their own ratepayers' money. Incidentally, many local authorities ran water services with considerable efficiency and at considerably lower cost than non-elected local authority quangos.

The Bill boils down to the Government's constant claim that everything public is bad and everything private is good. That simplistic view is the root of the privatisation of major utilities such as water supplies. There is no evidence to support the claim. If we consider what has happened to privatisation projects, such as the contracting out of cleaning in education establishments, we find some spectacular failures, which are well charted in a Trades Union Congress publication entitled "Contractors' Failures".

I noticed a letter in today's edition of *The London Evening Standard*—one of the Tory party's house papers—entitled "Gas, for the record." It is from Mrs. Donaldson of Huntsworth Mews, NW1—not a Socialist stronghold. She outlines a diary of events from 19 August to 25 November and all that she went through in getting a central heating boiler replaced. Her final paragraph, entitled "Conclusion", states that, since privatisation

"Absolutely nothing has changed at British Gas!"

That is a fair comment. I am not saying that British Gas is particularly inefficient—it was a fairly efficient organisation before privatisation—but things have not changed. It is certainly not my experience or that of that consumer that things in the private sector have got any better. However, there have been one or two changes in British Gas. For example, there has been a 47 per cent. increase in gas disconnections. British Gas has been referred to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission for abusing its monopoly powers. There have been one or two little changes since privatisation.

British Telecom is not a great advertisement for the success or efficiency of a privatised utility. The Consumers Association, in its report, stated that the majority of business users who answered its questionnaire said that the quality of service had gone down since British Telecom was privatised, and that claim was backed up by the majority of domestic consumers. The claim that things are necessarily better in the private sector than they are in the public sector does not stand up to examination.

How will consumers be affected when things such as water meters are inevitably brought in? There is no doubt that water price rises will be considerable. The Confederation of British Industry put the figure at about 30 per cent.

Part of the problem with water privatisation is that it has suffered from completely artificial restraints. It is nonsense to say that it can raise more capital in the private sector than it could in the public sector. It has not done so, only because it has been refused permission to borrow privately, and it has suffered from artificial cash limits. In my constituency, investment in a multi-million pound food factory was jeopardised because there was some doubt whether the local water board could provide the infrastructure for effluent treatment. That factory could have been lost because of the artificial restraint imposed upon it by the Government. I suspect that industrial consumers will find a considerable increase in effluent disposal and water charges. There is no great benefit to industrial or domestic consumers.

One of the most objectionable things about water meters is that they will penalise those people with families on low incomes. Those people will be forced even further into the poverty trap because their water bill will increase considerably.

There will also be problems for people who live in rural areas. The Bill will replace section 30 of the Water Act 1973 and allow the new privatised water companies to charge differential rates for providing water and sewerage services to the community. Under the new legislation, people who live in isolated villages and on farms will be asked to pay differential water rates when, under the existing leglislation, those costs are spread out evenly among all consumers. How will constituents in rural areas react when they find out that that applies to them?

The environmental aspect of the issue is important to me. I am glad that my hon. Friend the Member for Alyn and Deeside (Mr. Jones) is present to hear my comments. Among the things that has given me a lifelong interest in natural history was a visit to Lake Vyrnwy with the Merseyside natural history association when I was a teenager. The fact that I had access to that site, which is managed as a nature reserve by the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds—one of 77 sites on water authority property—has had a lifelong effect on me. I am worried that other teenagers from inner cities will be denied that experience. Such access will be lost, because of the high charges that will be imposed by the water companies. Under their obligations in the Bill, they will have to maximise their profits by charging for leisure use of and access to their land.

I welcome the setting up of the National Rivers Authority. That is a step in the right direction, but we could have had that without going through the whole privatisation process. However, I am concerned about funding arrangements. The NRA will be left with the state and will receive a grant from the Government. It will not be funded through a levy on the water authorities or through a share of their income. Therefore, it will be vulnerable to the cash limits imposed on the public sector by the Government. Will it have the resources to carry out its role in flood defence and drainage work? Will it be able to meet its obligations to conserve nature in water authority areas and to enforce the regulations laid down in the Bill? There is no obligation in the Bill for a report on environmental support and no obligation for the NRA to employ people responsible for conservation.

There is also some doubt about the consultation arrangements—for example, in respect of the regional rivers authority advisory committee. It does not appear that people involved in conservation organisations will automatically be represented on that body. That problem must be resolved.

Clause 7 is contradicted by the need to make a profit. It is all very well having a code of conduct, but that is undermined if a company's main obligation is simply to maximise its profits.

I am also worried about the fact that many of the NRA's obligations can be contracted out. Some of them can even be contracted out to the water plcs. The water plcs may, therefore, win the contracts for the important monitoring work which will enforce the law but, at the

same time, undermine the NRA's position. The contracting-out might by won be people who cannot do it properly.

I have an interest in wildlife and nature reserves on water authority property. I am an elected member of the council of the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds. Many hon. Members will have received briefs from organisations such as the Countryside Commission, the Ramblers Association and the Royal Society for Nature Conservation. Those responsible bodies reflect the opinion of millions of people in this country and express grave doubts about the legislation. They have made it clear that they do not believe that the Bill will be of advantage to the environment. The Royal Society for Nature Conservation's news release has the headline:

"Water privatisation proposals are no charter for wildlife."

The organisation makes it clear that the Bill does not go far enough and does not guarantee the protection of the natural environment or access to the areas involved.

Areas such as mine, which are predominantly rural, have problems with nitrate pollution. We are concerned to know whether the privatised water authorities will make available investment to deal with that problem. We are also concerned that the privatised authorities will not make available the money for the enormous infrastructure replacement that is required in many parts of the country. The privatised water authorities will have to pay corporation tax, and, as I understand it, they will no longer be eligible for European regional development fund grants for infrastructure investment. This is a considerable loss in terms of subsidy.

Many other issues in the Bill need to be clarified. I cannot forecast what the outcome will be, but it is safe to predict that the Bill will mean yet more looting of public assets, more speculators lining their pockets, the public paying higher prices for a service that was delivered efficiently and cheaply in the public sector and no guarantee of an increase in quality or an improvement in service to the consumer.

8.6 pm

Miss Emma Nicholson (Torridge and Devon, West): Thank you very much for calling me in this most important debate, Madam Deputy Speaker. I was fortunate to serve on the enabling committee where I learned a great deal about water metering and an enormous amount about the water industry in Yorkshire. Perhaps I can take my revenge for a brief moment or two by talking about the water industry in the south-west.

I apologise for missing a few hours of this important debate today. I was here yesterday. However, I arrived today about three quarters of an hour ago. I hope that hon. Members will forgive me when they learn that I have been celebrating my father's 87th birthday. My father is a former Member of this place. Hon. Members will guess that, for the past few hours, water has been measured more by its capacity not to dilute whisky too much than by its real importance.

Water is the most important thing of all. Surprisingly enough, we can live without food for quite a few days, although one might not think so in this building where there are so many places to eat. However, we cannot live without water. I have spent quite a lot of time working in developing countries. One appreciates the crucial importance of water in life when one sees women walk for half a day to fill some wretched pot with a scrap of water that we would use to wash up after a meal and when one knows that diarrhoeal diseases in children are cut by 50 per cent. by the simple means of teaching mothers to take water for their children to drink from above, not below, the place where they discharge human effluent. One also understands why projects involving camels, such as the farm project in Kenya, are important. It is because camels store water. That is why I value so highly the water industry's own charitable project for water overseas—Water Aid. Water matters to human beings and one can see that clearly when one works in developing countries.

I wonder whether we can use all these important lessons about water in this country. Have we watched the Golden Horn being cleaned up? That vast area, which was so difficult to water, is fast becoming much cleaner. Have we taken these lessons on board in the United Kingdom? We are in a crowded island with increasing industrial pollution. A mistake by a foreman turning a tap the wrong way can kill off water quality in a river for several weeks. Farm effluent from raising cattle indoors, which can be equal to that produced from a small town, can, if there is a mistake, cause great damage to water quality in rivers. With intensive farming, have we looked closely enough at ways of providing the sort of water quality that we need? Under this flood of effluent from people, industry and farms, the quality of many of our rivers has declined in recent years, and we have to put it right.

In my constituency we have a famous and beautiful river—I am sure that all hon. Members know it—the Torridge. It is famous because of Tarka. Last Christmas, hon. Members may have seen a programme on television called "Tarka's Troubled Waters." Mercifully, it was out of date by the time that it was shown. I was heavily criticised for saying that the Torridge had been badly polluted for many years, but was now being put right again and would soon be properly right.

The improvement is the result of a major farming programme. Many farmers who use intensive methods throughout the United Kingdom do not realise the extent of the pollution that they have been causing. South-West Water in my area—and I am sure that equivalent water authorities in many other areas have been trying just as hard—has been running an effective farm pollution programme merely by going out and talking to farmers about pollution and helping them with finance to put it right. As a result, there were more brown trout in the 12 months from Boxing day last year than for many years. The quality of salmon fishing has also gone up.

It can easily be said that these are minor interests and that only a few people want to go salmon fishing, because, although angling has the largest following of any sport in the United Kingdom, fly fishing is quite rare. However, in my area, as in others, we derive much of our drinking water from rivers. Therefore, we want the water to start off as clean as possible, so that it does not have to be put through massive cleansing programmes. Because of the success of that farming programme in our moorland hills, I was more than delighted to welcome the announcement by my right hon. Friend the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food about a week ago of the fact that he is putting £50 million into farm pollution programmes. That is really exciting. We are on the way, and I am pleased about it.

I was even more pleased when South-West Water committed itself to full treatment of this river and of Bideford sewage in the estuary in which the river ends.

[Miss Emma Nicholson]

Therefore, we shall have a pure and gleaming Torridge before long, as I promised last year on television, and a cleaned up estuary. I welcome the visit that my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary is to make on 13 January. We shall be able to show him the progress that has been made. The river is not unique. There are others like it. We have to set our sights on cleaning them all.

I shall also be taking my hon. Friend to see a small area called Lifton down. I bring this to his attention because the water supply there has been disgraceful. One might just as well have been living in the Sudan. If one turned on the tap, put in the plug and waited for a day, one would be lucky if the bath were half full. People have shown me water straight out of the tap that is almost a third sand, or something worse. Is it right that water should be like this in the United Kingdom, a developed country in the European Community, in this day and age? Bere Alston is a tiny village where a mother and baby have not been able to get fresh water in the middle of the day for hours at a time.

Both these areas will have the proper amount of capital invested in them by South-West Water to ensure that these problems are solved. Should it have taken 15 years for Lifton down water to come right, 20 years for Bideford sewage and the Torridge river to be cleaned up, and seven years for Bere Alston to have its problems solved? The raising of standards is one of the reasons why I welcome this Bill so very strongly, as does South-West Water, whose chairman, Keith Court, has worked tirelessly to raise water quality in the south-west. He has carried out a remarkable job. I am delighted that he is in post and will be continuing as chairman of the new plc.

What is necessary for the development of the infrastructure for water in my area, and I would guess in those of many other hon. Members, is intensive injections of capital. That is difficult to achieve when one is in competition for national funds against other great social needs, such as child care, health facilities, nurses' pay and the NHS. It is difficult to get the right amount of capital when social needs are so pressing. I believe that our new plcs will be able to make much faster progress in developing the infrastructure needed to get water quality up to the standards that we all quite properly demand when more options are open for finance once they are in the private sector.

On top of that, it will be possible to spread financing over a longer period. The great difficulty of working within Government constraints of 12-month intervals is that it is easy to go for a stop-go policy and not think what that means. It means stop on 31 March and start again on 1 April. One is tied to annual budgets when working within the Government and public sector funding programmes.

There are many good factors in the Bill. One of the best is that it demands new, higher standards for water quality within the United Kingdom, and I most strongly welcome that. We shall be shifting from expecting an average level of attainment in water quality to a higher standard of attainment in both the quality of water and its pressure —we are back to that half-empty bath—and to higher environmental objectives. We must willingly accept those environmental objectives. People are more and more conscious of the environment, and it is crucial that we respond to the desires and wishes of the general public.

Standards will be much tougher for the new public limited companies. They will be required to produce much higher standards on effluent levels, and we all want that. It will be hard for them if everything has to be perfect on day one. I know that my hon. and learned Friend the Minister will already have thought of the need to be practical and reasonable with the new plcs on such matters, or they will have pressures to which they simply cannot respond. That is a most important point that I ask my hon. and learned Friend to note.

It is also important, although it may seem an unpalatable point to make at the moment, to have within the pricing structure of the plcs the opportunity to obtain a reasonable rate of return. These new regulations will create water quality standards in the United Kingdom that will be at least the equivalent of the highest in western Europe. The Bill will require and create sewage disposal standards that will match European directives. That is why I so greatly welcome it.

I am conscious of the fears expressed by some hon. Members both yesterday and today about the need not to create a private monopoly in supply. However, I believe that the new inset competition and the pledge in the Bill that the plcs will operate in a "climate of effective competition" will be carried through and will create the necessary competition.

The split must occur. I welcome the creation of the National Rivers Authority, because the water authorities will no longer be required to be both poacher and gamekeeper. It is beyond human endeavour to be required to fine oneself for breaking the law. People are just not made that way. It certainly has not been the way in which the water authorities have been made. It is right and proper that the National Rivers Authority, with proper people and financing, should be responsible for the quality of the rivers and that the plcs should provide the water and sewage treatment.

I am conscious of the importance of safeguarding conservation and recreation. I note that in the Bill prior consultation is required before there is any development of sites of special scientific interest. In my constituency, there is a large part of a national park. I wonder whether the Minister would consider extending that need for prior consultation to national parks. That would reassure many people. The water authorities have built up an excellent relationship with the national parks, and I would not wish that relationship to do other than flourish under the new arrangements. I believe that that sort of reassurance is all that is required to maintain such a relationship.

I warmly welcome the Bill.

8.21 pm

Mr. Martyn Jones (Clwyd, South-West): When I had a proper job, I worked for a major user of water—although the company would probably be reluctant to admit it—the brewing industry. In fact, the brewery in which I worked is the major water user in Wrexham and, bearing in mind the lack of industry in the area, it is probably the main user in Clwyd. It was often my task when working in the laboratory to check on effluent and it was always my responsibility to monitor incoming water.

The supplier of the water is a private company set up by statute, which my hon. Friend the Member for Alyn and Deeside (Mr. Jones) referred to as a potential takeover target by, possibly, an overseas interest. It is an example of

the much-vaunted Victorian values that we are regaled with by the Government, because they saw fit to control such monopolies very tightly indeed by Act of Parliament.

With this Bill, we will create private monopolies with no such controls. It is obvious even to the dullest person that the opportunity for competition in what is described in economic theory as a natural monopoly does not exist. With no upper constraint on prices, and the provision that extra costs incurred in maintaining standards of quality will be passed on to consumers, the consumer will pay, not the polluter.

What will be created is analogous to providing local supermarkets that consumers are obliged to use. Consumers would have free access to the store but a tax would be levied on local residents to meet the costs incurred. How can there be any increase in service or consumer responsiveness when additional business yields additional cost but no additional revenue? That is dogma gone mad.

How can the National Rivers Authority perform such a wide task? The task is obviously necessary. Indeed, if a chain of supermarkets were set up like the water utility public limited companies, there would be overwhelming public demand for control. That will only apply to the National Rivers Authority when things begin to go wrong, which is likely. Unscrupulous polluters will drive a coach and horses through such a body. Unscrupulous water utility plcs, which are potential and, indeed, actual polluters, could flout the provision of control. In fact, they will continue to be allowed to pollute anyway, because of the previous lack of investment. How long that continues will, of course, depend on how quickly investment can be attracted, which, in turn, will depend on how much profit can be generated by an increase in charges, which will go directly into private owners' hands.

As well as having experience of the industrial use of water, I have a constituency interest, because large areas of my constituency are owned by water authorities and I have a large new reservoir, neither of which are inside a national park, and are, therefore potentially asset strippable by new owners. A long length of the Dee runs through my constituency and that attracts a large number of recreational users, such as anglers and canoeists. It is also the main aquafer from Bala, Clocaenog and Celyn to abstractions for Liverpool and Chester, as well as Wrexham and Deeside. The potential for conflict and chaos is enormous. There is no protection of access for anglers and ramblers. Plenty of potential exists for charging for those recreational activities, but little opportunity for the legitimate representation of the interests of those who use the river.

The NRA will have no effective local management structure. In my constituency, the Dee is a special case as it is arguably at present the most controlled and regulated river system in Europe. The control of the flow is crucial to fishing interests. General targets for water utility plcs will not be good enough. The control of the flow must stay in the public sector and must be enforced for the benefit of local recreation as well as profit. Local management boards are needed to give the NRA teeth, or it will be an under-funded and ignored paper tiger.

A conflict always exists between profit and service. Private non-monopolies resolve that by realising that service is necessary or competitors get the profit. Private monopolies simply screw the customer, who has no choice. That is what will happen with water. It is political dogma taken to the point of fetishism.

8.25 pm

Mr. Tim Devlin (Stockton, South): I am sure that the hon. Member for Glanford and Scunthorpe (Mr. Morley) did not mean to mislead the House when he claimed that the CBI said that price increases of 30 per cent. were expected. I consulted the parliamentary brief to which he referred and I saw the sentence:

"However we have noted certain reports suggesting that privatisation may result in increases of up to 30 percent". That does not, in fact, emanate from the CBI.

I have listened with interest to the speeches. My hon. Friend the Member for Warrington, South (Mr. Butler) talked about the quality of water in east London where I live during the week. I understand that water in that area has usually been drunk five times before it reaches the lips of an east Londoner. My hon. Friend the Member for Walthamstow (Mr. Summerson) commented on the river Skerne, which is in the north east. Having heard one northern Member talking about London and a London Member talking about the north, I was tempted to talk about somewhere in the south-west. However, my hon. Friend the Member for Torridge and Devon, West (Miss Nicholson) set out the worries of her constituency so well that I need not bother.

Water supply and sewerage are the most important of our public services. I welcome the Bill because it is designed to provide better quality water than we presently enjoy and at the lowest price to the consumer. It will free the water service of Treasury controls and it will provide attractive share ownership possibilities for many in the industry and for the public.

There is no doubt that the introduction of comparative competition in the water industry will provide greater incentives to our water providers to keep supplies clean. I do not for one moment accept that privately-owned water companies will be motivated solely by shareholders' profit, which has not proved to be the case with British Telecom or other industries that have moved into the private sector and where there have been significant service improvements.

The new statutory water undertakings will only carry on the good work already done by the 29 privately-owned companies, which provide one quarter of the nation's water. In the north-east, where I come from, the Hartlepool water company provides a good example of how good, clean water can be provided by a privately-owned company. Last night the hon. Member for Copeland (Dr. Cunningham) said that these private water companies were "statutory water companies" and not private enterprise. I asked whether the Opposition would find it acceptable for a number of privately-owned companies, which had statutorily defined duties, to come into being. That question was never answered. However, I believe that we have heard the answer in today's debate.

As usual, we have heard all manner of scaremongering and at times like this it well behoves the House to recall the scares put about when we abolished the metropolitan authorities or when we deregulated the buses. Part of my constituency is a large rural area which has a better—not worse—bus service as a result.

I want to suggest one possible amendment that the Government might care to consider. When water quality

[Mr. Tim Devlin]

suffers due to some catastrophe, such as that recently suffered in the south-west to which my hon. Friend the Member for Cornwall, North (Mr. Neale) referred, or when the water supply is cut off, as it can be from time to time even in the best regulated system, rebates or even compensation payments should be made to customers.

Customers are entitled to expect an extremely high level of performance from the new water service plcs created by the Bill. Those plcs will be subject to the stricter pollution controls that will be imposed upon them by the National Rivers Authority. They will also have to respond to statutorily defined quality standards that will be higher than present. That will include directives on water availability, pressure, constancy of supply and response times to repair and billing inquiries. The customer must be able to notice those improvements and obviously there must be a reserve power in the hands of the Secretary of State to intervene when those plcs fail to reach the targets.

I believe that the most effective pressure on water service plcs would be a statutory method of automatic compensation or rebates when a company fails to meet standards or cuts off the water supply. That would be a simple, ready-at-hand scheme, so that a customer is ensured of receiving satisfaction without having to mess about and set in motion long-winded procedures.

It should be noted that, where a water authority owns land in a national park—for instance, 37 per cent. of Northumbria Water's land is in the national parks—there is no question of that land being sold to property developers for despoliation. Land in national parks is guaranteed to be accessible to all by the legislation that established them. Rights of way continue irrespective of ownership and it is only sensible that the Bill includes safeguarding powers for water catchment areas. Therefore, let me speak to those outside these walls, for example, the Ramblers Association, whose concern I readily share. That measure of concern, however, is being unnecessarily aggravated and, if necessary, that concern can be cured by drafting amendments in Committee.

We heard some amazing things earlier about sewage treatment and land being sold off. Here, for the first time in decades, is an opportunity for water service plcs to raise money from other than the Treasury to invest heavily in the sewers. That opportunity, however, is condemned by the Opposition. We are also being given an opportunity to ask water authorities what use they have made of taxpayers' money. If it is true that water authorities have prime sites and other surplus land and buildings that are not being put to the best use, why are they still in water authority ownership? Why have those assets not been sold off long ago so that the taxpayer can benefit from the capital received? The purpose of a water authority is to provide water, treat sewage and to check water pollution, not to own land for its own sake. Water service plcs should have no compunction, therefore, in disposing of land that is not connected directly to their primary purpose. Any land disposal will, of course, still be subject to the planning controls of the specific area.

The House may be aware that my constituency includes a long stretch of the River Tees. We produce the best bottled drinking water that can be obtained in the United Kingdom—Northumbrian water. A private Bill will be introduced shortly to erect a Tees barrage. That will raise the water level by 2·65 m throughout the length of my constituency. Undoubtedly that will have an effect, not only on the farming community but on those businesses that currently emit effluents into the river. My hon. and learned Friend the Minister should bear in mind that his Department deals with the environment as well as inner cities. The barrage is an inner-city initiative that will undoubtedly have serious effects on the surrounding countryside and on the environment. Can my hon. and learned Friend tell me whether a full environmental assessment will be undertaken on the River Tees before that barrage is erected? Otherwise the NRA will find itself saddled with a river that is half clean and half filthy. It will then have to pick up the bill, and the costs to the local consumer.

The Opposition have erected a barrage against the Bill from which very little common sense has leaked. By contrast, the Government will erect a barrage on the River Tees that will open up a wave of new opportunities on Teesside in the next century.

8.35 pm

Mr. Eric Martlew (Carlisle): I must place on record my total opposition to the Bill. The idea of privatising the nation's water is something that must be spoken against. The Labour party must commit itself—let us use an old-fashioned word—to taking the water industry back into public ownership. There is no doubt about that.

Opposition to the Bill is not apparent only on the Labour Benches, because there is opposition to it throughout the country. Given that there are so few Members on the Conservative Benches tonight, I suspect that there is also a lot of secret opposition within the Conservative party.

A recent opinion poll showed that more than 80 per cent. of the population were against the privatisation of water. Why is there such massive opposition? The attempt to sell off the water industry has made consumers think about the service that they receive, and most of them are well satisfied. Today, 99 per cent. of British households are connected to the public water supply—they have water on tap—and 95 per cent. of households are connected to the public sewerage system. Therefore, when they turn on the tap they get clean water, and when they flush the toilet the sewage goes away.

The British people know that the system works and, unlike their experience with British Telecom, they encounter few problems with it. It can take days to get a telephone line replaced, months to get a telephone installed, and one is extremely lucky to find a public telephone that works. In comparison with the privatised industries, people are pleased with the service that they receive from the water authorities and companies.

The public are also against privatisation because of the pressing environmental problems. The pollution of our rivers, lakes and course lines have been mentioned by hon. Members on both sides of the House. We realise that massive sums of money are needed to put things right. The public do not believe that profit-hungry private water companies will be prepared to put in the money that is needed to solve the environmental problems. They are also well aware that the Conservative Government will not make those private water companies invest their money to solve those problems.

People are also against privatisation because they know from history that the privatisation of water does not work. They are aware that in the 19th century the private sector failed. If any hon. Member cares to look up 19th century copies of *Hansard* he will see that Act after Act was passed to force improvements in water standards. At that time people were dying from cholera and typhoid because the private sector would not put resources into the water industry.

By 1913, 80 per cent. of all water was in local authority ownership, and that has remained the position. Privatisation did not work, and Governments of both Liberal and Conservative persuasions put water into public ownership. The position in my constituency was little different from the national one. It suffered epidemics of cholera and typhoid that killed many citizens. The local authority decided to spend ratepayers' money to provide an adequate sewerage system and a good water supply system, and that policy served the city well. It got rid of the city's health problems and allowed it to expand.

In 1974, the citizens of Carlisle were not too enthusiastic about the proposal of the then Secretary of State for the Environment, the right hon. Member for Worcester (Mr. Walker), who is now the Secretary of State for Wales, to introduce the present water authorities. They had a cheap water system that worked, and they were not far away from the supply. We in Carlisle realised that if we went in with North West Water, our £10 million-worth of assets would go into the general pool and our rates would increase as we would be called upon to pay in part for the problems of Merseyside and Manchester. We accepted that, but we are not prepared to accept robbery of the £10 million. It was taken from the citizens of Carlisle, made available to the water authority and not paid for through taxation. It is now proposed to sell off the water authority, and the people of Carlisle consider that to be an act of robbery. They regard those who occupy the Conservative Benches as pirates. That is why there is opposition to the Bill.

Last week I decided to visit the local sewage works in my constituency. Those who work there were quite surprised to be visited by a politician. It is not often that politicians visit and shake hands with workers at sewage plants. We visit hospitals and old folks homes, but not sewage works. Before the Third Reading, I recommend all hon. Members to visit what is the most important building in their constituencies. Without sewage works, the civilisation that we know cannot exist.

During my visit I asked questions about profitability and how it could be improved. I was told that it would be possible to cut labour costs. I was told that the men were not paid very well, but that wages could be cut slightly, which would increase profitability. I was told also that the work force could be reduced, although that would lead to an increase in pollution problems. It was explained that in the event of an overflow, and with insufficient staff, the rivers would become polluted. It would be possible to reduce the number of chemicals that are put on the sludge. The chemicals reduce the smell, and anyone who lives downwind from the sludge will consider that to be important. There is no profit to be gained from using chemicals, and so the number used could be reduced.

I left the sewage works with the knowledge that we have an efficient system in my constituency. I know that £2 million was spent during the 1980s to update it. Privatisation would lead only to a worsening of the system for those whom I represent. There is no doubt that sewage works must remain in the public sector.

To whom does water belong? I was taught at school that it was a gift from God. We are all familiar with these lines:

"We plough the fields, and scatter
The good seed on the land,
But it is fed and watered
By God's almighty hand".

Little did I realise that economists would seek to calculate the value of a raindrop. The Secretary of State is taking up one of Bing Crosby's old songs, "Pennies from Heaven". A value is being placed on a raindrop. It is being costed, and then raindrops will be given away to the private sector. In the City, stockbrokers and others are singing the Gene Kelly number, "Singing in the Rain". They are all to make a fortune out of it.

The Government are altering the meaning of our songs and our sayings. No longer will we be able to say, "He spends money like water" when describing a spendthrift. That description will have exactly the opposite meaning. It will be the description of a Scrooge-like person with mean thoughts; in other words, someone like the Secretary of State for the Environment. There is one saying that brings together what the Government are about with water privatisation and with every piece of legislation that they have introduced. The Government

"knows the price of everything and the value of nothing."

8.44 pm

Mr. Ian Gow (Eastbourne): There is no need for the House to wonder what you were doing at this time last evening, Madam Deputy Speaker. You were then, as you are now, presiding over our affairs. I begin by commending to the House some of the words that you used from the Chair last evening. You said:

"The hon. Member for Antrim, South (Mr. Forsythe) is perfectly in order to speak on the Bill. He is an hon. Member of this House."—[*Official Report*, 7 December 1988; Vol. 143, c. 389.]

At the beginning of the afternoon it seemed to be very much a debate for Welsh Members. I wondered whether I would be disqualified by reason of the fact that I am a Scotsman who represents an English constituency. The debate was begun this afternoon by my hon. Friend the Minister of State, Welsh Office, whose remarks were taken up by the shadow Secretary of State for Wales, the hon. Member for Alyn and Deeside (Mr. Jones). It is a day on which Members of the United Kingdom Parliament are entitled to speak, and that includes those who come from Scotland, to which the Bill relates only in small part, and including, as you reminded us, Madam Deputy Speaker, those who come from Northern Ireland, to which the Bill applies not at all.

My hon. and learned Friend the Minister for Water and Planning will have reflected as he piloted the Local Government Finance Bill through the House, and as he starts piloting the Water Bill through the House, that the enormous benefits that he believes each measure will confer upon Her Majesty's subjects will be withheld deliberately from those who live in the part of the kingdom that is known as Northern Ireland. It is a matter of legitimate comment when debating the Bill's Second Reading that the benefits that it will bring are to be withheld from Northern Ireland.

[Mr. Ian Gow]

I remember, Madam Deputy Speaker, as you will, the words of the Conservative party's general election manifesto. We have had a most agreeable debate and Opposition Members have made assertions, quite legitimately, that the Bill is unpopular. That is a proper claim to be made by Opposition Members. No one can say, however, that the introduction of the Bill was a surprise. Whatever legitimacy is conferred upon legislation that is introduced in a party manifesto—some may think it scant—it has certainly been conferred upon the Bill.

I shall refer to the words that were approved by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State when the Cabinet came to give its final approval to the manifesto on which the Conservative party fought and won the last general election. The manifesto stated:

"The water supply and sewage functions of the water authorities will be transferred to the private sector."

It was a clear sentence and a short one. It was shorter than many other sentences that appeared in the manifesto and was incapable of being misunderstood.

The Bill is even longer than the Bill that became the Local Government Finance Act 1988. Although the Bill takes up hundreds of pages and must be in two parts because it is so large, it is implementing precisely the undertaking given in the manifesto.

Nor has the proposal for the privatisation of the nine water authorities in England and the one in Wales been a hasty operation. It is nearly four years since the then Minister at the Department of the Environment informed the House that the Government were considering the privatisation of the water industry. There is even a precedent for what we are doing, to which reference has been made today.

Nearly 25 per cent. of our fellow countrymen derive their fresh water from water companies which are privately owned. Everyone knows that those water authorities are subject to a strict legislative framework. They are different from all other companies. However, those 28 or 29 companies have one thing in common with private sector companies that are not like water companies. They are genuinely, fully and completely owned by the private sector. They are subject to control and to special rules, but in terms of ownership the 29 water companies are privately owned.

Those who decided to invest in the private water companies, those who decided to subscribe to their loan stock or to their debentures, did so because they believed that they would get a proper rate of return on their investment. Opposition Members must realise that because the ownership of a water authority, or, as they will become, the ownership of a water company, is transferred from the public to the private sector there is no reason to believe that that change of ownership will mean that there is a commitment to lower standards or to standards necessarily better or worse than those that apply to the water authorities today.

I believe that there are significant advantages in transferring the water authorities out of public and into private ownership. By making the transfer there will be genuine public ownership of a kind that does not exist today. I mean no discourtesy to my hon. and learned Friend the Minister or to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment, but I believe that their ownership, for that in effect is what it is, of the nine water authorities and the ownership of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales of the one water authority in Wales is harmful to the proper provision of fresh water and the proper collection of foul water.

I thought that I might receive just a murmur of approval when I said that I had no confidence in the superior wisdom of my right hon. Friends and of my hon. and learned Friend. The House is aware that all the members of the nine water authorities are appointed either by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment or by my right hon. Friend the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food. Henceforth of course, after privatisation, that power of patronage, which has been one of the evil concomitants of nationalisation throughout the ages, will be removed, and not before time. My hon. and learned Friend and my hon. Friend the Economic Secretary to the Treasury, who is on the Treasury Bench now, are aware of that. They know that not one of the water authorities can embark on a programme of investment without the approval of the Treasury. They do not even need the consent of my hon. and learned Friend or of the Secretary of State.

Mr. Eric S. Heffer (Liverpool, Walton): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Gow: I always give way to the hon. Gentleman.

Mr. Heffer: I am glad to hear that. The hon. Gentleman must be the only one who does.

If the hon. Gentleman is so much against the water authorities being under the control of the state—and I accept that there is an argument for that, although I do not agree with him on this matter—would it not have been better to hand back many of the authorities to the local authorities? For many years I served on a water authority. I was an elected representative of the water authority of the Liverpool city council. We were responsible for the water that came to Liverpool. We were responsible for water coming from north Wales, and it used to get blown up from time to time. If we want to end patronage, why not put control back into the hands of local authorities? Not that that is necessarily the right thing to do at the moment, but it is better than handing it to private individuals, who will only want to gain for themselves and not have the interests of the people as a whole at heart.

Mr. Gow: I do not have the hon. Gentleman's confidence in the ability of district councils to operate great enterprises.

I have received one of those messages which in this place it is wise to obey, namely, that other hon. Members want to speak. Therefore, having received that message, I shall obey it.

8.56 pm

Mr. Alan W. Williams (Carmarthen): I have listened intently to the speeches this evening, and I have read explanations in the newspapers over the past few weeks of the Government's proposals, but I have yet to find an argument that will persuade me that there is any validity in privatisation.

Under a private monopoly there will be no choice for the consumer. By definition, there will be no competition in the supply of water. Prices must rise, because privatised companies will want to make a profit. By how much prices

will rise remains a matter for speculation. However, when we consider the profits of British Telecom, 20 per cent. of whose turnover is profit, I can only see higher water prices.

The Government argue that privatisation somehow brings about efficiency. I cannot see any possible efficiency savings in Welsh Water. During the past 15 years it has experienced three reorganisations, and on each occasion it has cut staff. There is no fat left to cut in Welsh Water.

I welcome the National Rivers Authority. The unsatisfactory situation whereby water authorities are both poacher and gamekeeper has long existed. However, dividing those responsibilities would have been possible within the public sector.

I am worried that the NRA will not have the resources that it needs for the massive job that it has to do. Water pollution in Britain is a growing problem. In 1980-81 there were 11,467 incidents. Last year, 1987-88, there were 23,253—a doubling in the past seven years. That is the Government's record on water pollution. Last September we heard the Prime Minister championing environmental issues for the first time in 10 years, yet that is the Government's record—a doubling in the incidence of water pollution.

I hope that the NRA will be able to do something about that. Only 288 of those 23,000 cases resulted in prosecutions last year—barely 1 per cent. Industrial companies were responsible for 61 per cent. of those offences. In Wales, in 1986, two thirds of industrial discharges broke the law for more than one fifth of the time. This is an area of our life in which there is little law enforcement. Therefore, the NRA has a massive job on hand.

I hope that the Government will give the NRA the resources that it needs to tackle that job. I suspect that they will not. In the first place, the water companies will have an amnesty until 1992. Farmers have a non-statutory code of practice. Most important of all, neither individuals nor local authorities who are affected will be able to take water companies to court for such offences. Prosecutions will be left to the Secretary of State and the Director of Public Prosecutions. I fear that at the end of the day the NRA, which is a good concept in itself, will prove no tougher than the Police Complaints Authority.

We desperately need major environmental improvements. According to the EC drinking water directives on nitrates, aluminium, lead and so on, Britain's water has above the maximum permitted concentrations. The cost of cleaning up our water supply is estimated at £5 billion or £6 billion.

The problems of pollcyclic hydrocarbons, trichloroethylene and pesticides in the water have been referred to. Under the Government's legislation, toxic wastes can be dumped in Britain with little regulation, and it is only a matter of time before they too reach ground water, water courses and so on. The bills will amount to £10 billion or more.

We have also heard a good deal about sewerage and sewage treatment. Most of our sewers were built in the last century and are in a state of collapse and need major investment. Rivers are regularly polluted by 20 per cent. of our sewage treatment works. According to an article in *The Observer* last Sunday, if we tighten up, as we should, the regulations governing sewage treatment, 80 per cent. not 20 per cent. of our works will be breaking the law. Again, massive investment is needed to improve those figures and renew our sewers. We are talking, not of £10 billion, but of £20 billion of capital investment.

A few weeks ago, in a television interview, the Minister talked about our water industry. He argued that £10 billion or £20 billion worth of investment could not come from the public purse because the money was not there. What he was admitting was that, despite the Government's protestations on the environment, the water industry is not a high enough priority in their programme. That is what he was saying. The money is there. We have a Budget surplus to the tune of £10 billion this year and the funds could and should come from the public purse. I see no argument for privatisation. The money should have been made available and the Government's terrible neglect over the past 10 years has allowed the situation to deteriorate.

No argument has been made by the Government to support the Bill. At the end of the day I abide by public opinion, and it is clear that at least 80 per cent. of public opinion is against the Bill. Yesterday we had a full day's debate in the Welsh Grand Committee, where the Queen's Speech was voted down by 26 votes to 10. I promise the House that if only Welsh Members had voted according to their consciences, the result would have been 51 votes to 7. If the matter is put to the Welsh people, I am certain that 90 per cent. of them will not want to see Welsh Water privatised.

9.5 pm

Mr. Keith Mans (Wyre): I welcome public attention being concentrated on protecting the environment and, more specifically, the water industry. They have for many years been neglected topics, and the Government's measures have at least served to air them.

One of the Bill's chief advantages is that it will allow water companies in the private sector to borrow on the commercial market when and where they need to do so. That compares favourably with the situation that has existed for many years, during which time the majority of water authorities have been in the public sector.

I wish to repeat some of the points that were made in the Select Committee on the Environment report on rivers and estuaries. It is clear that one of the reasons why water standards have fallen over the last few years is the lack of investment for about the past two decades. A good example is that when the Labour party came to power in 1964, the previous Conservative Government having invested £400 million annually on sewage disposal, the total almost immediately dropped below that figure. It rose again through the rest of the 1960s and early 1970s, but surprisingly it fell again from a peak in 1973-74 of £900 million, at 1985-86 prices, to £400 million by the end of that decade. Therefore, I regard with scepticism the remarks of Opposition Members about how successful investment in the public sector had been when Labour was in power. The evidence produced by the all-party Select Committee suggests otherwise. Since 1981 investment has continued to rise, and I am convinced that it will continue to do so in the private sector.

As to the National Rivers Authority, one of the chief advantages of moving water companies into the private sector is that a regulatory device will remain in the public sector. I have no doubt that the NRA will be much better at regulating and controlling water companies than has been the case under the present arrangement, whereby

[Mr. Keith Mans]

responsibility for ensuring water purity has been split between water authorities and the pollution inspectorate. It was a pity that in 1974 the old alkali inspectorate, which had a lot of authority in the water industry and did a good job, was altered by the new Labour Government when they assumed office. Many of the problems surrounding degenerating water standards had their beginnings in that Labour initiative, whereby the pollution inspectorate assumed greater responsibility.

I am convinced that the increase in investment that has taken place over the past two or three years will continue when the companies are put into the private sector. I am equally convinced that to have the National Rivers Authority and the Director General of Water Services looking after the interests of the consumer and making certain that pollution is reduced in our rivers in the public sector will be a far better way to look after water in this country. I shall support the Bill tonight.

9.11 pm

Mrs. Ann Taylor (Dewsbury): I do not want to take up all the points made by the hon. Member for Wyre (Mr. Mans), but we have checked the figures for capital expenditure of water authorities under Labour and Conservative Governments. It is a simple fact, on the Library's own figures, that capital expenditure between 1974 and 1975 averaged £1,254 million a year and in the period from 1979 to 1987-88, the last year for which figures are available, it averaged £922 million a year. Those are the figures that the Library provided today.

Mr. Mans: The figures that I quoted were for sewage disposal works and sewage disposal and I made that clear.

Mrs. Taylor: If the hon. Gentleman chooses to be selective in that way, he should compare his figures with the overall figures for investment during that period.

We have had a two-day debate on the Bill, but even that has not been sufficient to explore all the anxieties of hon. Members and those of many groups outside the House examining the Bill. It has been a strange feature of the debate that the worries that were expressed by a wide range of bodies outside the House have been ignored by Conservative Members, despite the fact that many of the members of those groups live in rural areas that are represented by Conservative Members. Who would have thought that only Opposition Members would be prepared to voice the concerns of the Council for the Protection of Rural England, the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds, fish farmers, the Royal Society of Nature Conservation and even, in some circumstances, the National Farmers Union. No doubt the Whips have been hard at work to silence wets who are worried about water, but I warn the Government that they cannot ignore those fears and anxieties indefinitely. Seventy-five per cent. of public opinion is against the Bill and Tory Members will be under increasing pressure on the Bill. I hope that those Conservative Members who have expressed reservations in private will soon speak out publicly against the Bill.

We should be clear at the outset about the Bill's intentions. The Secretary of State for the Environment, who is absent from the House at the moment, gave us his reasons for the Bill yesterday. He pointed out that the Bill creates the National Rivers Authority and a statutory framework for setting river quality objectives and for updating sewerage law. All of that could have been done —and should have been done—without any proposal for privatisation. Clearly these provisions are in the Bill to try to make the sale of the water industry more acceptable to those groups who forced the Government to back down in 1986. Although they may favour the National Rivers Authority, they are not converted to the overall objectives of the Bill. If the Government are serious about independent controls—and we shall find that out when we try to strengthen the NRA in Committee—they could have introduced the provisions in a separate Bill before now and such a Bill would have gone through the House relatively quickly, with assistance from the Opposition.

The Secretary of State for the Environment claimed again yesterday that in establishing the NRA he was responding to the Select Committee's recommendation that gamekeepers should not be poachers as well. If the Secretary of State is serious about that, why is he allowing and encouraging the National Rivers Authority's regulatory functions to be contracted out—often back to the water plcs, the very bodies that the NRA will be regulating? If the gamekeeper should not be a poacher as well, why should the gamekeeper be forced to contract out his policing role to the poachers? That is what the Minister of State admitted will happen in an interview that was published this morning in the *Surveyor*.

One of our main concerns about the Bill is its impact on the consumer. Too often, the consumer gets a raw deal —literally so in some areas, including the Secretary of State's constituency where excreta has been found in the water supply. The Secretary of State's constituency faces other problems, too. The amount of aluminium in the water supply in his constituency exceeds the EEC directive level. Hon. Members will be aware, as I am sure the Secretary of State is aware, of the link between aluminium and senile dementia, which is of concern to everybody. That may explain the Secretary of State's absence. The Minister may deal with that point later.

The Minister for Water and Planning (Mr. Michael Howard): The hon. Lady knows perfectly well—it was explained in advance to the Opposition Front Bench—that my right hon. Friend had to attend an official function this evening. The hon. Member for Copeland (Dr. Cunningham) knows that full well. It was known long before the date for this debate was fixed.

Mrs. Taylor: My hon. Friend the Member for Copeland (Dr. Cunningham) has confirmed to me that he knew that, but I think that it demonstrates the Secretary of State's priorities.

Mr. Howard: It was agreed by the Opposition Front Bench that, in all the circumstances, my right hon. Friend's absence would be acceptable. The hon. Member for Copeland nods his assent. It is utterly disgraceful that the hon. Lady, after such an assurance, should make that point in that way.

Mrs. Taylor: I remind the House that the Secretary of State for Wales was also absent during the opening speeches of today's debate.

We saw another example of the Secretary of State's priorities when he introduced the Bill yesterday. The consumer was at the bottom of the Secretary of State's list of reasons for the Bill. The consumer hardly rated a

mention in his speech. I am not surprised that the consumer came at the bottom of the Secretary of State's list because, in a way, he was being honest. Privatisation is not designed to protect the interests of the consumer, so it is not surprising that little regard is paid in the Bill to their interests.

The Bill provides for regional advisory committees to be appointed by the National Rivers Authority. I hope that the Minister will assure us that the committees will include consumers and representatives from established environmental and conservation groups.

The Minister of State, Welsh Office, boasted at the beginning of today's debate that the Bill provides for customer services committees. He is proud of that. He is satisfied with that protection. We are not. That provision does not satisfy us, nor does it satisfy those groups outside the House who are concerned about the interests of the consumer. The National Consumer Council says that the national river committees and the customer services committees will be neither independent nor sufficiently financed. The provision for customer services committees is laughable.

The Bill states that customer service committees "may" —not will—be established. If they are established, there is no guarantee that customers will be represented on them; certainly not ordinary domestic customers. The Bill states that such committees should be made up of those with experience of the industry. They could be packed with business men with their own vested interests. Even if those committees are established, and even if ordinary domestic consumers get a few places on them, there is no provision that they must be consulted. As the Bill stands, the new water companies will be under no obligation to consult the consumers of their industry. We shall seek to amend that.

The other area of concern for consumers is prices. There has already been a sign of what the consumer will face because statutory water companies have been advised to increase their prices to the maximum. The Secretary of State claimed yesterday that those price increases were for investment. That is simply not true. They are intended to fatten the reserves and, more importantly, to ensure that the base line for the calculation of prices, post-privatisation, will be as high as possible.

There are other signs of more to come, and the message is always the same—maximise the cost to the consumer to ensure maximum return to the investor. We should not be surprised at that—after all, that is what private investors expect of their companies. The British Business School, which is not exactly a Labour party organisation, has identified three groups of people who have benefited from privatisation. The first is the short-term speculator, who has bought into the industries for a quick profit derived from the undervaluing of shares. The taxpayer is cheated to ensure benefit for short-term speculators.

The second group is the City, which has benefited from the costs of flotation. Figures from Price Waterhouse show that the City has gained more than £660 million in fees alone, with more to come. The third group—the only other group to benefit from privatisation—comprises the top managers in the industries concerned, who have gained average pay increases of 78 per cent. in the first year of privatisation. Those who know about the industry have been bought off with promises of increased salaries, and all of those costs have to be met by the consumer.

The consumer might not mind paying more, within reason, for quality or for environmental improvements —but there are no guarantees in the Bill that such improvements will take place. The Bill gives the Secretary of State many powers. For example, clause 98 states that the Secretary of State may establish water quality standards. Clause 104 states that he may establish water protection zones. Only yesterday he said that that power would belong to the National Rivers Authority. Will the Minister tell us whether that will be one of the first amendments to the Bill? Was the Secretary of State giving that power to the NRA? Under the Bill, it belongs to the Secretary of State. Clause 108 states that the Secretary of State may establish codes of agricultural practice.

What do those and other provisions really mean? They mean that the Secretary of State has the power to introduce stringent controls—but they also mean that he has the power not to introduce stringent controls. If this Secretary of State has a choice between introducing stringent environmental controls and protecting the profit of private water companies, I know which he will choose.

That is only one of the choices facing the Minister. The other choice relates to the arrangements for the sale of the industry and the price that will be fixed. The Secretary of State has not yet told us what he intends to do about the debts of the water industry. Does he intend to write off all or a proportion of those debts at massive cost to the taxpayer? It is important that we know that if we are to know who will buy the industry, and why.

If we compare the £5·2 billion debts of the industry with the profits, it is difficult to see where there is any incentive to invest. Will people queue up to invest in the sewers of Greater Manchester? Of course not, even though some of the most expensive functions will be transferred to the NRA to be funded by the taxpayer.

Mr. Summerson: Has the hon. Lady not heard the old saying, "where there's muck there's brass"?

Mrs. Taylor: I think that we all know whether the brass is due to go under this provision.

We have a water industry which is run on commercial lines with the water authorities run by Tory appointees, all of whom are committed to the commercial approach. The only commercial improvement from privatisation mentioned by the Minister is access to loans on the private market, although the Chancellor of the Exchequer has said that the water authorities could not borrow more cheaply in the market than they do from the Government. That was before the increase in interest rates which have reached their current ridiculous height.

Let us get to the real reason why investors will be buying into this industry. We all know why people will be looking at the water industry. It is because the total assets of the water authorities are so great that even they cannot quantify them. The private sector would simply like to get its hands on them. There are half a million acres of land, some of it in prime sites in London and other major cities and much of it in areas of outstanding natural beauty. There are examples in every region. The Secretary of State and the Minister of State say that we should not worry about what will happen to the land because we should rely on planning controls. Anyone who knows anything about what has happened to planning procedures knows that time after time under this Government the developer wins.

More serious than that perhaps is the fact that water companies will have a large degree of control over the infrastructure necessary for future development. By laying

[Mrs. Taylor]

new water mains, increasing the size of water mains and providing new sewers, they can increase the value of land dramatically and then sell it. Or the conglomerates that might take over the water industry can allow their subsidiaries to reap the benefit of development.

Before Conservative Members with construction interests become too excited about the backdoor means to development opportunities, they should be aware that the French are already one step ahead. They are buying into statutory water companies, not because they are happy with the regulated return allowed—they are not investing so much money for the 1 per cent. yield that they have so far received—but because they know of the opportunities for the future.

The Secretary of State told us yesterday that the French would be able to teach the British water authorities a lesson—how helpful they would be. He almost welcomed their presence because they would be able to teach the water authorities how to diversify and provide cable television. Perhaps the chairman of Thames Water would like to diversify into cable television. However, consumers would prefer to have water companies that concentrate on providing a good water service.

The French are buying into our water companies not just in order to have a base for profit out of water management—although they will happily accept that—but mainly to have a base for future asset stripping and to use the infrastructure power of the new companies to give work to their own construction subsidiaries. They are already operating in this way in many other parts of Europe. As the Secretary of State said, French companies have diversified. However, he did not tell us about all the ways in which they have done so. Many French water companies are already providing theme parks. Conservative Members may think that that is what is needed in the Lake District or in the Peak park or the Brecon Beacons, but we do not think so and I do not think that the general public want that either.

There are other and perhaps more ominous overtones to the French history of diversification. Not only have French water companies diversified into construction companies and theme parks, but some have diversified into funeral undertakings. I shall not make the obvious comment about the link between that and the possible future quality of water, but it is rather alarming to hear that the funeral company subsidiary of Lyonnaise des Eaux has just decided to pay its employees on the payment-by-result method.

We do not want French conglomerates running our water industry, nor do we want to be run by British conglomerates. Britain needs a publicly-owned water industry that is properly resourced and properly accountable. The Prime Minister is keen to emulate the Victorians, and I would have thought that the Secretary of State, if he were here, would do likewise. The Victorians concluded that the aims of private enterprise and the need for a clean and plentiful water supply were incompatible. In 1894 Joseph Chamberlain said:

> "It is difficult and indeed almost impossible to reconcile the rights and interests of the public to the claims of an individual company seeking as its natural and legitimate object the largest private gain."

Yesterday the Government made it clear that the real object of the Bill was not to protect the environment but to create viable and profitable companies. We seem to have learnt nothing in the 94 years since Joseph Chamberlain made his comment because we are contemplating whether we should again subject the country's water needs to market and competition forces. All those years ago even the Conservatives realised that the water industry was not safe in private hands. Who are the extremists now? I ask the House to vote against Second Reading.

9.33 pm

The Minister for Water and Planning (Mr. Michael Howard): The debate has lasted for almost 10 hours and detailed points have been raised to which I shall shortly reply. The most conspicuous feature of the long debate is the utter intellectual bankruptcy of the Opposition. Hour after hour Conservative Members have waited for some coherent explanation of the Opposition's attitude. We have waited patiently, we have waited attentively and we have waited in vain.

The Labour party is the "Say no" party. It says no to change, to new ideas and to any constructive proposals designed to improve the condition of our people. The Labour party is the most sterile, destructive and negative Opposition that we have seen for generations. At no time have those characteristics been more apparent than in the past 10 hours of debate.

Yesterday, we had from the hon. Member for Copeland (Dr. Cunningham) the routine rant that we have come to expect from him. He railed about the evils of the private sector. But until my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State intervened, he said nothing about the private sector water companies which presently supply one quarter of our drinking water, as we were reminded by my hon. Friend the Member for Eastbourne (Mr. Gow) in his elegant speech.

It is, of course, hardly surprising that the hon. Member for Copeland should be rather wary about the private water companies. If the private sector is the menace to standards in the water industry that the hon. Gentleman suggested, why were they not taken into public ownership under any of the Labour Governments who have existed since the war?

The hon. Gentleman has no answer to that. He prefers to forget that the private companies exist. He does not even know what they do. He suggested yesterday that they were not private enterprises, and that they simply act as agents for the regional water authorities.

That is an astonishing statement for the hon. Gentleman to have made. It will not, of course, come as a surprise to my right hon. and hon. Friends, who know from long experience not to expect Opposition spokesmen to have any acquaintance with the facts or with the real world. But it came as a considerable surprise to the companies themselves which have a long and distinguished history of supplying drinking water in the private sector quite independently of the regional water authorities.

Then the hon. Gentleman railed about price increases.

Mrs. Ann Taylor: Before the Minister leaves the subject of private water companies, if he will not accept the word of my hon. Friend the Member for Copeland (Dr. Cunningham), will he accept the words of Jack Jeffrey, who was chair of the Water Companies Association, who remarked:

"We are subject to strict financial controls, especially on dividends, which make us very different from the water plcs which are being proposed by the Government."?

Mr. Howard: I do not know what point the hon. Lady is addressing, but it is not the point made by the hon. Member for Copeland. The hon. Gentleman said that they were not private enterprise companies, and he was wrong. He said that they acted only as agents of the regional water authorities, and he was wrong about that, too.

The hon. Gentleman railed about price increases. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State dealt with that point in his speech yesterday. But what of the increase in the price of water of 42 per cent. in 1975-76? Did the hon. Gentleman not notice it at the time? Had he forgotten it?

Last, but very far from least, the hon. Gentleman had the temerity to criticise the condition of our rivers and beaches. The hon. Gentleman knows very well that the main cause of our present problems lies in the record of the Labour Government—*[Interruption.]* The convolutions in which the hon. Gentleman engaged in a vain attempt to defend the indefensible were astonishing. The first thing the hon. Gentleman did yesterday, when he sought to explain the Labour Government's record, was to succumb to a bout of amnesia about the last year of office of the Labour Government. He tried to pretend that the last year of the Labour Government was 1977-78. It is in *Hansard* for all to see. I think we can all sympathise with the hon. Gentleman's desire to expunge from the record all trace of the year 1978-79 or, failing that, to hope that we will forget that Labour was in office during that disastrous year. But the hon. Gentlman will have to be just a little more sophisticated if he is to have much success in that endeavour.

The hon. Gentleman was then faced with the decision of which deflator to use to bend the figures to his case. Should he use the GDP deflator or the public works deflator? He decided to use them both—one for one set of figures and the other for an entirely different set of figures. But that did not work either. The length to which the hon. Gentleman went to try to find some figures that he thought he could use illustrates better than anything the hollow weakness of the case that he was trying to defend.

Dr. John Cunningham (Copeland): I should be flattered that, in his speech, the hon. and learned Gentleman has referred only to my own speech. I take that as a compliment. As he and the Secretary of State find it difficult to face the truth, I say to him again that they are not my figures; they are the figures published in "Water Facts", and the statistics were calculated by the House of Commons Library. The hon. and learned Gentleman is trying to suggest that somehow Opposition Members have manipulated the figures. That is a manifest dishonesty.

Mr. Howard: Perhaps the hon. Gentleman will tell the House whether he depends on the House Library to tell him what was the final year of the last Labour Government. That was just one of the things that he got wrong.

Mrs. Ann Taylor: Will the hon. and learned Gentleman give way?

Mr. Howard: No, I shall not give way—*[Interruption.]* I shall refer directly to the hon. Lady. We have just heard the hon. Lady's maiden Front-Bench speech on this subject. I welcome her to her new responsibilities. She has certainly made an enthusiastic start, but, unfortunately——

Mrs. Taylor *rose*—

Mr. Howard: I shall give way to the hon. Lady in a moment.

Unfortunately, in her desire to make an enthusiastic start, the hon. Lady has let her enthusiasm run away with her. On Monday, for example, the hon. Lady issued a press release. It was a mixture of mistakes, muddle and misrepresentation.

I shall confine myself to one example. The hon. Lady alleged that, after privatisation, the water industry would not be able to spend money on protecting the environment because, for the first time, it would have to pay local authority rates. I shall quote the exact words that she used. "It is also likely"—
the hon. Lady said—
"that while the industry in public hands did not have to pay local authority rates, the private industry will."

There is just one difficulty about that. The industry in public hands has been paying local authority rates. There will be no change after privatisation. The hon. Lady got that simple, elementary fact utterly and completely wrong.

Mrs. Taylor *rose*——

Mr. Howard: I shall give way to the hon. Lady if she wishes, but I hope that, on this occasion, she will not blame the House Library for that mistake.

Mrs. Taylor: They do not pay rates, but they will after privatisation.

Perhaps I may refer to the figures for investment in the last year of the Labour Government. The hon. and learned Gentleman was challenging our figures. I shall tell him about investment in water authorities in the last year of the Labour Government, 1978-79. Would the hon. and learned Gentleman prefer the figures for 1977-78? I shall give both. In 1977-78, investment in water authorities was £1,066 million. In 1978-79, it was £1,013 million. Investment did not reach either of those figures under a Conservative Government until 1987-88.

Mr. Howard: We know what the figures show because we heard the speech yesterday—I shall return to it in due course—by the Chairman of the Select Committee on the Environment. That Committee reported, in terms which were supported and signed by the hon. Member for Bootle (Mr. Roberts), that, under the Labour Government, investment by the industry fell by one third in real terms and in sewerage by a half. Those are the facts of the matter.

Following the press release by the hon. Member for Dewsbury (Mrs. Taylor) on Monday, which contained such an elementary mistake, I should like to make an offer to the hon. Lady. I want the debates in which she and I will be engaged in the next few months to be conducted on a sensible basis. I want to help the hon. Lady to get her facts right. If she sends a copy of her press releases to the Department of the Environment in advance, I shall make sure that the facts are properly checked and that she does not in future make the kind of mistake that she made on Monday.

The Bill represents a giant step forward towards a better water environment. It is about the quality of the water that we drink, the purity of our rivers and the

[Mr. Howard]

cleanliness of our beaches. It is the key to those higher environmental standards of which others speak, but which we deliver.

Of course, the measures in the Bill will secure for our people all the advantages that any privatisation brings—the advantages that have led so many other countries, governed by parties of many different political persuasions, to emulate our example. It will contribute to the spread of share ownership, it will give employees a real stake in their companies, and it will remove from this important segment of our economy the public sector shroud which conceals and disguises true accountability. It will open up for the industry all the opportunities and incentives for increased efficiency that only the private sector can provide, and it will free the industry from the constraints of competition for limited public sector resources with schools, hospitals, defence and all the other demands which must continue to be met by the taxpayer.

It is that access to private sector capital which will, above all, enable higher environmental standards to be achieved. The hon. Member for Bootle suggested yesterday that we could somehow abolish all spending restraint while retaining the industry in the public sector. It would be interesting to know whether he had consulted his party's economic spokesmen before making that statement.

Mr. Allan Roberts: Will the Minister explain how funds for river navigation, flood defences, sea defences and all the other major environmental concerns, which now rest with the water industry, but which will be given to the National Rivers Authority, will be released from the public sector borrowing requirement if they stay in the public sector? How will they be funded?

Mr. Howard: They will be funded from the public sector. The reason for that is very simple—so simple that it has escaped the hon. Gentleman. The amounts to fund those activities are very much smaller than the amounts needed to finance the investment of the authorities themselves. If the step suggested by the hon. Gentleman yesterday was such an obvious and easy step to take, why was it not taken between 1974 and 1979 by the Labour Government, who presided over a cut in investment of one third overall and one half in sewerage services?

It is, of course, true that the industry is a natural monopoly. We recognise that, but that does not mean that there will be no scope for competition. There will be competition between the various privatised concerns in the capital markets, there will be competition over supply to "inset areas" and there will be competition in the provision of various commercial interests.

There will be the yardstick of competition between the companies themselves which will enable the Director General of Water Services, in setting the price at which the companies will be permitted to sell their water, to ensure that consumers benefit from improved efficiency. We are determined to ensure that the customer gets these benefits not only in the price that he pays for water but in the quality of service that he receives. Customers will be protected by enforcing the conditions of appointment of the companies, and there will be new customer service committees with a balanced membership representing consumer interests.

The Bill also provides for regulations to be made for a guaranteed standards scheme. These guarantees will cover such matters as resumption of water supplies after a supply failure or planned disconnection, prompt response to billing inquiries or reasonable written complaints and keeping appointments at the agreed time.

My hon. Friend the Member for Stockton, South (Mr. Devlin) referred to the need for automatic payments to be made to domestic customers if guaranteed standards are not met. We agree, and I am happy to be able to announce that there will be such a scheme providing compensation for a breach of guaranteed standards. We envisage a payment of around £5 for each and every day, or for each and every occasion, as appropriate, on which a breach occurs. This would be a no-nonsense, no-quibble scheme to provide a spur to management for good commercial manners and quick recompense to customers for the inconvenience that they have suffered. It will be a new remedy for the customer. It will be in addition to existing legal rights. It will be but one of the many advantages that will accrue to the customer as a result of privatisation.

If there has been a focus for the contributions to this debate, it has related to the environmental aspect of our proposals. That is as it should be, because concern for the protection and enhancement of our water environment lies at the heart of the Bill. It was my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State who last year saw the need to separate the regulatory functions of the water authorities from their water supply functions. Even Labour Members have been grudgingly obliged to concede the merits of the National Rivers Authority. The advisory committee, under the distinguished chairmanship of my right hon. and noble Friend Lord Crickhowell, has made an excellent start in identifying its responsibilities and putting in place the organisational framework within which these responsibilities will be discharged.

My hon. Friends the Members for Devizes (Sir C. Morrison) and for Pudsey (Sir G. Shaw) expressed concern about the resources available for the NRA. They were right to say that, unless it gets the resources it needs, it will not succeed. We accept that. We are determined to ensure that it gets these resources and that it will succeed. That is the basis on which it is being established.

My hon. Friend the Member for Cornwall, North (Mr. Neale), who has taken such a close interest on behalf of his constituents in recent events in his constituency, asked for a specific assurance that the Department will continue to monitor closely what is happening in his constituency. I am happy to give him that assurance. My hon. Friend the Member for Dorset, North (Mr. Baker) asked for a reassurance that the full rigours of the planning system would be maintained after privatisation, and I am happy to give my hon. Friend that assurance.

My right hon. Friend the Member for Woking (Mr. Onslow) suggested that the regional fisheries advisory committees of the NRA should have the same executive responsibilities as the regional flood defence committees as anglers would contribute a great deal to the funds of the NRA. The answer to my right hon. Friend's worry is that matters will continue as they have. The regional flood defence committee will continue to exercise the executive functions that are now exercised by the land drainage committees, and the regional fisheries advisory committees will continue as advisory committees to the new authority.

My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State has explained how we see this measure as the key to improved

environmental standards, but we should not allow the false picture of the present state of our water environment so sedulously painted by Labour Members to gain acceptance. They lost no opportunity to denigrate the state of our environment, but their charges, in this as in so many other cases, are very wide of the mark. They say that we have the dirtiest rivers in Europe. They are wrong. We have the highest standards of river quality in the European Community, with the exception of the Irish Republic and possibly Holland. They say that we have the dirtiest beaches in Europe, but they are wrong. We are making steady progress in cleaning our beaches. We are the only member of the European Community that has drawn up a clear and defined table and programme for securing compliance with the European bathing water directive.

Mr. Paul Boateng (Brent, South): The hon. and learned Gentleman is going at a fine old lick, but could we have some intellectual content?

Mr. Howard: If the hon. Gentleman is not interested in the state of our rivers or beaches, he is typical of the general attitude of the Opposition. I am dealing with the facts.

Dr. Cunningham: As the Minister of State unusually is dealing with facts, perhaps he can deal with this one. If what he says about our position in Europe is true, why have we been singled out by the European Commission for more prosecutions in respect of drinking water quality and bathing water quality than all the other member states put together?

Mr. Howard: That is not right either. That is another of the hon. Gentleman's errors. That is as wide of the mark as any of the other charges that the hon. Gentleman delights in peddling. The fact is that we are making substantial progress in improving our water environment and have reached far higher standards than most of the other countries in Europe.

I shall give the hon. Member for Copeland some more facts. We have more of our households connected to a main sewerage system than has any other country in Europe. We have more of our sewage treated before disposal than has any other country in Europe. We have no need whatever to be ashamed of our record.

However, I want to come to the record of the Opposition. It was identified in the clearest possible terms in the report of the Select Committee, chaired by my hon. Friend the Member for Hornsey and Wood Green (Sir H. Rossi), and supported and signed by the hon. Member for Bootle, who was a member of the Committee. The Committee said:

"There are a number of reasons why water authority effluents fall short of the present consent standards. The most immediate reason is because from the mid-1970s until the early 1980s there was a steady drop in investment by the water authorities in sewerage and sewage disposal."

The undisputed facts are that, when the Opposition were in power, investment by the water authorities fell by one third and investment in sewerage and sewage disposal fell by one half. Those are the facts. The Opposition like to convey the impression that those events took place in a far-off distant period of which they know nothing, but many of them were here. The hon. Member for Dewsbury was a Member of the House, albeit for a different constituency. Perhaps she would like to remind the House of the occasions when she rose during those years to protest against those cuts and against the damage to the environment that they caused. The hon. Member for Copeland was here, too.

Mrs. Ann Taylor *rose*——

Mr. Howard: Perhaps the hon. Lady will answer the question that I posed to her.

Mrs. Taylor: Before the Minister gets carried away, perhaps he would reflect on what he was not happy to discuss earlier: the actual levels of investment under a Labour Government compared with the actual levels of investment under a Conservative Government. The average level of investment under the last Labour Government between 1974 and 1979 was £1,254 million per year. The average investment under the Conservative Government has been £922 million per year. In no year since 1978-79 has investment under the Conservative Government reached the level of investment under the Labour Government. For the Minister to suggest that the problems faced by this industry today are the responsibility of the Labour Government is to ignore the fact that this Government have been in office for 10 of the last 14 years and that they have been—*[Interruption.]*

The Parliamentary Secretary to the Treasury (Mr. David Waddington) *rose in his place and claimed to move,* That the Question be now put.

Question, That the Question be now put, *put and agreed to.*

Question put accordingly, That the Bill be now read a Second time:—

The House divided: Ayes 301, Noes 241.

Division No. 11] **[9.59 pm**

AYES

Alexander, Richard	Clarke, Rt Hon K. *(Rushcliffe)*
Amery, Rt Hon Julian	Conway, Derek
Arbuthnot, James	Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre F'rest)*
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*	Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Arnold, Tom *(Hazel Grove)*	Cope, Rt Hon John
Ashby, David	Cormack, Patrick
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*	Couchman, James
Baldry, Tony	Cran, James
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*	Currie, Mrs Edwina
Bellingham, Henry	Davies, Q. *(Stamf'd & Spald'g)*
Bottomley, Peter	Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*	Day, Stephen
Bowis, John	Devlin, Tim
Braine, Rt Hon Sir Bernard	Dicks, Terry
Brandon-Bravo, Martin	Dorrell, Stephen
Bright, Graham	Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Brooke, Rt Hon Peter	Dover, Den
Brown, Michael *(Brigg & Cl't's)*	Dunn, Bob
Bruce, Ian *(Dorset South)*	Durant, Tony
Buck, Sir Antony	Dykes, Hugh
Budgen, Nicholas	Emery, Sir Peter
Burns, Simon	Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatf'd)*
Burt, Alistair	Evennett, David
Butcher, John	Fallon, Michael
Butler, Chris	Favell, Tony
Butterfill, John	Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Carlisle, John, *(Luton N)*	Fookes, Miss Janet
Carrington, Matthew	Forman, Nigel
Carttiss, Michael	Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Cash, William	Forth, Eric
Chalker, Rt Hon Mrs Lynda	Fowler, Rt Hon Norman
Chapman, Sydney	Fox, Sir Marcus
Chope, Christopher	Franks, Cecil
Churchill, Mr	Freeman, Roger
Clark, Hon Alan *(Plym'th S'n)*	French, Douglas
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*	Fry, Peter
Clark, Sir W. *(Croydon S)*	Gale, Roger

Gardiner, George
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Gill, Christopher
Glyn, Dr Alan
Goodhart, Sir Philip
Goodlad, Alastair
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Gorst, John
Gow, Ian
Gower, Sir Raymond
Grant, Sir Anthony *(CambsSW)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth N)*
Grist, Ian
Ground, Patrick
Grylls, Michael
Gummer, Rt Hon John Selwyn
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, John
Hargreaves, A. *(B'ham H'll Gr')*
Hargreaves, Ken *(Hyndburn)*
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hayhoe, Rt Hon Sir Barney
Hayward, Robert
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Heddle, John
Heseltine, Rt Hon Michael
Hicks, Mrs Maureen *(Wolv' NE)*
Hicks, Robert *(Cornwall SE)*
Higgins, Rt Hon Terence L.
Hill, James
Hind, Kenneth
Hogg, Hon Douglas *(Gr'th'm)*
Holt, Richard
Hordern, Sir Peter
Howard, Michael
Howarth, G. *(Cannock & B'wd)*
Howell, Rt Hon David *(G'dford)*
Howell, Ralph *(North Norfolk)*
Hughes, Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, David *(Wirral W)*
Hunter, Andrew
Irvine, Michael
Irving, Charles
Jack, Michael
Jackson, Robert
Janman, Tim
Jessel, Toby
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert B *(Herts W)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Key, Robert
King, Roger *(B'ham N'thfield)*
King, Rt Hon Tom *(Bridgwater)*
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Greg *(Derby North)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Edgbaston)*
Knowles, Michael
Knox, David
Lamont, Rt Hon Norman
Lang, Ian
Latham, Michael
Lawrence, Ivan
Lawson, Rt Hon Nigel
Lee, John *(Pendle)*
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Peter
Lloyd, Sir Ian *(Havant)*
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Luce, Rt Hon Richard
Lyell, Sir Nicholas
McCrindle, Robert
Macfarlane, Sir Neil
MacKay, Andrew *(E Berkshire)*
Maclean, David
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, Sir Michael
McNair-Wilson, P. *(New Forest)*
Madel, David
Major, Rt Hon John
Malins, Humfrey
Mans, Keith
Maples, John
Marland, Paul
Marlow, Tony
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Marshall, Michael *(Arundel)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Mates, Michael
Maude, Hon Francis
Mawhinney, Dr Brian
Mayhew, Rt Hon Sir Patrick
Mellor, David
Miller, Sir Hal
Mills, Iain
Miscampbell, Norman
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, Sir David
Moate, Roger
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Moore, Rt Hon John
Morris, M *(N'hampton S)*
Morrison, Sir Charles
Moss, Malcolm
Moynihan, Hon Colin
Neale, Gerrard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Onslow, Rt Hon Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Parkinson, Rt Hon Cecil
Patnick, Irvine
Patten, Chris *(Bath)*
Patten, John *(Oxford W)*
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Price, Sir David
Raison, Rt Hon Timothy
Redwood, John
Renton, Tim
Rhodes James, Robert
Riddick, Graham
Ridley, Rt Hon Nicholas
Ridsdale, Sir Julian
Rifkind, Rt Hon Malcolm
Roberts, Wyn *(Conwy)*
Roe, Mrs Marion
Rost, Peter
Rowe, Andrew
Rumbold, Mrs Angela
Ryder, Richard
Sackville, Hon Tom
Sainsbury, Hon Tim
Sayeed, Jonathan
Scott, Nicholas
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Shelton, William *(Streatham)*
Shephard, Mrs G. *(Norfolk SW)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shersby, Michael
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Hon Nicholas
Speller, Tony
Spicer, Sir Jim *(Dorset W)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Squire, Robin
Stanbrook, Ivor
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Steen, Anthony
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Stewart, Andy *(Sherwood)*
Stewart, Ian *(Hertfordshire N)*
Stradling Thomas, Sir John
Sumberg, David
Summerson, Hugo
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, John M *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Teddy *(S'end E)*
Tebbit, Rt Hon Norman
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thatcher, Rt Hon Margaret
Thompson, D. *(Calder Valley)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thorne, Neil
Thornton, Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Townsend, Cyril D. *(B'heath)*
Tracey, Richard
Tredinnick, David
Trippier, David
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Viggers, Peter
Waddington, Rt Hon David
Wakeham, Rt Hon John
Waldegrave, Hon William
Walden, George
Walker, Bill *(T'side North)*
Walker, Rt Hon P. *(W'cester)*
Waller, Gary
Ward, John
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Warren, Kenneth
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Wheeler, John
Whitney, Ray
Widdecombe, Ann
Wiggin, Jerry
Wilkinson, John
Wilshire, David
Winterton, Mrs Ann
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Woodcock, Mike
Yeo, Tim
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*
Younger, Rt Hon George

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Alan Howarth and
Mr. Kenneth Carlisle.

NOES

Abbott, Ms Diane
Adams, Allen *(Paisley N)*
Allen, Graham
Alton, David
Anderson, Donald
Archer, Rt Hon Peter
Armstrong, Hilary
Ashdown, Paddy
Ashley, Rt Hon Jack
Ashton, Joe
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnes, Harry *(Derbyshire NE)*
Barnes, Mrs Rosie *(Greenwich)*
Barron, Kevin
Battle, John
Beckett, Margaret
Beith, A. J.
Bell, Stuart
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bennett, A. F. *(D'nt'n & R'dish)*
Bermingham, Gerald
Bidwell, Sydney
Blair, Tony
Blunkett, David
Boateng, Paul
Boyes, Roland
Bradley, Keith
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, Gordon *(D'mline E)*
Brown, Nicholas *(Newcastle E)*
Brown, Ron *(Edinburgh Leith)*
Bruce, Malcolm *(Gordon)*
Buchan, Norman
Buckley, George J.
Caborn, Richard
Callaghan, Jim
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Campbell, Ron *(Blyth Valley)*
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Canavan, Dennis
Cartwright, John
Clark, Dr David *(S Shields)*
Clarke, Tom *(Monklands W)*
Clay, Bob
Clelland, David
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Cohen, Harry
Coleman, Donald
Cook, Frank *(Stockton N)*
Cook, Robin *(Livingston)*
Corbett, Robin
Corbyn, Jeremy
Cousins, Jim
Cox, Tom
Crowther, Stan
Cryer, Bob
Cummings, John
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Cunningham, Dr John
Dalyell, Tam
Darling, Alistair
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(Llanelli)*
Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham Hodge H'l)*
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Don
Dobson, Frank
Doran, Frank
Douglas, Dick
Duffy, A. E. P.
Dunnachie, Jimmy
Dunwoody, Hon Mrs Gwyneth
Eadie, Alexander
Eastham, Ken
Evans, John *(St Helens N)*
Ewing, Harry *(Falkirk E)*
Fatchett, Derek
Fearn, Ronald
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fields, Terry *(L'pool B G'n)*
Fisher, Mark
Flannery, Martin
Flynn, Paul
Foot, Rt Hon Michael

Foster, Derek
Foulkes, George
Fraser, John
Fyfe, Maria
Galbraith, Sam
Galloway, George
Garrett, John *(Norwich South)*
Garrett, Ted *(Wallsend)*
George, Bruce
Gilbert, Rt Hon Dr John
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Golding, Mrs Llin
Gordon, Mildred
Graham, Thomas
Grant, Bernie *(Tottenham)*
Griffiths, Nigel *(Edinburgh S)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Grocott, Bruce
Hardy, Peter
Healey, Rt Hon Denis
Heffer, Eric S.
Henderson, Doug
Hinchliffe, David
Hogg, N. *(C'nauld & Kilsyth)*
Holland, Stuart
Home Robertson, John
Hood, Jimmy
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Howell, Rt Hon D. *(S'heath)*
Howells, Geraint
Hoyle, Doug
Hughes, John *(Coventry NE)*
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport E)*
Hughes, Sean *(Knowsley S)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Illsley, Eric
Ingram, Adam
Janner, Greville
John, Brynmor
Jones, Barry *(Alyn & Deeside)*
Jones, Ieuan *(Ynys Môn)*
Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Kennedy, Charles
Kinnock, Rt Hon Neil
Kirkwood, Archy
Lamond, James
Leadbitter, Ted
Lestor, Joan *(Eccles)*
Lewis, Terry
Livingstone, Ken
Livsey, Richard
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Lofthouse, Geoffrey
Loyden, Eddie
McAllion, John
McAvoy, Thomas
McCartney, Ian
Macdonald, Calum A.
McFall, John
McKay, Allen *(Barnsley West)*
McKelvey, William
McLeish, Henry
Maclennan, Robert
McNamara, Kevin
McTaggart, Bob
McWilliam, John
Madden, Max
Mahon, Mrs Alice
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Marshall, Jim *(Leicester S)*
Martin, Michael J. *(Springburn)*
Martlew, Eric
Maxton, John
Meacher, Michael
Meale, Alan
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Michie, Mrs Ray *(Arg'l & Bute)*
Mitchell, Austin *(G't Grimsby)*
Molyneaux, Rt Hon James
Moonie, Dr Lewis
Morgan, Rhodri
Morley, Elliott
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(W'shawe)*
Morris, Rt Hon J. *(Aberavon)*
Mowlam, Marjorie
Mullin, Chris
Murphy, Paul
Nellist, Dave
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Brien, William
O'Neill, Martin
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Owen, Rt Hon Dr David
Paisley, Rev Ian
Parry, Robert
Patchett, Terry
Pendry, Tom
Pike, Peter L.
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Prescott, John
Primarolo, Dawn
Quin, Ms Joyce
Radice, Giles
Randall, Stuart
Redmond, Martin
Rees, Rt Hon Merlyn
Reid, Dr John
Richardson, Jo
Roberts, Allan *(Bootle)*
Robertson, George
Robinson, Geoffrey
Rogers, Allan
Rooker, Jeff
Ross, Ernie *(Dundee W)*
Rowlands, Ted
Ruddock, Joan
Salmond, Alex
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheerman, Barry
Sheldon, Rt Hon Robert
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Short, Clare
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton & F'bury)*
Snape, Peter
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Steinberg, Gerry
Stott, Roger
Strang, Gavin
Straw, Jack
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
Thomas, Dr Dafydd Elis
Thompson, Jack *(Wansbeck)*
Turner, Dennis
Vaz, Keith
Wall, Pat
Wallace, James
Walley, Joan
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wareing, Robert N.
Welsh, Andrew *(Angus E)*
Welsh, Michael *(Doncaster N)*
Wigley, Dafydd
Williams, Rt Hon Alan
Williams, Alan W. *(Carm'then)*
Wilson, Brian
Winnick, David
Wise, Mrs Audrey
Worthington, Tony
Wray, Jimmy
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Frank Haynes and
Mr. Martin Jones.

Question accordingly agreed to.

Bill read a Second time, and committed to a Standing Committee pursuant to Standing Order No. 61 (Committal of Bills).

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Ordered,

That, at this day's sitting, the Ways and Means Motion may be proceeded with, though opposed, until any hour.—*[Mr. Dorrell.]*

Water Bill *[Money]*

Queen's Recommendation having been signified—

Motion made, and Question proposed,

That, for the purposes of any Act resulting from the Water Bill ('the Act'), it is expedient to authorise—

(1) the payment out of money provided by Parliament of the following, namely—

(a) grants by the Secretary of State to the National Rivers Authority;

(b) the remuneration of, and any travelling or other allowances payable under the Act to, the Director General of Water Services and any staff of the Director, any other sums payable under the Act to or in respect of a person who holds or has held office as the Director and any expenses duly incurred by the Director or by any of his staff in consequence of the provisions of the Act;

(c) the remuneration of the chairman of a customer service committee, any travelling or other allowances payable under the Act to such a chairman, to other members of a customer service committee or to members of a sub-committee of such a committee, any other sums payable under the Act to or in respect of a person who holds or has held office as such a chairman or member and the expenses incurred by a customer service committee;

(d) grants and loans by the Secretary of State to a water undertaker or sewerage undertaker in relation to which a special administration order has been made;

(e) sums required by the Secretary of State for making any payment in respect of an indemnity given under the Act to a person appointed to achieve the purposes of a special administration order made in relation to a water undertaker or sewerage undertaker;

(f) expenses incurred by the Treasury or the Secretary of State in acquiring securities of a holding company of a water authority's successor company or rights to subscribe for any such securities;

(g) compensation payable by the Secretary of State under the Act in respect of the exercise of functions in relation to trade effluent or in respect of loss or damage caused in connection with a power of entry;

(h) grants in respect of compliance with directions given under the Act in the interests of national security;

(i) sums required by the Secretary of State for making payments under the Act into any fund maintained for the purposes of any regulations under section 7 of the Superannuation Act 1972;

(j) sums required by a Minister of the Crown for fulfilling guarantees given under the Act;

(k) administrative expenses or charges incurred by any Minister of the Crown or Government department in consequence of the provisions of the Act;

(l) increases attributable to the Act in the sums payable out of money so provided under any other Act;

(2) the payment out of the National Loans Fund of any sums required by a Minister of the Crown by virtue of the Act for making loans, while it is wholly owned by the Crown, to a successor company of a water authority or to a holding company of such a company;

(3) the reduction of the assets of the National Loans Fund by amounts corresponding to such liabilities of a water authority's successor company, or of a holding company of such a company, in respect of any loans as the Secretary of State may by order extinguish.—*[Mr. Dorrell.]*

10.14 pm

Mr. Matthew Taylor (Truro): After the debacle of the Government withdrawing their previous privatisation proposals in 1986, I had hoped that such proposals would never come back to the House in any form. I regret very much that they have.

When we consider what the Government now say to justify their position—that this is a "green" Bill, that the NRA is the linchpin to what they are doing—it draws a wry smile from us, because those points were not made originally. *[Interruption.]*

Mr. Bob Cryer (Bradford, South): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. I can hardly hear the hon. Member for Truro (Mr. Taylor), despite his being very close to me, because of Tory loungers and scroungers who are making such a noise.

Mr. Speaker: Order. Will those hon. Members beyond the Bar either come into the House or go out into the Lobby?

Mr. Cryer: Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. A Tory Member just shouted across the Chamber, "We do not want to hear you either." It appears that there could be a concerted attempt to drown out hon. Members, which is completely against the traditions of the House.

Mr. Speaker: I did not hear such a comment. Let us get on with the debate.

Mr. Taylor: I thank the hon. Member for Bradford, South (Mr. Cryer) for leaping to my defence. I have never been accused of having a quiet voice, so there will be a tussle if anyone tries to drown me out.

Yesterday, the hon. Member for Devizes (Sir C. Morrison) wondered how the privatisation of water could lead to competition. Many privatisations have been justified on the ground that privatisation would bring with it the benefits of competition. In privatisation after privatisation we have been told that competition is the crucial element, but the hon. Gentleman said that there would not be competition in any normal sense of the word in this case. Indeed, Ministers have accepted that there will not be competition. That is hardly a surprise. We are dealing with a natural monopoly. No one could possibly think that there could be any competition in any real sense.

Nevertheless, the Government have pressed ahead with the privatisation of water. In doing so, they reveal that competition is never one of the reasons for privatisation. In fact, they have pressed ahead with privatisation on occasion after occasion because privatisation is central to the Government's dogma. It is a matter of ideology. The Government are not looking at the merits of each case. Whatever the industry, whatever the circumstances, whatever the electorate think, the Government want to privatise whatever may be in state hands—or rather, in the community's hands.

In three Thatcher Administrations, none of which has had the support of the majority of the electorate, 29 partly or wholly owned public companies have gone under the hammer. Ironically, as each Conservative Administration has gained less support at the general election polls, privatisation issues have become not only more audacious but have centred on areas that are more and more deeply unpopular.

We on these Benches are willing to say that in some cases a transfer to the private sector has been beneficial; for example, in Rolls-Royce and Jaguar. Our objection is not against privatisation per se, as we hear from the Labour Benches. Indeed, when the Front-Bench spokesman replied to the Second Reading debate they made clear the rather stale arguments over privatisation versus nationalisation.

What we have said is that the individual merits of each particular case have been ignored, and the particular means of going about it have been ignored, simply to gain the maximum financial return for the Treasury and the maximum ideological advantage of privatisation. The Government have not considered what is best for each individual sector that has been privatised. Instead, there has been a blinkered ideological approach, blind to any wider considerations.

Finally, we have the privatisation of water. People are now against the proposal by a margin of 5:1, yet the Government propose the privatisation of water. Boiled down, it is the ultimate triumph of dogma over democracy.

Mr. Rob Hayward (Kingswood): Which of the 29 companies and organisations to which the hon. Gentleman referred does he propose to return to state ownership?

Mr. Taylor: None of them. If the hon. Gentleman will listen, he will know that the essential problem is not privatisation or nationalisation, but whether either is the best thing for the industry in question.

I do not believe that privatisation is best for the water industry. Also, one must also consider whether, in privatising, one is giving adequate power to consumers and meeting environmental concerns. In any privatisation, the first consideration should be the ordinary men and women of this country, whereas the Government's primary consideration has been maximising the return to the Treasury.

Mr. Hayward: If the hon. Gentleman does not think that privatisation is best for water, one presumes that he proposes its renationalisation. In which other cases does he consider that privatisation has not been best for the public and which does he propose renationalising?

Mr. Taylor: I shall not give way again to the hon. Gentleman, because he is not listening. If he is, he is incapable of understanding my argument. I shall spell it out again very simply for him.

One ought not to privatise just because one believes that it is the right thing to do—as is the Government's practice, to privatise purely on ideological grounds. Instead, one should do one's best to maintain the industry and ensure that its customers are given the best possible service, while protecting the environment and meeting other areas of concern. On every occasion such considerations have come second best to the Treasury's desire to make a bigger financial return.

I wish to move on, because the result of the Government's action in respect of water can be described in a single word.

Mr. Speaker: Order. When the hon. Gentleman moves on, will he relate his remarks to the money resolution that is before the House?

Mr. Taylor: Of course I will, Mr. Speaker.

I move on to the cost falling on the consumer as a result of the Bill—a cost that is allowed for in part in the money resolution, in the provision that it makes to spend money as part of privatisation. Even more expense will fall on individual consumers when the Bill is passed. We must ask ourselves whether it should be allowed to pass.

Looking back to 1986 when the Government last proposed privatisation, there was another difference—I have already mentioned the NRA—between their comments then and their comments now. Now we are hearing about the NRA and that this is a "green" Bill, but in 1986 we were being told that privatisation would lead to lower water prices. We do not hear that argument any more. On the contrary, the Government no longer claim that privatisation will keep bills down, but that it will increase them. All kinds of reasons are given for that, but the Government have ditched the idea of lower water charges. The only people who believe that passing this money resolution or any other relating to the Bill will benefit the consumer are the Government and their supporters. Nobody else, in the House or anywhere else, believes that.

The House regularly allows money resolutions to go through on the nod, but I have no intention of allowing that to happen on this occasion. I say to the House that this is an opportunity to pause and reconsider whether this money resolution should be passed and whether the Bill should take effect. I say to right hon. and hon. Members who suggested earlier that there is public support for this measure that they are wrong, and that the House would be wrong to pass it. There is no general support for it in this Chamber or elsewhere. I remind Conservative Members that the Government do not have the money, because the resolution has not yet been passed.

I represent an area where people are on low incomes, where some villages do not yet have their own sewerage systems, and where many beaches are polluted. It is they who will have to foot the bill for the improvements that are required. One example is the problem of sewage outfall on beaches. There are currently three projects in hand, all of which require substantial amounts of money. There is one project in Falmouth and Truro, one in Parr and St. Austell and one in Penzance and St. Ives. The Penzance and St. Ives project alone required a massive investment of £50 million, yet discharges will still go out to sea.

Conservative Members want the money resolution to go through on the nod, but they are not so interested in spending money where it needs to be spent as they are in trying to make the Bill fit their own ideology.

Mr. Patrick McLoughlin (Derbyshire, West): May I draw the hon. Gentleman's attention to the fact that we are debating a money resolution, not various aspects of the Water Bill which, had he caught your eye, Mr. Speaker, he might have raised on Second Reading?

Mr. Speaker: I have already drawn the hon. Gentleman's attention to the fact that he must relate his remarks to the money resolution, which is widely drawn.

Mr. Taylor: That is right. The money resolution allows the Government to spend money on the provisions of the Bill. The Bill is so appalling that we should not allow it to go through, as there are many other ways in which the money could be better spent.

In the past, my own area has relied on the European regional development fund to pay for projects. There is great concern in my area—and I hope that the Minister will be able to answer my question now or on another occasion—that, if we allow the Bill and the associated money resolution to go through, a private company such as one of the new water companies will not receive funding from Europe. The work is essential to bring our beaches up to the European standard, and I hope that the Minister can assure the people of Cornwall that they will not be expected to meet all the costs of cleaning up the beaches, which are used by citizens of the United Kingdom and Europe, purely because the Government, by their ideological approach, are cutting off the potential to obtain money in other ways.

Conservative Members have said that all this has nothing to do with the money resolution. They are really saying that they want the money resolution to go through on the nod. They do not mind money being spent as a result of the Bill, rather than on matters that are important to people, particularly in my part of the country.

What will happen to some individuals? It is easy for the House to vote sums of money and to spend money that does not come out of the pockets of hon. Members to any large extent. The money that hon. Members receive comes mainly out of public funds, so, although hon. Members can easily pass this resolution on the nod, it is less easy for it to be accepted by some individuals who, after privatisation, may find that their water supplies are disconnected because they are unable to pay their water bills after the price increases that the Bill will bring about.

I challenge the Minister to guarantee that the 9,000 disconnections last year will not be increased after privatisation. Will he guarantee to come to the House each year and tell us that there has been no increase in the number of disconnections following privatisation? We have seen the record of previous privatisations, particularly British Gas. I cannot let the money resolution go through without seeking such guarantees.

I remind Conservative Members that none of them is on low incomes, so they are unlikely to find it difficult to pay their bills. None of them is ever likely to be faced with the problem of having the water supply to their house and family cut off. None of them is likely to face the difficulty of not having water to wash in and to clean with.

Mr. Frank Haynes (Ashfield): Or of not having water for their swimming pools.

Mr. Taylor: None of them is likely to suffer, but people up and down the country will suffer as a consequence of price increases after privatisation. That will happen if we allow to go through on the nod the money resolution to a Bill under which there is no real accountability. Real accountability cannot be achieved by privatisation and by putting the industry into the hands of public companies. It can be achieved only by placing directly elected representatives in charge of a public water supply that was designed and built at the expense of local ratepayers.

We shall oppose the money resolution. It allows legislation that is daylight robbery to be passed. Our grandfathers and fathers invested, through their local authorities, in the water industry. Privatisation will not

[Mr. Taylor]

benefit local communities. It will benefit the Treasury, higher rate taxpayers and private shareholders. Local communities cannot afford, as Conservative Members can, to move around the country, pay their way and even fill their baths with Perrier water. Our constituents will be disconnected because they cannot afford to pay their bills. They will suffer from the pollution that is caused because public investment is no longer available. They will have to meet the real costs of the Bill.

10.30 pm

Mr. Bob Cryer (Bradford, South): I am taking yet another opportunity to speak on a money resolution, but this is a particularly important one. Earlier today I was approached by a Conservative Whip who suggested that, by means of some device, the money resolution would be debated at 4 am. I assured him that if the Government used such a device I should be here to speak about it. I am not sure whether he was being jocular but, as with all Tory Whips, his manner was threatening. He disappeared, chastened, after my brief conversation with him.

The money resolution is what was formerly called Supply. A ways and means resolution is to follow the money resolution, when we shall be able to discuss the ways and means by which revenue is to be provided to fulfil the supply need. The money resolution is subsumed in greater detail on pages xii and xiii of the explanatory and financial memorandum.

The residual functions of the National Rivers Authority will, it is estimated, cost £290 million. Those functions are wide and important. Is the Minister able to give details of the calculations? There is to be Exchequer grant aid amounting to £71 million for the first full year of the National River Authority's operations. I presume that that will be in addition to the £290 million.

There are reservations about the National Rivers Authority. They relate to its funding, naturally enough. the functions of the NRA are said to be as follows:

"So far as the new NRA is concerned, we see this as an unnecessary addition to the hierarchy and contrary to the concept of integrated river basin management, which we believe is the best method of managing the whole water cycle. To divide the responsibilities would seem to be a retrograde step when so much effort was put into achieving a coherent policy, based on watershed borders, only 13 years ago.

We see no justification for privatisation, which is certain to result in increased charges for consumers, nor are we convinced of the need for dividing responsibilities in the water cycles, inherent in the setting up of a National Rivers Authority."

The Minister may ask me which green or Left-wing organisation produced that statement. I am sure that he is anxious to know that it was made by the Confederation of British Wool Textiles Ltd., which probably numbers among its ranks a large number of employers. It circulated a letter in October that expressed that view.

Is the Minister able to provide information about the total expenditure and will he tell the House whether he is satisfied that that expenditure will meet the NRA's requirements, thereby reassuring the confederation?

On page xiii the Bill states:

"Net proceeds of sales of securities in the nominated holding company. . .and any dividend or interest payment on such securities. . .will be paid into the Consolidated Fund. Whilst a successor company and its nominated holding company are wholly owned by the Crown, clause 76"

—it says clause 76, but I assume that it should be clause 77—

"allows the Treasury to issue sums out of the National Loans Fund to the Secretary of State to enable him to make loans to those companies."

Clauses 77 and 78 govern the issue of those loans. In essence, repayments will be made as

"the Secretary of State may from time to time direct."

We should know a little more about what is in the Secretary of State's mind regarding issuing directions for repayment. For example, will he charge interest at current interest rates, which will be a very steep figure? Will he obtain repayment at a nominal rate? What figure does he have in mind?

The national loans fund debt owed by the water companies will be extinguished by the issue of debentures. Most debentures are secured by either a fixed or an appropriate floating charge. As it involves a considerable sum—almost £4 billion—will those debentures be permanently in the ownership of the Treasury or will they be discharged over a period—and, if so, over what timescale?

The economic regulation and consumer protection arrangements will involve increased expenditure. It is a relatively small amount compared with the large sums of money that we have been discussing. It is one of the cornerstones of the Government's protection measures, yet less than £4 million a year is to be available to finance a director and staff who will undertake the range of activities set out in the Bill.

The Confederation of British Wool Textiles Ltd. questions whether the limitation of price increases by that mechanism is adequate. Does the Minister think that £3·7 million is adequate to finance such an important sector? The confederation said:

"You should know at once that we find the Government's justification for this step"—

that is, privatisation—

"quite unconvincing. As a matter of principle, we do not believe that any public utility, providing services so fundamental and where consumers have no choice in using its services should be allowed to pass into private hands. Competition and the discipline of the market place are, we believe, the cornerstone of Government philosophy on privatisation but we have great difficulty in working out how our members can get their water from Severn and Trent or dispose of their effluent to North West Water Authorities—so where is the competition? We are not persuaded that the Government's proposals to ensure the reduction of controllable costs and the limitation of price increases to the consumer are adequate."

I question whether £3·7 million is adequate to finance that sort of operation.

There is a curious circumstance in clause 24, which is the contingency section. If any sewerage and water undertaking gets into financial difficulties it can prevent winding-up because there is a guarantee. The guarantee is covered in clause 24. Subsection (2) states:

"The Secretary of State may, with the consent of the Treasury, guarantee, in such manner and on such conditions as he may think fit, the repayment of the principal of, the payment of interest on and the discharge of any other financial obligation in connection with any sum which is borrowed from any person by a company in relation to which a special administration order is in force at the time when the guarantee is given."

The special administration order must be given, but that gives wide powers to the Secretary of State. It is true that he has to have the consent of the Treasury, but that means talking to a chum in the Cabinet. He will say,

"Look here, Nige"—this is a representation of the Cabinet and, naturally, I would call the Chancellor of the Exchequer an hon. Member in other circumstances—"there are a couple of water undertakings that we privatised in rather great difficulties. It has come as a shock to us all, but we have miscalculated. I am giving a special administration order. There are one or two of our chums involved too, Nige. They were decent contributors, you know, in 1987." What are the terms and conditions that will be laid down when we give them the money and ask them for repayment? The House should have some idea, lest anybody should imagine that that sort of conversation should pass between Cabinet Ministers.

The terms and conditions that the Secretary of State thinks fit should not be subject to general rules imposed by the Treasury. We must ensure that the dealing is absolutely fair and square and at arm's length. This is a fall-back position and I am surprised that the Government think that it is needed, but it appears from the legislation that it is.

The next matter of concern is national security. Clause 158 states:

"The Secretary of State may, after consultation with a body to which this section applies, give to that body such directions of a general character as appear to the Secretary of State to be requisite or expedient in the interests of national security or for the purpose of mitigating the effects of any civil emergency which may occur."

The financial relevance is that the Secretary of State can give grants subject to Treasury consent to meet his directions in the interests of national security. That may appear to be above board and straightforward, but clause 158(4) states:

"The Secretary of State shall lay before each House of Parliament a copy of every direction given under this section unless he is of the opinion that disclosure of the direction is against the interests of national security or the commercial interests of any person."

The Secretary of State can give a direction of a general character because he thinks that a civil emergency may occur and then he may say, "It's against commercial interests to reveal the sort of direction that I am giving and the payments which arise from that direction." The House should know a little more about the circumstances in which that would arise, particularly those circumstances in which the whole matter could be kept effectively secret. The Secretary of State will be giving money as a result of these directions. Is it possible that secret directions could be given which would result in payments which would never be revealed to this House? It is important that when we give powers, we ensure that there is accountability.

If the Minister says, "I have these powers and commercial interests are involved", will a civil servant stamp the top of the page, "Commercial. In confidence"? Only rarely do Ministers determine the status of documents. Civil servants decide and they thrust papers on Ministers' desks.

It is important that the Minister should give us an idea of the circumstances in which clause 158 will be exercised, particularly the way in which payments to meet those directions are accountable to this House, even when the secrecy measure is invoked.

The other significant expenditure is the £800 million to protect the pensioners affected by the transfer under clause 160. I take the view, which I am sure is held by my hon. Friends, that when the water industry is taken back into public ownership we should protect pension funds. I have never believed in expropriation and people who are foolish enough to buy water shares should be warned that in my view we should deal with them on the ground of hardship. We should send them to DHSS offices as other people suffering hardship are. Otherwise, we should make sure that this public asset is returned to the people who presently own it—all the people of Britain.

It is daylight robbery for the Government to abstract this public asset from the 55 million people who live in our country and sell it to a few of their cronies who have acquired money in a variety of ways—some of them highly disreputable—in the City. Pension funds should receive adequate consideration and I have quoted the amount that will be required to do that. I shall now deal with money that is not mentioned in the memorandum.

I have had correspondence with the Minister about the re-laying of old pipes on private land and in private houses. I am talking not about estates but about terraced or back-to-back houses in constituencies such as mine. Bradford is an old industrial city and many of its houses were built in Victorian times. Many of them are in decent condition because much care and affection has been given to them by their owners. Some of them may not be in good condition because of lack of care by some—though not all—landlords.

I would have welcomed in the money resolution provision for grant. I know that the Water Act 1945 allows the water authorities at present constituted only to provide and maintain pipes up to the border of the curtilage of the property. With back-to-back or terraced houses there is a problem. People at the front get the full water pressure but when the water pipe going round the back is within the curtilage of two private houses, the householder in the back-to-back group gets the worst water pressure. That means that people cannot have washing machines because they will not operate and cannot have a bath when their neighbour is having a bath.

The Minister will say that the Water Act 1945 provides a limitation. Since this is such a big change in the statutory provisions, will he consider in Committee financial provisions so that the water authorities can allow for pensioners and other elderly people who entered these houses in their youth and bought them over a period of time? If they have old pipes the water authority will say, "You have a leaking pipe. Give us £550 and we will repair it, and we will need another £200 for resurfacing." That is more than many pensioners or people on low incomes can afford. There is no provision in the DHSS and local authorities do not make provision for such improvements, even by way of grants. There should be provision for older industrial cities such as Bradford, Leeds, perhaps Doncaster, Sheffield and others. I speak from knowledge and from representations made to me by people in my constituency. The Minister should consider that.

This labyrinthine legislation—this massive legislation—has two main parts. I cannot remember another Bill with two such huge chunks. Perhaps there is some authority in the Bill that will allow the Minister to direct the authorities to provide the assistance that I have mentioned. If that is so, it is the one tiny part of the Bill that I shall welcome. I should be pleased if the Minister could guide me to such a part. If he cannot, I would like an assurance that he will do something about the matters that I have mentioned.

10.50 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Environment (Mr. Colin Moynihan): I have a very short time in which to respond to many important points, so I hope that the hon. Member for Bradford, South (Mr. Cryer) will forgive me if I try rapidly to answer as many as possible of the issues that he has brought to the attention of the House.

The comments made by the hon. Member for Truro (Mr. Taylor) may have been heartfelt, but I regret that none of them was relevant to the money resolution. We are glad to hear that the Social and Liberal Democratic party would not bring the statutory water authorities into public ownership—unlike the commitment given by the Labour party last night, if the Labour party were to come to power again. That serious and important issue has arisen as a result of the debate. The hon. Gentleman referred to all the costs associated with the plcs, such as the importance of upgrading sewage treatment works. That is a matter for the plcs, which will have access to the money markets—access which they do not have at present. That does not come within the money resolution, nor does the debate about European funds.

I draw the hon. Gentleman's attention to my concluding speech at the half-way point of the debate late yesterday evening when I made a statement on disconnections. I hope that that statement will assist and satisfy him that we are conscious of the importance of an effective disconnections policy, but again I regret that that does not come within the ambit of the money resolution.

All right hon. and hon. Members on both sides of the House respect and admire the hon. Member for Bradford, South for raising matters on the money resolution. It is important that they are listened to and treated seriously. I hope that I can follow up those aspects which I do not cover in the few remaining minutes by writing to the hon. Gentleman.

The hon. Member for Bradford, South rightly referred to the National Rivers Authority and the grants to it by the Secretary of State. Paragraph 17 to schedule 1 enables the Secretary of State, with the approval of the Treasury, to make grants to the NRA of such amounts, and on such terms, as he considers appropriate. He must, of course, Comptroller and Auditor-General with an account for each financial year of any grant paid and the Comptroller and Auditor-General must then certify and report on that account. As the hon. Gentleman knows, copies of the account and of the Comptroller and Auditor-General's report must be laid before both Houses of Parliament.

The grant-making power will enable grant-in-aid to meet the deficit on the NRA's operations. Although the NRA will be encouraged to maximise its income from direct charges, a deficit will arise largely because the environmental service charge will not be levied after 1989-90. Grant-in-aid is considered a more appropriate method of paying for services which are of benefit to the whole community. Grant will also be required to meet the NRA's administration costs and the costs of increased work on pollution control and research.

The public expenditure provisions anticipate grant-in-aid of £40 million in 1989-90, £71 million in 1990-91 and £65 million in 1991-92 when income from discharge consents increases. I emphasise that because it is important for the hon. Gentleman and the House to know that detailed consideration will be given to the nature of discharge consents and the charging methods applicable to them. They will represent a substantial form of income to the National Rivers Authority, but it is important for the Committee appointed to consider the Bill to look in detail at the provisions. Obviously, that income deducted from the overall amount is the relevant figure, and that will be far clearer as the NRA sets the appropriate framework for discharge costs.

The hon. Gentleman mentioned a figure of £71 million grant-in-aid from a turnover of £290 million. It is not intended to be additional, but the difference between the two will be raised through the charging procedure. I am sorry that I cannot provide him with a detailed figure of the difference for 1990-91, but, to be absolutely accurate, we need to look very closely at the charging method for discharge consents. As soon as that is available and discussed in Committee we shall be able to draw the precise figures that the hon. Gentleman is seeking.

The payment out of the national loans fund of any sums required by a Minister of the Crown or by virtue of the Act for making loans, while it is wholly owned by the Crown, to a successor company of a water authority or to a holding company of such a company, arises under clause 78. The power to make loans is provided for the period between vesting and flotation, in which the successor company and its nominated holding company might need access to public sector funds. The loan would be made to the nominated holding company, except in the unlikely event that the successor company had not yet become a subsidiary of it. Clause 85 sets limits on the borrowing of the group of companies to which a successor company and its nominating company belong.

In the remaining minutes, I shall address my remarks to the important issue of payments to existing pension funds. As the hon. Gentleman knows, the water authorities participate in the local government superannuation scheme. It is a statutory pension scheme governed by the Local Government Superannuation Regulations 1986, made under section 7 of the Superannuation Act 1972. Pensions payable under the Local Government Superannuation Regulations are official pensions within the meaning of the Pensions (Increase) Act 1971. Pensions of water authority employees are, therefore, index-linked in accordance with statute.

The cost of basic pensions is fully funded, but the cost of pension increases is met not from the superannuation funds but on an emerging cost basis. The administering authority makes the payments and, in general, is reimbursed by the last employing authority. The fund from which basic pensions are paid is the water authority superannuation fund, currently administered by the Severn-Trent water authority on behalf of all participants.

The Government intend that, after the transfer date, the National Rivers Authority will be the administering body for that part of the WASF which remains after the transfer payments described. The NRA will also be made a scheduled body, so that its staff will be able to continue in the LGSS to which I have referred.

I shall briefly mention the issue that the hon. Gentleman raised with regard to clause 4—the Director General of Water Services. The hon. Gentleman concentrated on the £3·7 million—an important figure. Let me try to clarify precisely how we have arrived at it and give some background information to the House.

As the hon. Gentleman knows, clause 4 provides for the appointment by the Secretary of State of an independent Director General of Water Services. Clause 4 also applies the provisions of schedule 3, which empowers the director general to appoint staff who will form the water services office, subject to the Treasury's approval, and for the payment from public funds of the expenses of the Director and his staff.

The director general, who will have a position similar to those of the present Directors General of Telecommunications and Gas Supply, will be responsible for monitoring the activities and performance of companies appointed as water and sewerage undertakers, and, where necessary, enforcing the conditions in their licences. The director general will have a duty to ensure that customers are protected from unjustified increases in price or reductions in service, while ensuring that companies are able to finance the proper carrying out of their statutory functions. The director general will also exercise a wide range of statutory adjudicatory functions and will establish and maintain up to 10 regional customer service committees to represent consumers' interests locally.

The director general will be supported by a new Government Department in the carrying out of his statutory responsibilities, and this will be similar to the Office of Telecommunications and the Office of Gas Supply and is likely initially to have a staff of 80. For instance, Ofgas has about 30. Approximately 50 will be based in a headquarters, probably outside south-east England, and the remainder will be in local offices servicing the regional customer service committees.

The running costs of the water services office and of the customer services committees for the first full year of operation have been estimated at £3·7 million. The breakdown of that we estimate to be £2·7 million for the water services office and £1 million for the committees. The expenditure should be reimbursed to the Exchequer through the payment by water and sewerage undertakers of their licence fees. Therefore, no net public expenditure should be required.

As I am in my last minute, I hope that the hon. Gentleman will be satisfied if I write to him on the important specific points about the special administrator, referred to in clause 24. I hope that I have managed to satisfy the hon. Gentleman on the other points, save one —grants for national security. With the permission of the House and of the hon. Gentleman, I shall write to him on that point as well.

Question put and agreed to.

Resolved,

That, for the purposes of any Act resulting from the Water Bill ('the Act'), it is expedient to authorise—

(1) the payment out of money provided by Parliament of the following, namely—

(a) grants by the Secretary of State to the National Rivers Authority;

(b) the remuneration of, and any travelling or other allowances payable under the Act to, the Director General of Water Services and any staff of the Director, any other sums payable under the Act to or in respect of a person who holds or has held office as the Director and any expenses duly incurred by the Director or by any of his staff in consequence of the provisions of the Act;

(c) the remuneration of the chairman of a customer service committee, any travelling or other allowances payable under the Act to such a chairman, to other members of a customer service committee or to members of a sub-committee, any other sums payable under the Act to or in respect of a person who holds or has held office as such a chairman or member and the expenses incurred by a customer service committee;

(d) grants and loans by the Secretary of State to a water undertaker or sewerage undertaker in relation to which a special administration order has been made;

(e) sums required by the Secretary of State for making any payment in respect of an indemnity given under the Act to a person appointed to achieve the purposes of a special adminstration order made in relation to a water undertaker or sewerage undertaker;

(f) expenses incurred by the Treasury or the Secretary of State in acquiring securities of a holding company of a water authority 's successor company or rights to subscribe for any such securities;

(g) compensation payable by the Secretary of State under the Act in respect of the exercise of functions in relation to trade effluent or in respect of loss or damage caused in connection with a power of entry;

(h) grants in respect of compliance with directions given under the Act in the interests of national security;

(i) sums required by the Secretary of State for making payments under the Act into any fund maintained for the purposes of any regulations under section 7 of the Superannuation Act 1972;

(j) sums required by a Minister of the Crown for fulfilling guarantees given under the Act;

(k) administrative expenses or charges incurred by any Minister of the Crown or Government department in consequence of the provisions of the Act;

(l) increases attributable to the Act in the sums payable out of money so provided under any other Act;

(2) the payment out of the National Loans Fund of any sums required by a Minister of the Crown by virtue of the Act for making loans, while it is wholly owned by the Crown, to a successor company of a water authority or to a holding company of such a company;

(3) the reduction of the assets of the National Loans Fund by amounts corresponding to such liabilities of a water authority's successor company, or of a holding company of such a company, in respect of any loans as the Secretary of State may by order extinguish.

WATER BILL [WAYS AND MEANS]

Resolved,

That, for the purposes of any Act resulting from the Water Bill, it is expedient to authorise—

(1) the inclusion in appointments of water undertakers or sewerage undertakers made under that Act of conditions requiring the rendering of payments to the Secretary of State;

(2) the payment of sums into the Consolidated Fund or the National Loans Fund.—*[Mr. Maclean.]*

PETITION

Leicester (Police Officers)

10.59 pm

Mr. Keith Vaz (Leicester, East): I wish to present a petition on bahalf of Mr. Mike Preston, Mr. Andrew Palmer, Mrs. Mary Draycott and 9,997 other people, including myself, living in the outer areas of my constituency, in the electoral wards of West Humberstone, Humberstone, Thurncourt, Evington and Coleman, who are deeply concerned about the high levels of crime in the city of Leicester and the need for more police officers in the city.

The petition supports the application by the chief constable of Leicestershire, Michael Hirst, for more police officers and is presented after a year-long campaign for additional officers in the knowledge that the Home Secretary will shortly be announcing his allocation of officers for 1989-90.

The petitioners and I also believe that it is essential to the future of good policing in the outer estates that the Uppingham road police station be opened for a 24-hour period each day and night, and every day and night, so that our citizens, especially the elderly, can be secure.

I hope that the Home Secretary will heed the demands of what amounts to one seventh of my entire constituency and allocate us the additional officers.

To lie upon the Table.

A27 (Noise Levels)

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Maclean.]*

11 pm

Mr. Anthony Nelson (Chichester): I welcome this opportunity to raise a serious environmental problem in my constituency—the noise emanating from the new A27 trunk road from Chichester to Havant. The quality of noise as much as its excessive level is quite intolerable for my many constituents living near this stretch of road. It is on their behalf that I speak today.

Every new road brings its reliefs and its problems. This new section of the A27 trunk road was sorely needed and long awaited. The deaths, injuries and traffic congestion along the old route were the source of outcry for many years. Many residents, especially the very young and elderly, in communities along the route were frightened to cross the road. Drivers went in fear of their lives and in certainty of traffic congestion.

When, after long delay and seemingly interminable public inquiries, the new road went ahead, there was great relief in those communities and along the south coast. I know that that view is shared by many hon. Members representing constituencies adjoining my own. Only this evening, I was talking to my hon. Friend the Member for Havant (Sir I. Lloyd) whom I see in his place, and my hon. Friend the Member for Arundel (Mr. Marshall), both of whom have taken a close interest in this matter because of the relevance to their own constituents.

My hon. Friend the Minister came down to open the new section of road on 19 August this year and we thank him for doing so. He will remember the very warm reception that he received on that occasion. However, few appreciated at that time, least of all myself, driving up the new road for the first time in a rather elderly car with him, just how noisy the new road would be when modern traffic in the volume and speed that it adopts used it to full effect, but, unfortunately, our worst fears have been exceeded.

I have with me some 200 or more letters from my constituents, complaining in strong terms about the noise and calling for resurfacing or remedial measures to be taken. This is the catalogue of human distress. This is the file of distress that my constituents have suffered and about which they have written to me in such graphic terms over the past couple of months. Many of them are reasonable people, not given to extremism or complaining lightly, but they feel that the noise, while expected to some extent, has proved to be excessive and quite unbearable. Many of them describe the roar to which they are constantly subjected as similar to that from an aircraft runway, especially when heavy goods vehicles pass by, as they frequently do.

Many are unable to enjoy their gardens or peace and quiet inside their homes. Many cannot sleep at night. Many have suffered a reduction in the market value of their homes, even though most neither wish nor intend to sell and leave the area. For many of my constituents, the quality of their life has changed materially, and for the worse, since this new section of road opened. In short, their peace has been shattered. They look to my hon. Friend to alleviate this problem urgently and to find the funds necessary.

I take from this file a couple of letters which are indicative of the representations that I have received every day from my constituents and about which they have been to see me. I quote first from a letter from Mr. Nightingale of Cemetery lane, Woodmancote, Emsworth. He says:

"Living at the above address, I would like to point out that the peace and quiet of my home, garden, and environments have been destroyed by the noise from the new A27 trunk road, which passes at 80 metres distance from my bungalow. I very much hope that something can be done to alleviate the noise problem and thus relieve my suffering. I would also like to point out that when the wind is blowing in my direction, I can actually smell the fumes and exhaust from the road."

Mr. Cyril Baker writes to me from Scant road in Hambrook, saying:

"Being an O.A.P. and property owner, thus a rate payer, I am writing to you regarding the constant noise created since the opening of the new A27 Trunk Road which passes through the field opposite the front of my property. Not only has the value of my property depreciated but as my bedroom is in the front of the bungalow I find it impossible to sleep. Even in my back garden I can no longer enjoy peace and quiet. Your co-operation regarding this matter would be appreciated."

Richard Stafford from West Ashling writes to me:

"I know you are trying to remedy the intrusion that the 'roar' of this road has brought to the peace and quiet of these parts. Please persuade the Department to do something. We must live ½ mile away and the whine continues day and night; life for the people closer must be intolerable."

Mrs. Sheila Frampton, writing from Fraser gardens in Southbourne, says;

"I write to express extreme unhappiness with the noise levels of the above. The unceasing traffic noise is both distressing and irritating. It is an ever-present noise even more obvious at 3 a.m. than it is at 3 p.m."

My constituents are obviously distressed, and I make no apology for reading out what they have said to me, because this is indicative of the real distress that is caused to individuals' lives—people's homes, the quiet and privacy of their environment, which they enjoy and for which they have paid a great deal of money. I believe that my hon. Friend—I hope that he will accept this obligation—will reply in sympathetic terms and offer some redress or alleviation of their plight.

I first raised the question of the type of road surface and the noise implications with my hon. Friend some years ago, following representations from a number of constituents who were apprehensive about the use of the concrete surface. As always, my hon. Friend was courteous and assiduous in his reply. On 15 July 1987, he said to me:

"as far as road surface noise is concerned our general experience has been that surfaces of brushed concrete do not produce noisier roads than bituminous surfaces designed to give traffic the same level of skid resistance."

I have to tell my hon. Friend that neither I nor my constituents believe this to be the case. I have been to hear for myself the noise and disturbance with which my constituents are being asked to put up.

I have visited residents and communities along the new route, with local councillors and representatives of the new A27 action steering group, which consists of residents associations of Fishbourne, Hanbrook, Woodmancote, Lumley and Emsworth. In my view, the noise results from excessive grooving or depths of brushing in the concrete road surface. It is not the noise emanating from the engines of vehicles but the noise of the tyres on the rough surface, which so permeates the countryside and so disturbs my constituents.

Interestingly, the noise varies greatly with the wind direction and the weather conditions. For some of my constituents, on occasion it can hardly be heard at all, and on others, it is distinct and permeates not only their properties but the structure of their buildings. There are some instances where properties on stretches of road where there is a great deal of curvature have a combination of noise effects that is extremely disturbing, I have visited some of my constituents in some of these homes. Although the noise varies with wind direction, it can be heard over suprising distances.

I stood close to the A27 dual carriageway at Havant, which carries the same volume of traffic, but is surfaced in asphalt, and the noise level there is insignificant in comparison. Similarly, when driving along the road, the surface is noticeably quieter when on the asphalt sections over bridges and culverts.

I understand from my correspondence with my hon. Friend that the Department of Transport's specification for the surface finish of brushed concrete provides that the average texture depth shall not be less than 0·75 mm, as determined by what is known as a sand patch test. I believe that that is a somewhat archaic method, given the new laser facilities for assessing surface depths, but it is the one that is used and, presumably, it is regarded by the authorities as being reliable. That minimum surface depth is to ensure that there is sufficient skid resistance. From inspecting the road myself, it is apparent that the texture depth is much deeper in places and the unevenness in some parts appears to be similar to mini potholes.

The A27 action group has today delivered to me its own measurements of the surface texture depth. Those measurements were taken by an assiduous constituent at daybreak on a Sunday three weeks ago, while his wife kept a lookout for passing traffic. That was somewhat beyond the call of duty, but it has been helpful to the debate. By using the same sand patch test method, he found that the mean surface texture depth was some 30 per cent. more than the present guidelines advise and, in the worse cases, was some 60 per cent. more.

In his letter to me of 18 November 1988, my hon. Friend the Minister, said that on this scheme the sand patch test results varied generally from 0·9 mm to 1·9 mm, with an average result of 1·3 mm. Even that is nearly double the minimum specification and in my judgment is much deeper on some parts of the road. Those parts of the road where it is much deeper give rise to noise and permeating noise, which is quite intolerable for my constituents.

I ask my hon. Friend whether there is a maximum texture depth specified and, if not, why not? That is of importance not just in my area, but throughout the country where new roads are being built.

Mr. Michael Marshall (Arundel): My hon. Friend will accept that he is doing a great service, not just for his constituency, but nationally. He will know, of course, of the new plans for the A27 at Crossbush and at Arundel. I hope that my hon. Friend will urge our hon. Friend the Minister to assure us that the point that he is making will apply to the new extensions of the road allied to his own schemes and, especially, in the selection of tarmac rather than concrete as a principle.

Mr. Nelson: I am obliged to my hon. Friend, because I believe that he supports the point that I am trying to make.

[Mr. Nelson]

It does have relevance to other parts of the country as well as to my constituency. There is great concern that perhaps economies—reasonably and understandably being sought in the roads programme—may have an adverse impact on the environment and noise. Crossbush, which we discussed before this debate, is an important example. Therefore, I believe that other communities will be listening with great interest to my hon. Friend's reply.

The planning inspector's report on this road back in 1984, at paragraph 79.03, said:

"In order not to introduce more noise than is necessary into the lives of affected communities. I request that a major factor in the choice of road surface for this route should be its property to generate the minimum amount of traffic noise."

To which the Secretaries of State responded on 12 June 1985 in paragraph 42 that

"this will be taken fully into account during the contract letting procedures."

I ask my hon. Friend to explain whether that was taken into account in awarding the contract and, if so, how.

My hon. Friend the Minister wrote to me on 4 November 1988 asserting that

"if this new road had been constructed with asphalt surfacing in accordance with the Department's current specification, it would not have produced a significantly lower traffic noise level."

I contest now, as I did then, this assertion, especially as the grooving in the concrete is at least twice the depth of the minimum specification.

The Minister went on to say:

"the usual competitive arrangements allow for either concrete or bituminous construction to be accepted, with contracts awarded on the basis of the lowest cost for a particular job."

All well and good, but what was the difference in the cost between surfacing the road in concrete or tarmacadam? Indeed was a quotation for bituminous construction even invited? This raises significant questions. Tenders should not be sought on the basis of price only. Does the Department make a point of inviting tenders for different types of surfacing in view of the implications of the different building materials involved?

Most of my constituents who are affected consider that the only satisfactory conclusion is the resurfacing of the road with asphalt. My hon. Friend ruled this out last month because, in his words, the Government

"could not justify the very substantial cost that would be involved."

What cost would be involved, and how would this relate to the difference between the original tenders for concrete and for bituminous surfaces? I have been told that the road was budgeted originally at £30 million. Apparently the contract price was about £19 million, although the actual cost was a little higher. Will my hon. Friend confirm or deny these figures? It is important that he does that because it might demonstrate whether the job has been done on the cheap, but at the expense of quality and quietude.

Last month I suggested to the Minister that, if it were technically feasible, the textured depth of the road should be "sandpapered" down, but he replied on 18 November that his Department was not aware of any machine that could plane concrete to a tolerance as fine as, say, 0·5 mm. But such a fine tolerance is not required. Any improvement or reduction in the highly grooved surface would bring a significant attenuation of noise.

The Minister also appears to place great reliance on the natural action of traffic as an abrasive in removing the high ridges within "a reasonable period". But what is "reasonable" and what degree of reduction in noise can be anticipated? My view is that it will take much longer than a year.

It has been said that the noise from the new road surface will be reduced by 40 per cent. in the first year. But what does that 40 per cent. reduction mean? Sound intensity is measured on a logarithmic scale, so a reduction of sound intensity by 40 per cent. would mean that the measured sound level would be reduced by only about three dB(A). The chairman of Chichester district council, Mrs. Jean Illius, recently sent me the test findings of environmental health officers at two locations north of the road, in Hambrook and Woodmancote.

The findings of 65 dB(A) and 65·5 dB(A) respectively were at or above the predicted noise levels provided by the Department of Transport at the commencement of the scheme and predicted for the year 2003. But as the volume of traffic is expected to rise significantly in the next 15 years, it is reasonable to assume that the actual noise levels for the year 2003 will be greater than predicted. While I welcome my hon. Friend's decision to undertake a reassessment of traffic noise levels, may I be told what action he will take if his original predictions are shown to have been exceeded?

The Minister has told me that the Department of Transport could contemplate only work such as further bunds or barriers, but my impression is that these would provide little relief, even to nearby houses. Surprisingly, the trees along the route provide little or no sound cushion. Unless there is a considerable depth of densely planted trees, the attenuation provided is negligible.

What redress or compensation is available to my constituents? Will the Minister look again at the question of resurfacing or planning works if the results of his tests show, as I believe they will, that the noise is excessive? Also, in view of the recent tragic death of a 15-year-old boy while trying to cross the road, in the constituency of my hon. Friend the Member for Havant, I hope that he will consider the aspects of access to the road and safety along its route.

Will my hon. Friend confirm that in part I of the Land Compensation Act 1973, claims for compensation may be made for loss of value of property because of noise and other adverse physical factors? My constituents should be informed that claims may be made from 20 August 1989, one year before the road opening, and that anyone selling before then should register a claim with the Department of Transport after exchange of contracts but before completion. Claim forms are available from the Department's south-east regional office in Dorking.

From what I know of my hon. Friend the Minister, I know that these words will not have fallen on deaf ears. I and my constituents look to him to make a constructive and positive response.

11.20 pm

The Minister for Roads and Traffic (Mr. Peter Bottomley): I shall say some specific things first and then deal with more general issues, which is the reverse of normal procedure. My hon. Friend the Member for Chichester (Mr. Nelson) referred to safety, and my hon. Friend the Member for Havant (Sir I. Lloyd) has written

to me about it. We are considering the improvement of fencing along the road as a matter of urgency. My hon. Friend the Member for Chichester talked about lighting. Hampshire county council has accepted that it is its responsibility to maintain the lighting in the tunnel, and it will give the matter urgent attention. Noise is important, but, as my hon. Friend says, it is safety first.

Anyone listening to my hon. Friend would have understood how hard he has worked on these issues, the detail that he has gone into and the close links that he has had with his constituents and the constituents of others who are affected by the issue. I acknowledge the way in which he brought into the debate my hon. Friend the Member for Arundel (Mr. Marshall). If I spent all the money that is available to me on extra facilities for existing road proposals, I must say to my hon. Friend the Member for Arundel that it would not be possible to bring Crossbush into the programme as soon as I would wish.

My hon. Friend the Member for Chichester has raised an environmental issue. Liberal Members are entirely absent from the Chamber. That is their position after a speech by the hon. Member for Truro (Mr. Taylor) on a water authority, during a debate on the money resolution, that had nothing to do with the question before the House. That shows how the Liberals treat local and national issues. My hon. Friend has introduced a national issue, and I know, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that that is one of the reasons why you are chairing our proceedings.

My hon. Friend the Member for Chichester knows that, in the light of the concern which he and his constituents have raised, we have asked the consultants to reassess traffic and noise levels. The reassessment will take account of traffic flows, recorded in the three months since the road opened, and the road surface texture, using the new 1988 version of the report entitled "Calculation of Road Traffic Noise". If the original forecasts of noise levels are found to be significantly exceeded by the measured results and the forecasts which were built upon them, we shall consider whether additional protective measures can be justified. We hope to have the results early next year.

It is too soon to draw firm conclusions either on the results of the new forecasts or on whatever measures might be taken—I do not want to raise my hon. Friend's hopes too high by offering him promises late at night and not delivering in the morning—but it does appear that noise levels are between 2 and 3 dB(A) higher than forecast. As my hon. Friend spelt out in his physics lesson, that is an appreciable difference. Of course, it is the same difference upwards as it would be downwards. We should not rubbish the effects of reductions or of increases in noise. At the least, if it is confirmed that noise levels are 2 or 3 dB(A) higher than those predicted, that would result in additional houses being offered secondary glazing.

My hon. Friend the Member for Chichester was slightly unfair to mounds. If someone is within about 100 yd of a mound or bund, there is an appreciable difference. The closer that someone is to the bund or mound, the greater the difference. Trees on their own do not affect the noise level. They have a psychological effect, however, because they cut off the sight of traffic. It is often the combination of the sight of traffic and the sound of it that makes life difficult to bear for those who have lived previously in an area that was quiet. We all know that in areas of the sort that are represented by those of my hon. Friends who are in the Chamber this evening—I am sure that my hon. Friend the Member for Loughborough (Mr. Dorrell) will confirm this from his constituency experience—that when a road is built where people are already living, it can disturb them greatly. If a house is built following the construction of the road, people will move in and cheerfully put up with more noise than if the noise follows them.

I understand the local concern. It would not be possible to resurface the road. The cost difference requested by my hon. Friend is £1·3 million, and that is an appreciable sum. If we have 30 to 40 completed road schemes a year and we were able to save £1·3 million on each, we could bring relief to many more communities. I am not saying that my hon. Friend's constituents must make sacrifices so that others may be bypassed. There is a responsibility to bring the environmental relief that this section of the A27 has brought to the many people who live on the existing road and we need to get value for money. Also, if we specified the type of surface, we would find that either the bitumen or the concrete suppliers would start to practice more monopoly pricing. We would lose a strong element of competition. There would be a loss not of £1·3 million, but of £2 million or £3 million on a surfacing contract. One of the reasons why we get value for money is that we allow competition.

My hon. Friend referred to the inspector's report and to the decision letter when previous Secretaries of State said that they would take that into account. The information that, at any given level of steering resistance, roads have the same level of noise is based on scientific research. It does not state that a concrete grooving will always be achieved precisely as intended. My hon. Friend raised that point. He was rather hopeful about taking off any high ridges that may exist. It is important to ensure that we have the right skidding resistance. We were talking about trying to cut off peaks, if there are any, without affecting the skidding resistance of the road. We intend to spend £9 million in each of the next four years and £2 million a year thereafter to monitor the skidding resistance of our roads to see whether resurfacing work is inadequate. We expect that that small amount of money will produce a return of £5·50 for every £1 we spend in terms of accidents prevented. It is important to bear that in mind after my earlier points about casualty reductions.

I obviously cannot say that on every occasion that asphalt is used it comes up to the intended specification. Extra safety and extra noise must be balanced. There may be signs that traffic is wearing out some of the ridges in a reasonable time. However, that cannot be claimed to reduce the noise by 2 or 3 dB(A). The likely figure is 1 dB(A) and that would not be noticeable to the general public, although it would be noticeable to noise meters.

If successive ridges have created extra decibels, my hon. Friend should not be concerned about that. It may turn out that since the road was designed and the calculations were made, continued economic growth, the increase in the number of cars and the growth in general movement in the south-east and on the south coast in particular, may have been more of a cause of that. That would provide a new basis for the forecast for the design, which may bring about some of the changes in compensation arrangements.

My hon. Friend asked me to confirm the section 1 compensation arrangements. He described them correctly. People who are selling before the year is up after the opening of the road, should register the claim between the exchange of contracts and completion. If they have any doubts, they can refer them to my hon. Friend, to the

[Mr. Peter Bottomley]

Department, or to a surveyor, who can act as their agent. Those who are still in possession of their homes a year after the opening of the road can make a claim. We shall go in for extensive local publicity, so that no one loses the chance to claim for a reduction in value of his home because of noise or other relevant factors.

My hon. Friend paid tribute to the importance of the new road. Although I said in my speech at the opening of the road—which was a cheerful occasion—that those who were experiencing noise for the first time would find it unpleasant—I cannot remember whether I used a stronger word than that—most of us understand that it is not nice to have to accept noise from a new road. Nor is it nice for local people living in the settlements along the old road to have to put up with the traffic. Clearly, the traffic on the new road is travelling faster, and that will lead to an increase in noise. It may be generally better that that should be so, but we must always recognise that progress has its penalties.

The constituents who sent 200 letters to my Department, some of which I have seen, and the letters that my hon. Friend held earlier, show that there is a problem. So far as the Department is able, it will try to solve it. However, I do not want to make any extravagant promises. Even with the increase of 20 to 40 per cent. in the next two years in road spending, we must watch out for the money while trying to be fair. When we receive the noise report, the new forecast will be presented in public. I hope that that will help my hon. Friend and his constituents.

Question put and agreed to.

Adjourned accordingly at half-past Eleven o'clock.

House of Commons

Friday 9 December 1988

The House met at half-past Nine o'clock

PRAYERS

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

Multi-fibre Arrangement

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Lightbown.]*

[The following documents are relevant: European Community Documents Nos. 11580/86 and the supplementary Explanatory Memorandum submitted by the Department of Trade and Industry on 23 January 1987 on common rules for imports of textile products from Yugoslavia, 11621/86 and the supplementary Explanatory Memorandum submitted by the Department of Trade and Industry on 23 January 1987 on the arrangements for imports of textile products from Taiwan, 6104/87 and the supplementary Explanatory Memorandum submitted by the Department of Trade and Industry on 10 July 1987 on the arrangements for imports of textile products from Taiwan, 7207/87 on modification of the textiles agreement with Thailand, 6647/88 and 9562/88 on modification of the textiles agreement with Hong Kong and the unnumbered Explanatory Memoranda submitted by the Department of Trade and Industry on 16 December 1986 and 23 January 1987 on common rules for imports of textile products from third countries.]

9.34 am

The Minister for Trade (Mr. Alan Clark): It is two and a half years since the House had an opportunity to discuss the multi-fibre arrangement. We have before us a number of European Community documents which the Scrutiny Committee has recommended for consideration since the subject was debated two years ago. Of course, we have had a number of Adjournment debates covering the subject during that period, and I know that the House will wish to take the opportunity today to enlarge the scope of the discussion in more general terms. I welcome that.

I also welcome today's occasion because I am mindful of the vigilance and commitment of many hon. Members in whose constituencies there are textile interests. Hon. Members frequently write to me on the subject—I have had more than 400 letters since my appointment as Minister for Trade. They always write with expert knowledge and set out their arguments in a lucid and constructive manner, with one possible exception who has not bothered to turn up. I may allude to him in the fullness of time. In response to their concerns, I have met delegations from industry and from hon. Members on a number of occasions and I have found those meetings useful and constructive.

I am very conscious that the textile industry, with about half a million employees, is still our largest single employer of labour. The Governmnt attach great importance to the health and vitality of the textile and clothing industry. The industry is spread geographically throughout the United Kingdom—knitwear in Scotland, flax and man-made fibres in Northern Ireland, cotton in the north-west, lace and knitwear in the east midlands, man-made fibres in south Wales, Humberside and the north-east, and wool in north Yorkshire, with clothing firms spread throughout the United Kingdom.

It is important to recall how important the textile and clothing industry is today and the extent to which it still makes a major contribution to our wealth creation, even after the retrenchment in size in recent decades. It comprises about 15,000 firms, employing about half a million people, equivalent to approximately 2 per cent. of total employment in the United Kingdom and almost 9 per cent. of manufacturing employment. Total output in 1987 was about £12 billion, making it the United Kingdom's fourth largest manufacturing industry. Exports in 1987 of textile and clothing products totalled over £3 billion, forming one of the largest exporting sectors in the United Kingdom. Our two largest textile firms are the largest in Europe, and amongst the six largest in the world.

By any standards, therefore, the industry is very large. It has achieved much and has shown considerable resilience. That is due to the industry's skilled and adaptable work force and strengthened management.

The increasing use of more sophisticated technology in all sectors has produced significant productivity gains. The critical importance of design, where good progress has been made over the past few years, should also be noted and the increasing trend towards specialisation, with companies identifying what they do best and adapting and developing for all they are worth.

All these are important if we are to have a thriving and competitive industry able to respond rapidly to the changing demands of the market place. None the less, we recognise the difficulties facing the industry and the concerns about closures and redundancies in the last year. I am always sorry to learn about those. Hon. Members are quick to write to me and my colleagues in the Department about their concerns, and I can assure the House that those issues weigh heavily in our consideration of future textile trade policies.

More widely, the Department has a close relationship with industries through its contacts with individual companies and the trade associations. I have met those myself on 12 occasions since my appointment as Minister.

We live in a time when the consumer is regarded as sovereign, but I am well aware that the consumer is not much good at consuming if he or she is out of work. The MFA seeks to balance the interests of consumers and producers. The Consumers Association briefing arrived on my desk late last night, and I have it with me in case any hon. Members propose to base their arguments upon it.

As hon. Members know, the MFA was first established in 1973 in order to provide a breathing space for the textile and clothing industries in industrialised countries to adjust to low-cost imports from the developing world. It has been renewed three times since then, most recently in 1986, and during its life access has become more generous and the quotas enlarged so that in certain sectors we have already a virtually complete liberalisation.

The House debated the subject when negotiations to renew the MFA protocol were at a formative stage and again just before the Community agreed its mandate. In December 1986 we debated the outcome of the negotiations.

Since that time the agreement with Yugoslavia and the Council regulation applying autonomous import arrangements to Taiwan have become available. There have also

[Mr. Alan Clark]

been some technical modifications to a number of the third country agreements. The need for those technical changes was foreseen when the original bilateral agreements were negotiated. In the cases of Taiwan and Thailand, up-to-date import statistics were not available. The Community agreed therefore to reconsider these agreements as necessary when full 1986 figures became available. In the case of Yugoslavia, the agreement takes a slightly different form, being an additional protocol to the EC-Yugoslavia co-operation agreement.

In other instances, amendments have been necessary to take account of certain classification changes introduced this year with the harmonised commodity description and coding system. In some cases changes to tariff codings brought previously unrestricted goods within restricted categories and negotiations have been necessary to agree appropriate adjustments to quotas with the objective, to which I attach importance, of ensuring as far as possible that the effect on trade is neutral, in accordance with the terms of the bilateral agreements and of the MFA itself. Such alterations have occurred, for example, in the case of Hong Kong.

Further amendments of that sort are in train for the agreements with Hong Kong, Thailand, Philippines, Pakistan and India. The Community has exchanged letters with Colombia, Guatemala, Haiti and Mexico—I realise that those countries do not impact on United Kingdom trade—containing consultative clauses in the event of exports rising to disruption levels, but no restrictive levels. In all of that the industry has been kept closely informed.

We are also in close touch with it about the current round of the general agreement on tariffs and trade multilateral trade negotiations. The House is aware that the future of the MFA was one of the many issues under consideration in the negotiations. The United Kingdom, together with its Community partners and other GATT members, committed itself at Punta del Este to examining the "modalities" for the return of international trade in textiles and clothing to normal but strengthened GATT rules.

Mr. Bob Cryer (Bradford, South): Give us a clue.

Mr. Clark: The hon. Gentleman is intelligent enough to know that, when language as obfuscated as that is deployed in a communiqué, there is wide scope for determined negotiators to achieve their objectives within its framework.

Mr. Graham Allen (Nottingham, North): Before the Minister becomes too involved in modalities and other highly technical questions on the MFA, will he address the wider economic background in which the industry finds itself, particularly in the east midlands, where 111,000 people work in the industry—20 per cent. of the total in the United Kingdom. There is great concern there about the uncompetitiveness of sterling and the historically high levels of interest rates. Before he goes too far into his detailed comments, will he comment on the broad-brush economic background in which the industry operates?

Mr. Clark: I have referred to that. I recognise that the prospects of every industry have to be set in a general, as well as a narrow, context. It is not appropriate for me, particularly in the narrow confines of this morning's debate, to digress. I shall certainly listen with great interest to the hon. Gentleman if he should catch Mr. Speaker's eye, but that is really a matter for my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster.

The mid-term meeting at Montreal will be of interest to the House. The Community and the United Kingdom argued strongly that any return to normal GATT rules would have to be progressive and accompanied by a satisfactory liberalisation by all countries, including the less developed ones and particularly the newly industrialised economies, and by strengthened and more effective rules, especially those concerning safeguards, unfair trade, intellectual property and market access. However, final agreement on textiles proved impossible because developing countries sought a commitment to a specific timetable for the phasing out of the MFA without substantial progress on the other issues. The position in the negotiations therefore remains that agreed in 1986 when negotiations began—a commitment to find means by which textiles could eventually be integrated into GATT on the basis of strengthened GATT rules and disciplines. I hope that that further carefully worded statement goes some way to enlightening the hon. Member for Bradford, South (Mr. Cryer), who questioned me about the concept of modalities.

Hon. Members are well aware of the high tariff and non-tariff barriers which face our exporters in many parts of the world, while the countries in question enjoy more open access to our markets. I cannot emphasise strongly enough our determination to press in the negotiations for a better balance of rights and obligations among GATT partners.

Hon. Members will make their own points. I shall be present throughout the debate and, with the leave of the House, I hope to summarise those and respond to the best of my ability at the conclusion of our debate.

The current agreement between the European Community and China runs out at the end of the month. After lengthy negotiations between the EC Commission and the Chinese authorities, a new agreement was drawn up yesterday. It is expected that this will be initialled by the Commission shortly and then submitted to the Council of Ministers for approval.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Clark: I shall respond to the interventions by giving way to hon. Members from left to right.

Mr. Archy Kirkwood (Roxburgh and Berwickshire): I an not sure that I fit that description.

Will the Minister say how soon we shall see the detailed terms of the Chinese agreement, particularly the new negotiated inner limits on cashmere garments coming into the domestic EEC market?

Mr. Clark: They will be put before the Council of Ministers and at that time they will be public knowledge. It may be possible for me to digress further in general terms at the conclusion of the debate when I have heard what hon. Members had to say.

Mr. Max Madden (Bradford, West): Speaking from the moderate centre, may I ask the Minister to make it clear whether China is regarded as a dominant supplier? Judging by China's production, imports and potential, it is

regarded by everyone as a dominant supplier. Is that the position of the Government and the international community?

Mr. Clark: The hon. Gentleman makes an important point. I regard China as a dominant supplier in all but name and think that that is a realistic assessment of her present status. As the hon. Gentleman knows, the manner in which these agreements were written and in which they operate prevents us from identifying China formally as a dominant supplier until the agreements are renewed or rewritten. I am aware that China's dominance is increasing. I am not entirely happy with the trend in the agreements that are being considered with China, because they do not reflecct that point as much as they should. We are examining this matter closely. Like many in the Community, I think that the sooner China is accorded that dominant status, the better.

Mr. David Tredinnick (Bosworth): The import of cheap Chinese underwear is threatening my constituency in the east midlands. This matter is raised many times. The issue of whether China is recognised as a dominant supplier is crucial to the prosperity of Hinckley and the east midlands as a whole.

Mr. Clark: I think that my hon. Friend was referring to underwear made of paper—knickers were made of paper at one stage.

Mr. Tredinnick: No.

Mr. Clark: I remember taking action to restrict that access. I should like to give my hon. Friend a considered answer on this point, which he may develop later. We are all aware that certain thresholds must be reached before action is possible.

Mr. Tredinnick *rose*——

Mr. Clark: If my hon. Friend will excuse me, I have given way several times already. Perhaps he will make his point later, and I shall try to respond to it.

I turn to the more vexatious subject of Turkey. The House has already debated the concern felt by the industry in the acrylic yarns spinning sector. As the House knows, when the voluntary textile restraint arrangements were renewed last year between the Turkish textile producers and the Community, we were able to secure a new restraint limit on acrylic yarn exports, although the level was higher than the industry had wished. However, at the time of the negotiations there was insufficient evidence of disruption to United Kingdom industry to justify tighter restraint. I know that that statement irritates hon. Members. I have made it before and it is a matter of fact. It is not possible for me to take the action that I should like or to argue for it until there is evidence of serious disruption.

Mr. Cryer *rose*——

Mrs. Elizabeth Peacock (Batley and Spen) *rose*——

Mr. Clark: I shall not give way until I have finished this paragraph. Then I shall give way, as I always do.

It is relevant to know that imports of Turkish acrylic yarn have fallen sharply in the first nine months of this year compared with the same period last year. They represent only about 25 per cent. of the agreed restraint level.

Mr. Cryer: Can the hon. Gentleman give a better and tighter definition of the disruption that is necessary before an agreement to restrain imports can be reached? The trouble is that the industry does not have much idea of the sort of damage that can be done. Is it a matter of the number of people unemployed, or is it simply the level of imports? As the hon. Gentleman knows, imports have increased from a low base to a high base and have declined from a peak. That peak has caused, is causing and will cause damage.

Mr. Clark: Does my hon. Friend the Member for Batley and Spen (Mrs. Peacock) wish to raise the same point?

Mrs. Peacock: Yes. As my hon. Friend is aware, recently I sent him a headline from my local newspaper which said that 92 jobs were to go. That is happening only because of the acrylic yarn that has come to this country from Turkey, with a little coming from Mexico. How can we obtain the information that will result in a level being imposed before the damage is done? By the time the level is set, it is too late and we are losing jobs that we desperately need.

Mr. Clark: I appreciate the points made by the hon. Member for Bradford, South and my hon. Friend the Member for Batley and Spen. I am ready to take action as soon as I have the evidence. It must be proved to the industry and related to cause and effect. As soon as that evidence is in a form that will be satisfactory to the Commission, we shall take the action. The industry is in close contact with my Department. I encourage that. Such contacts cannot be frequent and continuous enough for me because I am ready to make a move, provided the facts justify it. I accept the contention that this damage can be suffered in a period of high impact and that it is difficult to repair it. If imports have fallen and are only at 25 per cent. of the agreed restraint level, it is not possible to take this any further.

Mr. Keith Vaz (Leicester, East): That is where the Minister spoils his case. He comes to the House, is courteous and charming and makes some good points about commitment to the industry. Last week in my constituency, Chilprufe, a firm that has been operating since 1906, and therefore is no fly-by-night, announced that 190 people were to be made redundant. The workers blame not GATT or the MFA but the Government, because they say that the Government have not taken sufficient action to protect the industry. It is not fair competition when other industries are being supported and given subsidies. The Minister has the proof from the hon. Member for Batley and Spen (Mrs. Peacock) and other hon. Members, including me. When we came to see him at his Department, we spent more than an hour explaining that there was damage. When will the hon. Gentleman take sufficient action to protect people such as the employees of Chilprufe?

Mr. Clark: The hon. Gentleman's intervention was couched in such a form that I can only assume that he will leave early for some social engagement or that he felt that he was unlikely to catch your eye, Madam Deputy Speaker. It was a kind of mini-speech, somewhat separated from the germane and effective points made by my hon.

[Mr. Clark]

Friend the Member for Batley and Spen and the hon. Member for Bradford, South which related directly to Turkish acrylic yarn.

The hon. Member for Leicester, East (Mr. Vaz) asked when I will take action. I always take action, where I am allowed, within the parameters of our international agreements and the relationship to the Commission which governs the whole subject. The hon. Gentleman seemed to be moving into a "mode" where he was asking why I would not subsidise the industry. He did not explain why Chilprufe needs a subsidy and what subsidy its competitors enjoy that give them the advantage. If the hon. Gentleman can cancel his engagement later in the day and remain here, I shall look forward to listening to his speech, in which he will probably digress and deal with this subject.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton (Macclesfield): To return to the point raised by my hon. Friend the Member for Batley and Spen (Mrs. Peacock) and the hon. Member for Bradford, South (Mr. Cryer), does my hon. Friend agree that the criteria upon which anti-dumping measures can be taken are inadequate and that something must be done to make them more effective? There is no point in saying that imports have fallen and that the Turks have not taken up all of their voluntarily agreed quota. Damage is being done by unfair competition to the textile and clothing industry. My hon. Friend has no love, rightly, for the Commission because it consists of ineffective bureaucrats who do not have the best interests of our industry at heart. The criteria upon which an anti-dumping request is made must be changed if they are to be in any way effective.

Mr. Clark: It is a fairly tall order to try to alter the definition of what constitutes dumping. One of the problems with anti-dumping actions is the interval between the injury first being felt and the judgment on the dumping case being implemented, and there may be scope for changes to that. The industry—and, indeed, other industries—might regret any drastic action to change the criteria. I should prefer action to be taken over the timescale.

Those factors have created difficulties especially for the anti-dumping applications made by the industry against imports of acrylic yarn from Turkey. That complaint remains on the table and there appears to be no early prospect of returning to the Commission with a renewed request for action. We shall continue to monitor the position closely in conjunction with the industry. I very much hope that it will keep in touch with my Department.

Mr. Frank Haynes (Ashfield): The Minister has, rightly, been courteous this morning. I realise only too well the period that he has been in his post and the work that he has done, but it is not good enough. Mansfield and Ashfield have lost 1,200 jobs in a short time. That is why we are here this morning. We want to get at the Minister and find out what he will do about those jobs. There are problems in the industry and we want to know what the Minister intends to do. Matters are becoming worse as time goes on.

Mr. Clark: I always pay close attention to interventions from the hon. Gentleman, who will no doubt develop his case and tell the House why the industries in his constituency are suffering.

Mr. Vaz: Because of the hon. Gentleman.

Mr. Clark: I reject that. I do everything within my power to defend those industries. The House well knows that the sovereign power of the United Kingdom in such matters is restricted by our signature to the treaty of Rome, our membership of the European Community and other international trade treaties and arrangements that govern the trade. It is a very good line for the local newspapers when hon. Members say, "What is the Minister doing about it?". Hon. Members who accuse me of inaction should say what they want me to do. Do they want me to break international agreements?

Mr. Vaz: Yes.

Mr. Clark: If so, hon. Members must put that case and I look forward to hearing their arguments.

Mr. Haynes *rose*——

Mr. Clark: If the hon. Gentleman will forgive me, I shall not give way because I have lost count of the number of times I have done so. Is he intending to make a speech?

Mr. Haynes: Yes.

Mr. Clark: In that case, perhaps the hon. Gentleman will excuse me if I do not give way—[HON. MEMBERS: "Give way."] Of course I will give way to the hon. Gentleman, who I have known and respected for many years. He gave me a hard time in an employment Bill Committee when I had only just been made a Minister. I have respected him since then.

Mrs. Alice Mahon (Halifax) *rose*——

Madam Deputy Speaker (Miss Betty Boothroyd): Order. Let us be certain about to whom the Minister is giving way.

Mr. Clark: The hon. Member for Ashfield (Mr. Haynes) was soliciting me to give way.

Mr. Haynes: The Minister should be careful with his words! It appears that he is protecting Turkey, China and all those places doing harm to our industries and our country. The Minister should be looking after British industry; that is his job.

Mr. Clark: There is always a certain difficulty in not conveying some sympathy with such arguments. I am beginning to hope that there are some hon. Members present who have been briefed by the Consumers Association. I hope that they will try at least to offset the balance to some extent.

Mrs. Mahon: The Minister threw out the challenge that we should tell him what to do. May I offer him a helpful suggestion? The Opposition would have had a great deal more confidence in him had he not appointed Professor Silberston, who produced a flawed report on the state of the industry. We would have had more confidence in the Minister's desire to protect the industry had it not been for that appointment.

Mr. Clark: It is especially disappointing that Turkish taxes on imported goods have recently been raised again, adding to the already heavy burden of duties and other levies on exports to that country. I welcome the setting up, at last, of a group of experts from the Commission and representatives from Turkey who will try to resolve

distortions of trade within the framework of the European Community—Turkey association agreement. That group held its first meeting recently and my Department will be supplying relevant information to support the Commission's work.

There are implications for any future textile trade arrangements in the single market completion that is scheduled for 1992. The Commission believes that, if quota arrangements remain, they would have to be operated on a Community-wide basis after 1992. That line has been supported, in a non-textile context, by the European Court of Justice. However, with the MFA negotiations still in progress, it is too early to say what the outcome will be for textiles. I believe that 1992 will be an opportunity for our manufacturers and exporters, with their excellent trading record, to enter an unrestricted new market of 320 million consumers with high levels of disposable income. That opportunity will need to be grasped early or it will be lost. I hope that UK textile firms are planning now how best to meet that challenge. I know how much work they have put into restructuring their industry since the introduction of the MFA in 1974 gave them that incentive. I am confident that they will rise to the challenge.

I wish to stress how important it is for all our trading partners, not least those who press most stridently for the abolition of the MFA, to consider whether their own restrictive policies sit comfortably with that request. Some, like Hong Kong, conduct their relations on a genuinely free trading basis; others—and I have just been talking about Turkey—most emphatically do not. As 1992 approaches, there is talk and, indeed, apprehension about the prospect of a Fortress Europe developing, and that would not be in the interests of the United Kingdom. The atmosphere for its rejection is not improved by those countries, particularly the newly industrialised countries, which insist on unrestricted access to the Community market, yet seem to make so little progress in liberalising access to their own.

10.11 am

Mr. Doug Henderson (Newcastle upon Tyne, North): The Minister said in his introduction that he was prepared to take up a number of points that my hon. Friends and other hon. Members have made. If the number of interventions is indicative of the complaints received by hon. Members, I suspect that the Minister will have to make a lengthy reply to the debate.

The House is grateful for the chance to consider the bilateral arrangements that have been made with countries such as Hong Kong, Thailand, Taiwan and Yugoslavia. A debate on those arrangements is welcomed by the industry, as it allows the House to comment on a number of wider issues. It allows us to comment on what is happening in the Uruguay round of GATT talks which is currently taking place in Montreal and which, as hon. Members present this morning know, is crucial to the future of the textile and clothing industry. The debate also allows us to review the state of the industry in the mid-term of MFA4.

In his introduction, the Minister pointed out the importance of the industry to our economy. We know that it is the fifth largest industrial sector, with an asset value of over £5 billion and annual sales of about £13 billion—the Minister said £12 billion but I shall not argue about the difference. The industry is a major exporter, with a value of more than £3·5 billion per annum. As people throughout the country know well, it is also a major employer, employing 482,000 people, often in vulnerable areas of the economy such as west Yorkshire, the north-west, the east midlands, parts of Scotland—particularly the borders—and Northern Ireland. We cannot ignore its importance in some areas of inner London, where the industry employs many people from ethnic minority groups.

Hon. Members need little reminder of the main issue that relates to the textile and clothing industry in our country. I hope that hon. Members will agree that international trade agreements are essential to the future prosperity of the industry. The House will know that since 1974, all United Kingdom Governments have supported the regulation of trade in textiles and clothing through the multi-fibre arrangement. Since 1974, in various GATT talks, all Governments have emphasised the importance of the MFA and that it is important for MFA countries to conclude bilateral agreements with non-members—in our case, through the European Community.

The documents before the House this morning, which have given us the opportunity for this debate, relate to many of those bilateral arrangements. If the House does not know it already, it should know that alarming trends are becoming apparent in our industry. The textile and clothing industry's trade gap is deteriorating and is rapidly becoming a chasm. The United Kingdom market has been flooded by imports in the past year. The latest figures available show that after nine months the trade gap for the industry stands at £2·5 billion. That is equal to the level for the full year in 1986, when the multi-fibre arrangement was last negotiated. It is equal to 26 per cent. of the total trade deficit incurred by the country in the first nine months of the year. In a full year, the textile and clothing trade deficit is anticipated to be £3,416 million, or over £55 per person per year in this country.

Hon. Members will emphasise different aspects of the problem. I believe that there are three main reasons for the emerging crisis. First, the over-valued pound has caused enormous damage in two ways. It has cheapened the price of imports, particularly from other EEC countries which still constitute about 60 per cent. of textile imports. It has also priced some of our exports, especially in the high-value area, out of foreign markets. That proves to us that the textile trade gap is not solely caused by excessive imports from the developing world and that action that is geared only to curbing imports from the developing world will not solve the problem.

I have received much correspondence this week from the industry. I have a letter from Peter Hargreaves who, appropriately, is the managing director of the Hilden Manufacturing Co. in Accrington. I do not know whether he is related to the Hargreaves who invented the spinning jenny, but he may be. He writes:

> "While the Company is naturally very proud and honoured to have received the Queen's Award for Export achievement those eight years of investment and hard work are now virtually being destroyed in a matter of months by the government's present policy of maintaining a strong pound, and the Enfield Group has been forced, for the first time in its history, to adopt a non-recruitment/replacement policy in order to maintain employment".

New technology is being reflected in correspondence to the House. I received a fax last night from the Cumnock Knitwear company in Cumnock, Ayrshire. The manager of the company, Mr. John Liddell said:

[Mr. Doug Henderson]

"Our sector of the textile industry is going through quite the worst slump in living memory due very much to the strength of sterling, high interest rates and the importation of knitwear at an unprecedented level from the low-cost countries."

Other hon. Members will have received similar correspondence and I should be very surprised if the Minister had not received correspondence from employers throughout the industry, ringing the alarm bells.

Another factor, apart from the high pound, that is causing damage to the industry is undoubtedly the dollar pricing by far eastern and south-east Asian producers—combined with artificially low exchange rates—which has created unfair trade. That is particularly unacceptable in the case of countries such as South Korea, which has a fairly substantial trade surplus. The relaxation of the rules in MFA4 in comparison with its predecessor, has also had an impact on our industry and that point has been given particular prominence by the British Textile Confederation. In correspondence this week, it has pointed out the damage done in terms of job losses. There is a long list of job losses, as the hon. Member for Batley and Spen (Mrs. Peacock) said when talking about acrylic yarns. The list of jobs lost over the past six months includes 96 in Bingley, 200 in Bramley, 50 in Bradford, 200 in Oldham, another 230 in Oldham, 160 in Bolton, another 80 in Oldham, 540 on Merseyside and 250 in Chinley. That is all in the list prepared by the British Textile Confederation. It is a reflection of the increasing trade gap, which will be seen in a number of ways in the industry, particularly in job losses.

As my hon. Friend the Member for Ashfield (Mr. Haynes) said in an intervention, the main issue in the debate is Government action to halt the crisis. The Minister said that, in the general context, the responsibility lay with the Chancellor of the Exchequer. The Minister should take warnings from the House back to the Chancellor. Those warnings do not come solely from the Opposition because I am sure that many Conservative Members will identify the danger to the industry that is caused by the excessively high pound. Will the Minister confront his right hon. Friend the Chancellor directly on the Treasury's impact on our manufacturing industry? Too often the Treasury take decisions as though they were purely theoretical. However, this debate shows that decisions taken by the Treasury affect the real world, the real economy and real jobs in the textile industry.

Mr. Alan Clark: That point has been raised by hon. Members of all parties and was raised with me by one of my hon. Friends at Question Time on Wednesday. Neither hon. Members nor industrialists, when they complain about the high value of the pound, ever say at what level they would be comfortable and for how long. Will any hon. Member postulate a preferred dollar exchange rate, deutschmark exchange rate or basket exchange rate? I am not saying that I would endorse that, I am simply curious about opinions on it.

Mr. Henderson: If the Minister talks to the same industrialists whom I meet from time to time and if he reads the same correspondence from the CBI, he will recognise that many people in industry attribute the difficulty to the last Budget when unnecessary tax cuts were given to the richer sections of the community, which caused—*[Interruption.]* Conservative Members should talk to industrialists in the textile industry because they will say that they were very much opposed to those tax cuts and that they wanted protection for the industry. The House wants to know whether the Minister and his right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer will accept that industry is facing real problems because of the Government's economic policy.

Mr. Cryer *rose*——

Mrs. Mahon *rose*——

Mr. Henderson: I give way to my hon. Friend the Member for Bradford, South (Mr. Cryer).

Mr. Cryer: Last night we had a debate on water privatisation, for which all Tory Members voted. The Confederation of British Wool Textiles Ltd. has made clear its objection to the privatisation because of the danger of increased charges. Already electricity privatisation has been postulated on the basis of a 15 per cent. increase in electricity prices. Such factors must prejudice the position of British manufacturing industry, and specifically the wool textile industry, which depends on those two service commodities. The Minister's platitudes about being ready for the future and 1992 are being damaged by the Government's policy on privatisation.

Mr. Henderson: My hon. Friend has made an excellent point. If I had more time I might have developed some of his points myself.

Mrs. Mahon: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for allowing me to intervene. I am glad that the junior Minister at the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, the hon. Member for Calder Valley (Mr. Thompson) is in his place because I have received a letter that concerns both our constituencies. It is from a manufacturer, J. S. Taylor Ltd,. and states:

"We are finding reluctance to order with the continuing strength of the pound, which is also making our job of exporting very difficult. These factors also contribute to our imbalance of trade on cheap imported fabrics, which are in any case not sold to the United Kingdom at real market prices . . . Another area however which is of great concern to us is the Government proposal to privatise the water authorities."

That is direct evidence and I am pleased that the hon. Member for Calder Valley has been here to hear it.

Mr. Henderson: I am grateful to my hon. Friend the Member for Halifax (Mrs. Mahon) for that contribution, which clearly reinforces the points that have been made about concern in the industry.

Industry does not complain only about macro-economic policy——

Mr. Graham Riddick (Colne Valley) *rose*——

Mr. Henderson: I think I shall press on a little——

Mr. Riddick: Will the hon. Gentleman give way on the question of the water industry?

Mr. Henderson: No, I shall press on for a little——

Mr. Riddick *rose*——

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. The hon. Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, North (Mr. Henderson) clearly is not giving way.

Mr. Henderson: Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker.

Industry wants to know about other issues relating to it. It wants to know whether the Government will stand firm in the GATT talks on arrangements for the textile industry and whether the Government will take a firmer stand on that than they appear to do on some other issues. It will also want to know whether the Government will give the industry confidence by announcing that they will support the renewal of the multi-fibre arrangement in 1991. I know that the Minister has made some soundings on that, but there has been nothing stronger.

Mr. Tredinnick: On a point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. My hon. Friend the Minister for Trade gave way almost a dozen times during his speech, so is it not reasonable that the Opposition spokesman should give way as many times as my hon. Friend?

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. That is not a point of order for the Chair.

Mr. Henderson: Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker. I must make it clear that the Opposition recognise that for a trading nation such as the United Kingdom it is important that we encourage the maximising of free trade. Employers and unions in the industry are clear that we can have free trade only if we have fair trade. We cannot have fair trade with countries that have a trade surplus that is maintained on unsustainably low exchange rates; with countries such as Brazil, which maintains excessively high tariffs, keeping out products not only from the EC but from the less developed of the developing countries; with countries such as Turkey, which retains an array of Government subsidies; or with undemocratic regimes that are reinforced by unacceptable low wage economies. In case some of my hon. Friends representing Yorkshire constituencies are in some doubt, and even if they recognise some of the characteristics to which I have referred, my comments were not intended to be in any way a reference to the city of Bradford.

The industry demands to know the Government's view on trade. Do they accept that until we have fair trade we must have regulated trade? Do they accept that without a multi-fibre arrangement we would face unilateral action, as the United States has already threatened, we would face anarchic instability in markets as employers identify, and we would face an outbreak of beggar-thy-neighbour protectionism?

The general president of The National Union of Hosiery and Knitwear Workers, Mr. David Lambert has written to me this week stating:

"Companies are now taking investment decisions, both to buy new machinery and to create a skilled labour force, and to do this, they need the confidence that there will be a market for their products after 1991."

Can the Government give both unions and employers the confidence to invest? Can they give them hope beyond 1991? Will the Government assure us that they will take advice from sources other than Professor Silbertson, to whom one of my hon. Friends has referred? Many of us believe that taking advice from Professor Silbertson is a bit like the three little pigs taking advice from the big bad wolf.

The current trade talks in Montreal are important and it is vital that we refer to them in this debate. Will the Minister state some of the Government's priorities in those talks?

The Minister knows that under GATT rules selective action to stem a surge in imports is outlawed. That is as true for textiles and clothing as it is for other goods. The industry argues—this point was identified by the hon. Member for Batley and Spen—that selective action is necessary. The industry has cited the case of the surge in the importation of knickers from China, which could not be stopped without a more widespread application of restrictions which would act indiscriminately against other suppliers.

Will the Government support the need for a safeguard clause in the Uruguay round? The inclusion of a social clause is also important, although it is not a matter for the Uruguay round. It relates more directly to the negotiations on the next multi-fibre arrangement.

Surprise, surprise, the United States Government have recently reached an accommodation with the American labour unions on a social clause. Countries that deny basic workers' rights in their industries, such as the right of free association and minimum conditions, are now denied access to the American market. Imports from Chile and Paraguay have been recently knocked back because the United States Department of Trade recognises the organisation of industry in those areas. China is not included.

The Minister will be aware that the United States Government have now asked GATT to set up a working party to consider the wider applications of that social clause. The Minister will also know that the Government are never slow to second any other proposals from President Reagan. Industrialists in the defence industries tell me that that is particularly so when American manufacturing industry stands to gain. Will the Minister seek the support of the Prime Minister for the insertion of a social clause in the GATT talks?

Mr. Alan Clark: The answer to that is no.

Mr. Henderson: I hope that the Minister will reconsider that answer. If you do, you will be able to say that you have the support of——

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman is bringing me into this debate rather more personally than he should.

Mr. Henderson: For that I apologise, Madam Deputy Speaker.

If the Minister does approach the Prime Minister, he will be able to tell her that he has the support not only of the House but of the British Textile Confederation, the Knitting Industries Federation and the British Clothing Industry Association.

Other matters are important in the review of the multi-fibre arrangements. One important issue is to find the means of monitoring new technological developments. One way for a producer to increase access to markets is to export a new fibre that might be outside the terms of the previous MFA. I always thought that ramie was something that happened in a bar-room brawl at the Scottish Conservative party conference, but I can assure the House that ramie is also a new fibre that comes from China. Ramie was not included in MFA4 and I hope that the Minister acknowledges the damage that the import of such products does to economies such as our own. In future talks on the MFA. I hope that he will consider supporting the establishment of a committee to examine new technological developments.

[Mr. Henderson]

The renegotiation of the bilateral agreement with China is another important issue. Under previous agreements, China has enjoyed the privilege of not being classed as a dominant supplier. Therefore, it has greater access and a larger quota growth than countries such as Hong Kong and South Korea. Circumstances have changed, however, and China is now the second largest volume supplier to the EC. Its economy is rapidly industrialising and the Chinese will soon be able to penetrate our markets even further. Do the Government accept that China should now be put on a similar standing to the dominant suppliers, such as South Korea? Do the Government accept that, as a consequence of its new standing, China's rate of access to our markets would then be reduced?

Such measures are not necessarily only in the interests of European manufacturers. A strong case can be made to support the fact that a tightening of the regulations with China would do much to help the less developed of the developing countries. Our Government could make an important contribution towards that aim.

The impact of 1992 worries many in the industry. Those familiar with the quota system will know that the EC agrees a quota and that it is then divided among EC countries, essentially on a historic basis. Many industrialists have already identified that, after 1992, it will be almost impossible to allocate quotas to a particular EC country. They fear that countries with an over-valued currency will suffer from a surge of imports from other EC countries. Those with the most over-valued currency would be flooded with the full impact of any particular EC quota.

Others are alarmed that outward processing, which has existed in Europe for a considerable time, will be exacerbated after 1992. Some countries will have an arrangement to outward process which will then allow the re-export of such products to another EC country.

We must tackle those issues as we approach the second half of MFA4. Other concerns will undoubtedly be raised by my hon. Friends and by Conservative Members. Time denies me the opportunity——

Mr. Riddick *rose*——

Mr. Henderson: A lot of hon. Members wish to take part in this debate, but as I promised the hon. Member for Colne Valley (Mr. Riddick) that I would give way, I gladly do so.

Mr. Riddick: I shall not make the point about water that I wished to make earlier. The hon. Gentleman has rightly asked the Minister a number of questions about how he will approach some of the important issues. If the hon. Gentleman were a Minister in a Labour Government —I know that that is most unlikely—would he consider breaking international agreements to help our textile industry? That has clearly been advocated by one or two of his hon. Friends.

Mr. Henderson: I do not believe that any of my hon. Friends have suggested that we should deliberately break international agreements. What my hon. Friends have advocated—and what a Labour Government would do —is a tougher stance in negotiations, particularly with EC countries, when we are preparing the EC agenda for MFA or GATT talks.

I know that my hon. Friends will wish to reinforce some of the points that I have already made. I do not wish to dwell on Turkey, but perhaps that will be taken up later. I also hope that special assistance for the United Kingdom industry and dumping will be considered later.

The people, especially in the textile areas, will want to know whether the Government are prepared to bat for the British textile industry. They will want to know whether the Government will give the industry confidence for future investment by announcing today their support for the introduction of MFA5. They will want to know that, in any future review, regulations of trade in textiles and clothing will plug existing gaps. They will want to know whether help will be given to the least-developed of the developing countries; whether the Government will stand firm in the GATT talks and whether a sensible modification of the bilateral agreement with China can be achieved. Most of all, they will want to know that the Treasury will listen to what it is told about the damage to industry as a result of high interest rates and high exchange rate policy.

10.38 am

Mr. Nicholas Winterton (Macclesfield): I congratulate the hon. Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, North (Mr. Henderson) on the general tenor and tone of his speech. It might well have been me speaking nearly 18 years ago because I have taken a strong interest in this important industry throughout the time that I have had the honour to serve in this House.

I commence my speech by quoting the statistics that the hon. Gentleman gave earlier because they are extremely relevant and I hope that they will weigh heavily with my hon. Friend the Minister and all members of the Treasury Bench. The trade deficit in textiles for the first nine months of 1988 widened to a staggering £2,562 million, more than a quarter—some 26 per cent.—of the total national current trade deficit. I have opened with those remarks so that we may put into context the true importance of the United Kingdom textile and clothing industry within the United Kingdom's economy.

Our whole economic growth is jeopardised because of the serious imbalance in trade with the rest of the world. I urge my right hon. and noble Friend the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry and my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer to pay careful attention to what is said today by hon. Members on both sides of the House so that this very important sector of our manufacturing base can be given the support and understanding that it needs to compete fairly with the rest of the world.

The trade imbalance which was used as the reason or, should I say, the excuse a few days ago to force up interest rates still further could be brought down again by simple steps to help an industry which provides employment for 482,000 people. Again, I take up the statistics referred to by the hon. Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, North. That industry exports about £3·5 billion worth of goods every year, it invests more than £550 million a year, and its competitiveness has increased by more than 40 per cent. since 1980. That is a fine record which has been seldom equalled by any other sector of manufacturing industry in the United Kingdom.

Those statistics paint a picture of a healthy and thriving industry which has the ability and the products to compete

in the market place throughout the world. It would be foolish and short-sighted not to seize the initiative to allow the textile and clothing industry to move forward into the future with the confidence that led to exports to Japan soaring by more than 50 per cent. in the first six months of the year—a fact that has not been referred to so far today. That confidence is making textiles and clothing the United Kingdom's greatest export to Japan, which is arguably the most quality conscious and demanding market in the world. That has been achieved by the clothing and textile industry, and we should be proud of it.

Clearly the industry's products and the efficiency cannot be blamed for today's trade imbalance. Where does the problem lie? On the export front, where the industry has achieved a great deal, the strengthening of sterling has made it difficult to maintain the pace of advance. That point was made by the hon. Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, North and by others in interventions today. At home, the effect of higher interest rates is likely to depress consumer and retail demand for home-produced quality goods. The weak US dollar has materially increased the competitiveness of imports, particularly from those countries in the far east whose currencies are linked to the dollar.

The cumulative effect of currency changes over the period 1985 to 1987 make the US dollar 62 per cent. more competitive than sterling. It made the Chinese currency 112 per cent. more competitive, and the currencies of South Korea, India, Pakistan, Malaysia, Thailand and the Philippines between 50 and 100 per cent. more competitive. In short, high interest rates and strong sterling are not just hard on British householders; they create a positive penalty barrier for British manufacturing industry. I know that my hon. Friend the Minister for Trade shares my view that at the end of the day manufacturing industry creates the wealth which allows the country to prosper and provides the resources for the infrastructure which our people demand. For the sake of future confidence in the textile and clothing industry, I hope that my hon. Friend will speak as a matter of urgency to the Chancellor of the Exchequer on that point.

The question of what rate we should set for our exchange rate was raised earlier between the Opposition Front-Bench spokesman and my hon. Friend the Minister. I believe that it is counterproductive to have high interest rates which could drive more British manufacturing industry into liquidation and out of business. At the end of the day, that would mean that we would have a bigger trade imbalance because we would need to import more to fulfil our market requirements.

We must have a less blunt weapon to tackle inflation than merely the use of interest rates. Industry can cope with high interest rates or high exchange rates, but it finds it almost impossible to deal with both. The mandarins in the Treasury should have a real understanding of manufacturing industry. If they really wanted British industry to expand, they should not have phased out capital allowances in 1984. I said that at the time and most of industry supported me and industry is saying that even more strongly now, although it is sadly too late in the day.

The position is very difficult. Despite the possible impact of reduced confidence and high interest rates on investment decisions, I know that because of his considerable contact with the industry my hon. Friend the Minister for Trade is aware that the textile and clothing industry is determined that the drive for continually improving competitiveness must be intensified. Confidence would be strengthened if more determination was shown by the Government and by that body across the Channel —the European Commission—and our negotiators in Europe to use our rights in the existing trading agreements fully. They should act properly to counter disruptive import surges and resist the progressive opening of our markets to countries that remain firmly closed to us or distort trade by subsidies to their domestic industry.

I am not arguing for protectionism. I am arguing for pragmatism and common sense. We simply cannot afford to allow the United Kingdom to become the world's dumping ground for cheap textile products. It is useless to improve the efficiency of our manufacturing industry if we end up by subsidising industries in other countries. It is no secret that Turkey is one of the areas of greatest concern to our manufacturers. Despite the Ankara agreement that it would phase out import tariffs and abolish subsidies to its producers, Turkey has not yet made sufficient progress down that route.

Some hon. Members may not be aware of the information that I discovered through a series of parliamentary questions that were answered almost a year ago. I found out that our textile exports to Turkey face basic tariffs of between 10 and 40 per cent. There are also hidden tariffs in the form of municipal taxes, customs charges, stamp duties, import premiums, wharf dues and even housing funds. The practical implications are that exports of synthetic filament yarn from this country to Turkey face tax barriers of nearly 40 per cent. The export of wool cloth faces nearly 80 per cent. tax barriers. Cotton cloth faces 77 per cent., knitted outer wear faces taxes of 122 per cent. and men's suits are barred by tariffs of 87 per cent. However, not one of those products imported from Turkey into the United Kingdom faces any tariffs.

When he replies, I hope that my hon. Friend the Minister for Trade will direct some remarks to those grotesque inequalities and tell us what the Government will do to put them right. That is not our idea of fair trade. That is not an open market. It is surely protectionism at its worst.

My hon. Friend the Minister for Trade has already reminded the House that Turkey is not a party to the MFA, but that does not relieve his Department of the duty to do better to protect our domestic industry from unfair competition. Turkey does not have merely a foot in the door of our markets; it has a hob-nailed boot firmly on the throat of many British textile and clothing manufacturers. If Turkey is to remain convincing about its intention to join Europe in our single market of the future, let us have a clear sign from the Turkish Government of their willingness to trade freely and fairly with the United Kingdom.

I shall balance what I have said by drawing attention to a problem that is faced by one of our major textile employers. I refer to Coats Viyella and its India Mills, which are in Darwen, Lancashire. I am advised by the company that for the past 18 months it has been battling with the European Commission over the introduction of a dumping duty on polyester staple fibre from, among other countries, Turkey. In its letter to me—I suspect that the company has written to other hon. Members—the company explains that it buys from Turkey

"for one of our spinning units, India Mills, a melt dyed polyester staple fibre, as there is no readily available source

[Mr. Nicholas Winterton]

from within the Community. We have tried to buy the fibre from Hoechst of West Germany and I quote from their telex of 29th June 1988."

The telex is headed "Polyester Spun Dyed Colours" and reads:

"We are aware of a growing interest in such an item and are conducting a feasibility study into the matter. However, such a product requires new plant to separate from existing lines. Whatever the outcome of this study will not affect our short term position of only being able to offer black."

That is signed by a representative of Hoechst UK.

The letter from Coats Viyella adds that the company is loyal to European fibre suppliers, with 94 per cent. of its total synthetic requirements being purchased within Europe and 89 per cent. from within the European Community. The letter continues—and this is the other side of some of the arguments that have been advanced this morning—

"We find that the imposition of this duty puts the UK (and for that matter, other European) spinning and weaving industries, on less than a competitive footing with imports of spun yarn and fabrics of polyester, where in many cases no duty is levied. The confirmation of a permanent duty on coloured polyester fibre will have dire consequences on our business, putting at risk 650 jobs solely at India Mills. There is then the likelihood of a knock on effect through to weaving and finishing."

The letter is dated 28 November.

The managing director of India Mills, Mr. Stephen Isherwood, wrote to me on 6 December in these terms:

"I write to inform you that for the first time for over 10 years, almost the entire work force (650 persons) at India Mills will be laid off for the whole of the week commencing 12 December."

I want fair competition for the textile industry. Where British manufacturers or other European manufacturers no longer produce a particular product, it is important that the MFA and the other agreements should be flexible enough to allow manufacturers to import from whereever they wish to fulfil their contracts and orders.

Having taken an interest in the textile and clothing industry for many years, I believe that MFAs have brought stability to the world market for textiles. They have enabled the United Kingdom textile and clothing industry, although it has so often been at a competitive disadvantage, to plan confidently for the future. The arrangements have allowed industries in the developing world, about which many of us are concerned, to invest and to grow securely. They have played an important role in saving our industry from collapse and in enhancing the economic prospects of many other countries. We would be foolish to abandon a scheme of such proven worth and to ignore its proven benefits.

The textile and clothing industry does not dispute that the return of textiles and clothing to the normal rules of the GATT must be regarded as the ultimate long-term objective, but such a step is not a practical proposition now or in the foreseeable future. Any return to the GATT rules cannot be contemplated, in my view, until two basic conditions have been fulfilled. First, the circumstances which in the first instance gave rise to the MFA and to its subsequent renewals must not continue to pose the threat of disorder. Secondly, the return to the normal rules of the GATT must be made only as part of a general move towards genuine liberalisation of the world textile and clothing trade, involving a better balance of rights and of obligations.

The MFA has not acted as a protectionist barrier as some within the consumer industry would have us believe —far from it. Instead, it ensured that an orderly growth of penetration into our domestic market has taken place.

In 1985, we imported 205,000 tonnes of textiles and clothing products from MFA countries. In 1986, we imported 248,000 tonnes. By 1987, these imports had risen to 331,000 tonnes. Imports increased by 62 per cent. over that period. It seems that this year there will be a further 10 per cent. rise on last year's figure.

I and the British textile and clothing industry remain committed to making the MFA work in future. I hope that my right hon. and hon. Friends on the Treasury Bench will give an assurance that its value is properly appreciated and that it will be retained for the foreseeable future.

I take advantage of the platform that is provided by the debate to deal specifically with an issue that is causing considerable concern to the textile and clothing industry. Adulterated cashmere products are being delivered to our quality clothing sector by Chinese producers. I hope that my hon. Friend the Minister is aware of this. The textile trade with China is covered by letters of agreement, which have been honoured for many successive years. They guarantee a given quality and quantity of cashmere. Recent changes in the economic system in the People's Republic of China, which reflect an appreciation of the need for competition in the market, have created difficulties for our cashmere users. The result is what can perhaps best be described as teething problems within the new system in the People's Republic. Companies in the United Kingdom have complained about sudden rises in prices in China for raw cashmere. I have no objection to that because the market must determine the cost to industry, but in this instance the charges levelled were in breach, so it seems, of agreed contracts.

I hope that my hon. Friend the Minister will be able to investigate the problem and the allegation that a considerable tonnage of Chinese cashmere has been doctored with sheep's wool or man-made fibre as part of a new production process. If the allegations are true—we have strong reason to believe that they are—neither the Chinese producers nor our clothing manufacturers stand to gain by besmirching the reputation of cashmere quality. Perhaps the long-term future for cashmere lies in finding a strain of cashmere goat that can be farmed in Britain on some of the redundant farmland that arises from the disruption of the dairy industry that is caused by the introduction of milk quotas. I am only sorry that my hon. Friend the Parliamentary Secretary to the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food is no longer in the Chamber to hear me. I am aware of the important responsibilities that my hon. Friend carries within the Ministry.

Perhaps British cashmere is currently a dream. I say that with regret because one farmer in my constituency is breeding cashmere goats, and in seeking to expand that business she is coming up against the bureaucratic machine in Brussels that insists on charging levies on goats imported into this country for breeding. for the purpose of producing cashmere wool. I hope that my hon. Friend the Parliamentary Secretary to the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food will check with his Department what is the position and ensure that in future negotiations any goats imported into the United Kingdom for the purposes of breeding for cashmere production will be exempted

from any form of Community levy. I hope that the Minister will be able to give me that assurance before the end of the debate.

I hope that the Government will act to defend the interests of one of the United Kingdom's most stalwart and robust manufacturing industries. It has an unrivalled industrial relations record, whichever of the several unions concerned has been involved. They have co-operated for more than 40 or 50 years in the industry's rationalisation. There has been no major strike, the unions realising that the industry is up against stiff competition. They have co-operated and shown an example that should be followed by unions in many other sectors of British manufacturing industry.

I hope also that at the end of this debate the textile industry will receive clear messages and reassurances from the Minister that not only will the MFA continue but that the industry has the Government's understanding and support.

11.1 am

Mr. James Lamond (Oldham, Central and Royton): It is always a pleasure to follow the hon. Member for Macclesfield (Mr. Winterton), as I often do in debates of this kind, because he is so forthright in his views. I recall that 14 or 15 years ago, he and I formed the all-party cotton and textile group, which is still in existence, although its meetings are almost as cyclical as the industry itself. I say that it is a pleasure to follow the hon. Gentleman, but it is also rather worrying, because, as we share many friendships in the industry, he probably receives the same briefs and letters as I do. When he speaks before me, I grow anxious in case he quotes from the material that I intend introducing into my speech.

I agree with everything that the hon. Gentleman has said, with the possible exception of his remarks about the breeding of cashmere goats—about which I admit to knowing nothing, because it is one of the very few activities not carried on in Oldham, Central and Royton. I cannot say whether the hon. Gentleman is right in his comments on that subject, but I support all his other views.

At the beginning of the debate we heard the Minister confirm, as we usually do, the industry's importance. With more than half a million employees, it has more than coal mining, steel and shipbuilding put together. One can throw in the car manufacturing industry as well, and still the textile industry's employees outnumber them.

The term "textile and clothing industry" covers a wide field. It is difficult to discuss it as one subject, because while one part of the industry may be having a successful time, another may be teetering on the edge of disaster. Bearing that in mind, it is not surprising that the Minister receives many letters, because one section or another of the industry is usually suffering.

Mr. Alan Clark: I hear only from those who are not having a good time.

Mr. Lamond: The Minister is correct. I confess that I had not realised that he was so sensitive. If it helps his morale, I shall drop him a line when manufacturers write to me saying that they are having a good time. I shall certainly pass on any such letters. So far, I have not received any.

Mr. John Longworth is the secretary of the Oldham and Rochdale Textile Employers Association Ltd. and a good friend of mine, though he is certainly no Labour man. I should not like to say that he is a Tory either. He informs me that the past four years have been reasonably good. I believe that that must be so, because I am not receiving the same number of complaints as I usually do. However, what are reasonably good years for employers may not be reasonably good for employees.

The industry has been profitable and there has been investment. I remember being in Oldham two years ago when Courtaulds announced its considerable investment programme of three or four mills there. Unfortunately, now that that investment has been made, the installation of new machinery and improved methods have increased production and profitability, but not the number of employees. In fact, there has been a decrease, and it was always planned that there should be.

The argument deployed, which I must accept as being reasonable, is that, had that investment not been made, even more people would have been made redundant. It is difficult for the trade union movement to accept that because it has seen a decline in the industry, not just in the three or four years that the present Minister has been in post—I do not blame him for that—but for 50 or 60 years. That has in some respects been advantageous, because Oldham has for many years worked at attracting other industries to the area, and it did so earlier than other towns, where a decline in traditional industries did not occur so quickly. Oldham can now boast several computer-based industries, and so on, and we are grateful for that.

The fact remains, however, that there has been a downturn in Oldham's textile industry over the past few months. As recently as this week, Courtaulds has issued short-time working notices in nine of its Oldham mills. The notices will not come into effect for a fortnight, but it is unlikely that there will be any drastic change during that time, with the result that employees will be on short-time working, which for them is unacceptable. Mr. Peter Booth, the national secretary of the Transport and General Workers Union textile group, will be seeing what the Government can do to help in that respect.

Earlier, my hon. Friend the Member for Ashfield (Mr. Haynes), in a typically fiery intervention, attacked the Minister and, if I read correctly between the lines—it is not often that one has to do that in respect of my hon. Friend—he seemed to be calling for the Minister's resignation unless he takes positive action. I do not support my hon. Friend's call. For as long as we have a Tory Government, I am happy that the hon. Gentleman should remain in his post. I admire his style at the Dispatch Box, particularly at Question Time. There is a refreshing honesty and candour in his style that is not often found in any Minister of any party when at the Dispatch Box.

We are all aware that although the Minister tries hard to conceal it, he is not in the forefront of admirers of the Common Market and its bureaucracy. From time to time we tease him about going back to his old ways before he was a Minister. He is sophisticated enough not to be caught by that trap, but we know that in his heart he is a staunch defender of British industry in his negotiations in the Common Market.

I should not be at all happy to see the Minister replaced, unless it was by the hon. Member for Macclesfield. I have often wondered about that. Perhaps it is because the hon. Gentleman specialises in one industry, but he speaks about that industry in the most honest and straightforward

[Mr. Lamond]

manner. If I thought that he would get the Minister's job I should certainly support him, but he may have blotted his copybook in other ways. He may be too forthright to be considered for the job. However, that is by the way. The Minister is here, and I should like him to note that our exchange at the beginning of the year about Turkish imports, and the subsequent correspondence that I sent him, which was not entirely complimentary to him and his Department, did not carry my condemnation as strongly as that of the employers who wrote to me asking me to convey what they thought.

I received a letter dated 5 December from Mr. Edmund Gartside, who was very concerned and made complaints about the Government's action. Mr. Gartside is prominent in the textile industry. He was chairman of the committee that dealt with Brussels on behalf of the industry, and I think that at one time he was president of the British Textile Confederation. He has certainly held high office. He is the chairman and managing director of Shiloh plc, which is based in my constituency. He wrote:

"As you know, there was a distinct deterioration in the market earlier this year which caused the closure of five cotton spinning mills and widespread short time working in our sector of the industry, including one of our mills."

One of the mills owned by Shiloh, which is a very good firm, was forced to close. Its employees and ex-employees are so loyal that when I advised elderly ladies and gentlemen about their right to sue their former employers because they had been refused lump sum compensation for byssinosis, they would not sue the firm because they thought so highly of Mr. Gartside and the firm where they had been employed. That is the employer who wrote to me about the disastrous effects on the industry. Mr. Gartside continued:

"This was caused in my view by the very high level of imports in 1987 which on the yarn side represented a 22 per cent. increase on the previous year. We warned the United Kingdom Government that this would have a devastating effect on confidence and employment in the industry, but Mr. Alan Clark, in answer to your questions"——

that is my questions——

"in the house last January said that there was no evidence of any disruption, despite the fact that I and others in the industry had given firm evidence of a downturn in sales and increasing stocks as early as the last quarter of 1987.

Mr. Clark said in answer to your question on the 13th January that if the industry 'produces evidence of serious injury it will enable me to take action to reduce the volume of imports from Turkey'.

Despite five large mill closures and short time working, Mr. Clark has still taken no action, and if this is not evidence of serious injury, I wonder what is.

The plain fact is that the industry is being decimated, not only by the volume of imports, but by the absurdly low prices of these imports which are heavily subsidised to the extent of between 30 per cent. and 40 per cent., not only from Turkey but from other sources also."

Mr. Gartside continued at some length:

"I hope you find the above information useful in representing the industry's case in the debate later this week and I assure you the situation in the industry is now getting very serious. Let us not forget that this government did nothing to prevent the destruction of half the industry (the Lancashire sector) in the early 1980's. The revival was very much due to the fact we had inadequate capacity when there was a mini-boom."

I remind the House that I am reading, not from something from a trade union or in a Left-wing journal, but from a letter from Edmund Gartside, one of the best employers in the industry. He concluded by saying:

"Now it seems hellbent on destroying a further large slice of the industry, and possibly eliminating it entirely, as we cannot possibly compete with subsidies of 30-40 per cent. The Government knows these subsidies exist, but deliberately turns a blind eye to them."

Perhaps that criticism was a little harsh, especially of the Minister, but I am passing on the real feelings of those whose lives and employment prospects are tied up with the industry. I hope that the Minister will take them seriously.

I shall not speak for too long because other hon. Members, by their anxiety to intervene, have demonstrated a great interest in the debate, but I wish to make about four short points.

There is no doubt that the overvalued pound is having a considerable effect on the industry. I received a letter from Mr. Longworth, to whom I referred earlier, in which he said:

"The industry is entering another difficult period, as we forecast last year. Already there has been some short-time working and mill closures. The spinning industry and the knitting industry have been particularly affected. Five cotton spinning mills closed recently, also acrylic spinning mills in Yorkshire have closed. A large clothing unit in Oldham announced its closure".

That is a firm on the other side of the industry. I shall not name it, but it has recently closed its unit in Oldham, where is had employed 400 workers. It had been established in Oldham for a considerable time. Perhaps one of the reasons for that closure was that it was a major supplier to Marks and Spencer. I understand that Marks and Spencer, an excellent firm for which I have the highest regard, for many years had a policy of buying as much of its clothing stock as possible from British sources. I think that it used to say in its advertising that nearly 99 per cent. of its products were British and that the only country from which it imported goods was Israel.

The feeling in the industry, as expressed to the media, is that Marks and Spencer is increasingly moving to overseas sources. That may be due to the pressure of competition, and I can understand that because other large multiple stores, such as British Home Stores and Littlewoods, carry a tremendous amount of imported clothes, such as suits from Czechoslovakia and Romania, and shirts from Hong Kong. I enjoyed what the Minister said about Hong Kong and absolve that country from criticism because it operates a very fair system and does not close its markets to us.

That is a very important development. If a large store such as Marks and Spencer is moving towards buying from overseas sources, the Minister—or somebody in his Department—ought to consider what can be done to minimise it.

Mr. Longworth then said:

"The MFA, with all its imperfections, has helped to prevent even more closures and it is essential therefore that it should continue and be renewed in 1991."

I accept that.

When we debated the multi-fibre arrangement it was thought unlikely that it would be renewed in 1991, but I urge the Minister to look at what has happened in the meantime. I agree with the hon. Member for Macclesfield that it is essential. The MFA does not restrict trade. It helps to bring about its orderly development. It provides for the expansion of imports from certain developing countries. The trade unions support it, provided that the competition is fair, and provided also that a social clause is obtained that is similar to the one that the United States is considering.

The overvalued pound is hitting our exports. It is difficult to sell abroad. Moreover, foreign countries have much easier access to this country because their goods are cheaper. I refer especially to those countries whose currency is tied to the American dollar, including a considerable number of poorer countries. High interest rates cannot be divorced from the difficulties that face the industry.

The Chancellor of the Exchequer may think that high interest rates provide an effective method of cutting inflation, but I have yet to see proof of it. The right hon. Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup (Mr. Heath) was right when he said that to use high interest rates alone to check inflation was rather like using only one out of a bag of golf clubs. Surely there is a more sophisticated method of controlling inflation than continually increasing interest rates, which have an enormous effect on many other aspects of life, including manufacturing industry, which is still the lifeblood of this country.

The United States' protectionist policy is a danger to our textile industry. If the United States closes its doors to us that is bad enough, but it also means that other countries, including China, which are looking for markets in the United States, will divert their products to this country, among others. In our previous debate it was said that China had great plans for expanding its production. It will perhaps amount to as much as the production of all the EEC countries.

Another rumour, or story, is circulating in the north-west. Only the other day I learnt that a United Kingdom machinery manufacturer is selling machinery to the Chinese on condition that the Chinese importer gets a 30 per cent. grant from the United Kingdom Government. On top of that, it will be receiving a soft loan from the United Kingdom for, I understand, 20 or even 30 years at well below commercial interest rates. The Government should look into that. We cannot expect to sell textile manufacturing machinery and then be surprised if foreign countries manufacture textiles with that machinery and try to export them and sell them here. We should examine all the implications of such a policy.

I am sure that the Minister has read Mr. Peter Booth's press release. He is the national secretary of the Transport and General Workers Union textile group. In that press release of 10 November he referred to the anxieties of both employees and employers, and said at the end:

"We would also support the call for a summit meeting of all concerned in the industry to determine a better way forward. It is also important that all Members of Parliament with textile and clothing interests in their constituencies raise their collective voices in support of the industry."

We can reasonably claim that we do that.

Mr. Booth continued:

"They should act now by joining our call for selective import controls and exert pressure on the Government to bring sterling down to a fair trading level. At the current level of redundancies we are witnessing a return to the situation of the early eighties where over 300,000 textile and clothing workers lost their jobs and a large part of the industry closed its gates for the last time."

We do not want a return to what happened then. I know that the Minister does not want that. I look to him to take action to ensure that we do not.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. Before I call the next hon. Member, I remind hon. Members that there is a good deal of interest in the debate. I appeal for shorter speeches so that every hon. Member will be able to catch my eye.

11.26 am

Sir Richard Body (Holland with Boston): I hope that you will watch out, Madam Deputy Speaker, because I may crave the protection of the Chair. I intend to do a dreadful thing. I want to enter a small plea for the consumer.

I see that I am encircled by hon. Members representing Yorkshire constituencies—and rightly so. I hope that one of them will be able to explain one thing to me. A few months ago I visited my tailor in the City of London where one can buy the best clothes at the cheapest price. He has an old-fashioned shop. Like many tailors now, he has on show a row of ready-made suits. One of them caught my eye. Half an hour ago I realised that I am wearing it. I know that it is not very well cut, but I shall come to that in a moment. I felt the cloth and thought that it was very good, hard-wearing cloth that would stand up to wear on these green Benches. I tried on the suit. I know that it does not fit very well but I bought it because of the quality of the cloth. My tailor assured me that it is the best Yorkshire cloth. I am sure that my hon. Friend the Member for Batley and Spen (Mrs. Peacock) will vouch for the fact that it is very good cloth.

Mrs. Peacock *indicated assent.*

Sir Richard Body: Having purchased the suit, my tailor told me that it had been made in Italy. I nearly handed the suit back to him, but the cloth is so good that I decided to buy it.

Is any Member with a Yorkshire constituency able to explain to me why good Yorkshire cloth cannot be made into suits in this country? Why do we have to send the cloth hundreds of miles to Italy to be made up into suits which are then brought back here to be purchased by customers such as me? Something must be wrong with our textile industry if it cannot take advantage of its assets. I know that consumers are not very popular characters, but——

Mr. Gary Waller (Keighley): May I make the simple point to my hon. Friend that it works both ways: that material from overseas is sent here to be processed and made into excellent suits and other garments, which in many cases are then re-exported. That is the nature of free trade, which my hon. Friend probably supports. We should not regret it, because unless material comes here to be made into excellent garments we do not get the jobs that are created thereby.

Sir Richard Body: I have been rather beastly: I have not said what my tailor went on to tell me. He said that the Italians are much more sensitive to consumer wishes and make suits that customers want. He cannot obtain such suits from Yorkshire. I hope that my hon. Friend the Member for Keighley (Mr. Waller), who represents his constituents so vehemently, will take that message back to some of them. I am an advocate of fair but free trade, and I should like industry in Yorkshire to thrive for, incidentally, it is exactly 40 years ago this week that I became a parliamentary candidate for Yorkshire, and I will always wish it well.

Sir Marcus Fox (Shipley): My hon. Friend must not assume that firms in Yorkshire cannot make suits as good as the one he is wearing. My suit, which I hope is as good as his, is made by an excellent, pro-British firm in Leeds called Jackson Centaur. I wish that the shopper would take more care when buying a suit. It is untrue to say that our designs are not as good as those from Italy.

Sir Richard Body: I thought that my hon. Friend was about to say that firms in Yorkshire do not cut suits as badly as the one that I am wearing. However, my hon. Friend's remarks do not answer what my tailor told me. I hope that what I have said will be borne in mind by our firms.

It has just dawned on me that I have a textile firm in my constituency which is part of one of the largest textile companies in the United Kingdom. It is vibrant, progressive and is expanding almost every week. I have not heard a whisper from it about this debate or a plea for protection. It is doing its utmost to meet consumer demand and recognises that, to echo the phrase used by my hon. Friend the Minister, the consumer is sovereign.

Much of the textile industry is responding to consumer demand and does not fear the future. No doubt some of the tales of woe told by hon. Members apply to some textile firms, but I hope that my hon. Friend the Minister will bear in mind that such tales do not apply to every corner of the textile industry. The factory in my constituency is comparatively small and employs only a few hundred people, but it has much confidence in the future.

Items are not imported unless the consumer wants them. Often the type of consumer who wants such goods is among the least well-off of our society, for whom the expense of new clothing or something for the household is an important item of expenditure. They look, quite rightly, for the cheapest article that they can find. If they save a few pounds by purchasing a cheaper garment, they have more money to spend on another necessity. I am speaking not of those who would cut down on some luxury item but of those—I have many in my constituency—for whom clothing is an expensive item.

I know that my hon. Friend the Minister is arguing as valiantly and vigorously as anyone in Brussels and elsewhere on behalf of British industry, but I hope he will bear in mind that when we impose protection we do so against consumer demand. Overwhelmingly, the poorest in society are affected by protection. They are much poorer when the House—or should I say the Commission—imposes restrictions on what they are allowed to buy.

I thought that I would need your protection, Madam Deputy Speaker, but I seem to have got through my speech unscathed. I made it because all hon. Members have not hundreds but thousands of constituents for whom clothing is an expensive item. In real terms, it has become more expensive than many other items that they must buy, and when they have to pay £2, £3 or £4 more for something it seriously affects them, especially those on low incomes or those who may be out of work. I hope that my hon. Friend the Minister will bear that in mind. I do not think that we could have a more doughty champion of their cause than my hon. Friend the Minister. We could have no one better, not even my hon. Friend the Member for Macclesfield (Mr. Winterton), whose strongest characteristic is not subtlety, a little of which is necessary in Brussels. The Minister has been very successful and we wish him well at the forthcoming negotiations.

Most Ministers are rather coy about the House's loss of power over trade negotiations and other issues. I was, therefore, glad that my hon. Friend the Minister made it clear—although he was not as explicit as he might have been, but that is part of the subtlety that he practises so skilfully—that we are not sovereign in matters such as this. When Opposition Members or anyone outside the House criticise the Government for not having an effective system of protection against textiles from abroad, they should recognise that all the 26 textile trading agreements have been negotiated and settled not by a United Kingdom Minister but by the Commission. That is a measure of the House's loss of power and our inability to be as effective as we might wish on behalf of our constituents.

11.37 am

Mr. Max Madden (Bradford, West): The hon. Member for Holland with Boston (Sir R. Body) raised the tentative voice of consumers in Britain and revealed some secrets about his tailor. The name of his tailor should be given to the clothing industry, with which I have considerable contact, because I should be amazed if it could not supply him with extremely attractive and well-designed suits of a good quality. I am sure that the hon. Member for Holland with Boston and the consumer would be well satisfied with them.

The hon. Member for Holland with Boston does not seem to have appreciated the points that have been made in the debate about the dangers of a high interest and high exchange rate regime for the competitiveness of the British textile industry. We are arguing for protection, not because we are fearful of competition but because, given the unfair competition, action needs to be taken by the Government to create fairer trading conditions. A high interest and high exchange rate regime is making matters extremely difficult.

I wish to declare my interest as a Member sponsored by the Transport and General Workers Union with a particular interest in the textile group of that union. The national secretary of the textile group, Mr. Peter Booth, has been referred to on a number of occasions, especially by my hon. Friend the Member for Oldham, Central and Royton (Mr. Lamond), and I should like to quote briefly from another press release that Mr. Booth issued only last month about this debate. He said:

> "This is a golden opportunity for Textile MPs of all Parties to raise the serious issues facing the Textile Industry. Our members in textile constituencies across Yorkshire, the East Midlands, the North-West of England, Scotland and other areas are anxious to see vociferous support given to their industry at a time when threats of mill closures and further job losses are looming large."

That is the voice of the largest trade union representing men and women working in the industry.

Mr. Alan Clark: It is rather unorthodox for a Back Bencher to be invited to give way to a Minister and I am grateful for the hon. Gentleman's courtesy in so doing.

The hon. Member for Oldham, Central and Royton (Mr. Lamond) quoted Mr. Booth's demand that we should consider import controls. I would be interested to hear Opposition Members pick up that point and argue the case

for import controls. I hope that I have intervened at a stage in the hon. Gentleman's speech which will allow him to do that, if he believes that he has an answer.

Mr. Madden: I shall certainly refer to that aspect later. The Minister is right to say that there is widespread belief in the textile and clothing industry that selective import controls can play a part in tackling the industry's problems.

I now wish to refer to a letter written to the Government in mid November by three organisations—the British Clothing Industry Association, the British Textile Confederation and the Knitting Industries Federation. In their letter, they said:

"But we now share a growing apprehension about the level of activity over the coming months and beyond. On the export front, where we have had considerable success, the strengthening of sterling has made it difficult to maintain this pace of advance. At home, the effect of higher interest rates is likely to depress consumer and retail demand. The weak US dollar has materially increased the competitiveness of imports, particularly from those countries in the Far East whose currencies are linked to the dollar, and this has had a twofold impact: pressure on the market place, and pressure on prices and margins, reflected in some areas of the textile industry by short-time working, closures and redundancies. There is concern about future orders across a growing area of joint industries."

They concluded:

"Confidence would be strengthened if there was seen to be more determination by the Government and the European Commission to use our rights in the existing trading agreements fully and promptly to counter disruptive import surges, and to resist the progressive opening of our market to countries that remain closed to us or distort trade by subsidies to their domestic industry."

I have participated in these debates for 10 of the past 14 years. We always hear ritualistic praise about the loyalty of the work force, how hard working people are, how modest their pay claims are and how, as a result of industrial peace, there is so much co-operation and high productivity. All those things are absolutely true. However, we hear less about the declining work force. May I remind the Minister that, between September 1987 and September of this year, there has been a fall in employment in textiles alone of more than 8,000—the precise figure is 8,700. In the same period, the decline in clothing and footwear has been 8,600, so, in that year alone, we have seen a decline in employment of 17,000 jobs which men and women badly need. They depend on those jobs, and the communities in which they live are seriously damaged by those extensive job losses. In terms of cost to the community and to the economy, those 17,000 jobs are worth between £12 million and £15 million, a significant loss in employment.

We do not hear very much about the systematic overtime worked in much of the industry. I have always been told that systematic excessive overtime was an indication of basic inefficiency. It certainly has the effect of creating low basic rates of pay because the men and women in those industries have come to depend on systematic overtime to secure reasonable incomes. That is often overlooked. The Government should consider the amount of overtime involved and devise ways and means to create jobs and increase employment, instead of causing job losses, by reducing systematic and excessive overtime which is even being worked at a time of high job losses in much of the industry.

We have heard, quite rightly, a great deal about the export performance of those industries. We are the fifth largest United Kingdom exporter. We are the largest exporter to Japan—perhaps the most difficult market for any exporter. That is a measure of the success of the British industry. It is the answer to the tailor of the hon. Member for Holland with Boston. If we can export successfully to Japan and meet the sophisticated requirements of Japanese consumers, why cannot we satisfy a London tailor about the style and quality of suits produced in this country?

We must face the major lack of confidence in the industry at present, although it has been there to some extent for many years. There is a basic doubt in the minds, not only of the men and women who work in the industry but of those who manage and own the industry about the industry's future as perceived by the Government. There is a fear that the industry is expendable. There is a fear that Turkey is allowed to get away with dumping, which is proved and accepted because our Government are anxious to block Turkey's entry into NATO. They are anxious to secure the contracts to build bridges across the Bosphorus.

It is believed that political considerations are the real reason why the Government are not prepared to fight determinedly and with real vigour and enthusiasm for the interests of the British textile and clothing industry. The Government's firmly held political considerations make the workers believe that the industry is expendable. There are also fears that the British textile and clothing industry will become expendable so that financial services can expand and prosper. That is a fear which the Minister must address.

We are facing 1992, with all the challenges that that creates, and we have heard the figures today about the extent of the trade deficit and the import penetration of the British market. I fear that that will become much worse after 1992.

The associations to which I have referred have said that they are extremely concerned that there will be pressure to replace national quotas with a single Community quota. That creates anxiety in all sections of the industry.

Someone who has been particularly prominent in the debate about the benefits and advantages of 1992 is Mr. Alan Lewis, the chairman of Illingworth Morris. Mr. Lewis acquired Illingworth Morris some time ago, following a reference to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission. At that time, the hon. Member for Shipley (Sir M. Fox)—I have given him notice that I intended to refer to him today—expressed concern about the acquisition of Illingworth Morris by Mr. Lewis. For reasons that are not altogether clear, those anxieties were removed and he supported the acquisition.

It is clear from the Register of Members' Interests that the hon. Member for Shipley is a consultant to a firm called Alcrafield Ltd., a holding company which has been very much at the heart of Mr. Alan Lewis's business empire for a number of years. It is also clear that Mr. Lewis is the head of the Hartley Investment Trust.

The Observer last Sunday, under the headline

"£4 million Tory bonanza from big business",

said:

"Britain's largest companies more than doubled their contributions to the Conservative Party last year, paying a record £4·5 million to help ensure Mrs. Thatcher's re-election.

A survey carried out by an independent organisation, the Labour Research Department, reveals that 333 companies paid £4,528,553 to the Conservative Party in the financial year covering the election . . .

[Mr. Madden]

According to the Labour Research figures, the Conservatives' Treasurer, Lord McAlpine, received seven corporate donations of £100,000 or more.

The largest—£167,000—was paid over by the Hartley Investment Trust headed by the textile millionaire, Mr. Alan Lewis. Labour Research claims the Hartley Investment Trust is 'mainly a laundering operation'.

Early last year, according to the researchers, Mr. Lewis —who runs Illingworth Morris plc"——

Mr. Nicholas Winterton: On a point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. Is the reading out of huge extracts from newspapers relating to Members' interests directly concerned with the debate on the MFA? I have listened at some length to the hon. Member for Bradford, West (Mr. Madden) because I sympathise with the stand he takes on textiles. However, what he has said in the last three or four minutes appears to be divorced from the debate.

Madam Deputy Speaker: This is a wide debate on the Adjournment. The hon. Member for Bradford, West (Mr. Madden) is not completely out of order, but I have appealed for shorter speeches which I hope will be more directed to the topic on the Order Paper.

Mr. Madden: I appreciate your view, Madam Deputy speaker. I shall conclude by reading the last section of the quotation. It is relevant to the debate on the future of the textile industry, bearing in mind the prominent role played by Mr. Alan Lewis. As I have said, he argues that there are advantages open to the British textile industry from the changes that will take place in 1992.

The Observer said:

"Early last year, according to the researchers, Mr. Lewis —who runs Illingworth Morris plc, manufacturers of woollen textiles—used direct mail to ask people for donations to meet 'a special requirement of the Conservative Party'. Mr. Lewis had already put up the money himself. Company accounts show that in the year ending March 1987 the Hartley Investment Trust paid the Conservatives £278,343. However, this sum was not met by donations, and the company received a refund from Conservative Central Office. The donation was revised to £167,000."

I can understand why Conservative Members are reluctant to allow such information to be revealed. However, like most Members of Parliament, and most members of the public. I believe that it is important that when Members speak in this place, and when individuals speak outside, we should all know who they are speaking for, who they are representing and what interest they are seeking to protect and promote. I have brought this information to the House because it is important that we have it.

I have drawn to the Minister's attention the worries which have existed in the industry for many years and which will intensify unless urgent action is taken. We need a plan for the textile, clothing and footwear industries for the year 2000. We need from the Government a clear strategy document spelling out their policy, attitudes and priorities to those industries. As I suggested in an earlier debate this year, we should have a national conference where the Minister, Members of Parliament, trade unions, employers, local authorities and agencies with direct interests in the future prosperity of these industries are allowed to express their views, make suggestions, give ideas and make proposals such as those that have been made in this debate.

The central pillar of such a strategy must be, first, MFA5. That is required to give a basic stability and confidence for the future on which investment planning and all other planning can be based. The Minister asked me in what respect I and others support selective import controls. The overwhelming case is against Turkey. I have referred to the briefing given by three organisations. I am sure that the Minister has been given copies of it. There is scathing criticism of the way in which the Turks have conducted their trade in recent years. The document states:

"In breach of the Treaty of Ankara, which gives Turkey duty-free access to the Community for its exports, Turkey has continued to grant generous investment and export subsidies (which would be illegal if introduced by any EEC country) to its textile and clothing industries, while shutting out imports by extremely high tariffs. When all the different forms of duty are added together (including an obligatory payment to the state housing fund), taxes on imports can reach 122 per cent."

The hon. Member for Macclesfield (Mr. Winterton) referred to that. There are suggestions in the document on actions that can be taken which amount to selective import controls.

We want action to be taken against China. The Minister should go a little further than he did in replying to my intervention and answer the following questions. Do the Government accept that China is a dominant supplier? Will they accept the logic of that position? We want priority to be given to this important industry which is a major exporter and employer and an important section of our economy. In the past, arguments have been deployed about the industry's importance. I have discussed these matters with all sections of the industry. They do not believe that the importance which they represent to the British economy is reflected in Ministers' attitudes or the way in which they protect the industry's interests.

We want an investment plan for the industry and an exchange rate and interest rate regime that reflects the interests of British industry. Only last week I talked to one manufacturer—other hon. Members were present at the meeting—who told me that the increase in interest rates had resulted in his company paying an extra £4,000 a week in interest repayments. That is the scale of the burden faced by many small and medium-sized companies.

We need a training plan for the industry. There is already worry about skill shortages, yet in my city there is a penniless army of 900 young people under 18 who are without hope because they are denied benefit or have not been able to get a YTS place or job. Many will be forced into crime and prostitution. Many of those young people have the skills and attitudes necessary to make an important contribution to the British textile industry.

I shall end with an appeal that I have made on previous occasions. I regret that the Minister has chosen this moment to leave the Chamber. I hope that he will appreciate the anxieties expressed both today and previously. I hope that there will be a range of positive actions to help British industry. I have already outlined the direction that I believe such action should take. I am sure that my hon. Friends will reinforce that appeal.

12 noon

Mr. Gary Waller (Keighley): The debate is timely, coming as it does when the industry has reasonable experience of MFA4, having lived for 18 months with the bilateral agreements with the European Community's supplier countries.

The end of the current arrangement in July 1991 is sufficiently far off for the House to consider issues other than that of what should follow. There will be plenty of opportunities for such debates. It is right that the House should never lose sight of the importance of the clothing and textile industry, which, as has been said several times today, provides the livelihood for so many people in this country.

Those who keep in close touch with the textile industry, especially the wool textile sector, know that it is highly cyclical. Perhaps it is misleading to refer to the industry as a single entity. As the hon. Member for Oldham, Central and Royton (Mr. Lamond) said, it incorporates a whole spectrum of different processes that are affected differently by changes in the economic climate, as well as by shifts in fashion. That, inevitably, means that it is not an industry suitable for those who like a steady and predictable life.

As the hon. Gentleman also said, we often receive letters from management. We always respect what is said, but, as my hon. Friend the Minister appreciates, it appears that any advance is always due to the efforts of the company, while any failure is attributed to the Government. That is certainly true of the attitude of a few members of the industry, although many others take a different and more robust attitude.

During the past five years the House has debated textiles rather less than it used to, and there is a good reason for that. I use the word "good" in both senses. After the terrible carnage of the 1970s and early 1980s, when many mills closed and thousands of jobs were lost for ever, textiles have enjoyed a successful period. Now, once again, there is a feeling of doubt and nervousness about the future. Some sectors, such as knitting and acrylics—the former has certainly been affected by a change in fashion, although it may be short term—face problems that are already much more than just an ill wind, and the cuts and closures are already starting to bite.

The industry is now much better placed than it was to withstand the vicissitudes of tougher times ahead. A decade ago we were bedevilled by structural inadequacies. Our products had a reputation for durability that was second to none, but our designs left much to be desired. There was surplus capacity, low levels of automation and inadequate marketing skills. We all recognise that there was also a chronic failure to invest when it was most needed.

The process of change has certainly not been easy. In fact, it has been downright painful. The unions have co-operated in enabling that change to come about, despite the effect on their members, with mills closing almost daily at one stage. The result is that the industry is infinitely more robust and better able to withstand competitive pressures.

There has also been a much greater recognition of the need for first-class training—to which the hon. Member for Bradford, West (Mr. Madden) referred—and for recruitment policies to attract some of the brightest young people into a sector that has not always been perceived favourably in employment terms. I pay tribute to the Confederation of British Wool Textiles Ltd. for the positive moves that it has made to remedy the situation.

It has been said that the multi-fibre arrangement has provided the industry recently with some welcome protection. Protection is sometimes a feature that we welcome when our people benefit from it, but we are not slow to condemn protectionism when others, such as the Americans, seek recourse to it. It is worth spending a little time sorting out in our minds when such measures are justified and when they are not. I believe that my hon. Friend the Member for Holland with Boston (Sir R. Body) failed to draw that distinction.

One of the people who seemed to have some difficulty with the concept in a previous debate was the hon. Member for Yeovil (Mr. Ashdown), who is now the leader of the Social and Liberal Democratic party, but was then simply his party's spokesman on trade and industry. In the debate on 9 May 1985 he declared roundly that if MFA4 was to come into effect—and he had doubts about that—it should be the last of its kind. He was then lambasted by his hon. Friend the Member for Rochdale (Sir C. Smith), who left us in no doubt that, in his estimation, he knew a great deal more about the matter than did his hon. Friend who held the shadow trade portfolio. He said:

"I try to deal with my hon. Friend kindly, so I say simply that it might have been better if my party had decided to leave the speech to someone who knew something about the textile industry."—[*Official Report*, 9 May 1985; Vol. 78, c. 963.]

Today, people in the textile areas are waiting with bated breath to discover whether the hon. Member for Roxburgh and Berwickshire (Mr. Kirkwood) is a member of the Yeovil school of social and liberal democracy or the Rochdale school.

Of course, free trade is a slogan that we should not mock. As a nation which is so dependent on trade, and which has a textile industry that is good at exporting—when it has a chance to do so, as the hon. Member for Bradford, West said—it is an ideal profoundly to be wished. However, in a period of rapid change free trade can easily be supplanted by a state of disorder, which benefits only those who put short-term expediency before long-term stability. We know that the beneficiaries would be countries which make a virtue of breaking the rules on dumping, unfair subsidies and erecting barriers to imports. The losers would include many of the poorest countries to which MFA4 gives special priority in the hope that they can pull themselves off the floor by their own efforts.

Thus, if the multi-fibre arrangement were no longer needed, it could only be after there had been a drastic review of the provisions of GATT that left no room for doubt that every player that stood to benefit from genuine liberalisation had certain obligations to fulfil and that the will existed, above all, to enforce them. There is no sign that we are yet approaching that state of affairs.

There is no doubt that we are undergoing rapid change. In textiles, the share of world exports held by developed countries fell from 79 per cent. in 1955 to 60 per cent. in 1982, while the share held by developing countries doubled from 15 to 30 per cent. In clothing, the speed of change over the same period has been even more pronounced. Developed countries saw their share plummet from 71 to 38 per cent., while that of developing and mainly low-cost countries, with many of which bilateral trading agreements exist under the terms of MFA4, climbed from 10 to 48 per cent. That trend has continued even more strongly since 1982.

Anyone who argues that the MFA is a means of stultifying progress fails to take account of the facts. But for its existence we would long since have seen complete chaos breaking out, which would benefit no one. Where fair methods have been adopted, we cannot begrudge the fact that poorer countries are benefiting from industrialisation.

[Mr. Gary Waller]

However, there is no disguising the effect that that has had on employment in the United Kingdom. Although a study has suggested that developing countries are responsible for only one third of the job losses due to external trade, as many as half the jobs lost in the period of most rapid contraction, between 1973 and 1982, may have resulted from improvements in productivity.

Those who, like the hon. Member for Halifax (Mrs. Mahon), who I am delighted to see in her place, blame Conservative policies, as the hon. Lady did in a recent Adjournment debate, conveniently forget that the dates do not match. If the industry had not modernised, its position would have been much worse than turned out to be the case.

Mr. Cryer: The hon. Gentleman has mentioned the modernisation of the industry. Does he accept that a fair proportion of that modernisation was undertaken in the period of a Labour Government. I am thinking, for example, of the wool textile industry scheme, which improved on the original wool textile scheme that was introduced in 1973 by a Conservative Government? Does the hon. Gentleman recognise that the bulk of that work was carried out under Labour?

Mr. Waller: No, I do not necessarily agree that the bulk of it was done under Labour. Both parties have given assistance to the industry to enable it to equip itself with more modern and more productive machinery.

The much derided Professor Silberston, who produced a report for the Government before the last MFA negotiations, and who has again been asked to report on subsequent developments, fairly assessed the many trends. However, there is a feeling that he paid relatively little attention to the barriers faced by British exporters in many developing countries. Only half a page was devoted to that issue, and little was made of the fact that some of the worst offenders can no longer be described as developing countries, but must be thought of as newly developed.

There has been a substantial increase in textile and clothing imports from MFA supplying countries, from 205,000 tonnes in 1985 to 331,000 tonnes in 1987—a 62 per cent. increase in two years, with a further 10 per cent. climb in the first nine months of this year. Those figures demonstrate not only the greatly increased access permitted under MFA4 and financial agreements, but the benefits that the MFA countries have gained from currency factors, especially the far east and south-east Asian countries that are tied to the United States dollar. At the same time, the relative strength of sterling has weakened Britain's competitiveness in many of our best markets.

In a previous debate on this subject I complained about the unfair barriers erected by Taiwan and South Korea. There has been a distinct improvement, which is welcome, in that those countries have not only reduced tariffs and quotas to more acceptable levels, but have reduced their dependence on the dollar. As Taiwan is not recognised diplomatically by the European Community it is not, strictly speaking, an MFA state, although restrictions are broadly in line with the agreements reached with other supplying countries.

Brazil remains highly restrictionist, although, like many other countries in south-east Asia and South America, parts of its population could be substantial purchasers of our products. However, with total bans and tariffs of over 100 per cent., such sales do not seem a likely prospect in the near future. High indebtedness may be submitted as an excuse, but no such excuse exists for the high barriers operated by non-MFA countries, such as Australia and South Africa, although the economic difficulties of the latter perhaps have different origins.

The United States is a special case. We hope that President-elect Bush will be as vigorous as President Reagan has been in restricting protectionist measures. Measures such as the Textile and Apparel Trade Bill have been misguided in their objectives of seeking stringent controls over imports from any countries, including those in the European Community. Tariff barriers to our exports are already much higher than those operated by the Community. When Congressmen in the United States talk about reciprocity, they tend not to mean that barriers must be removed reciprocally—something that we can all applaud—but that levels of trade must be reciprocally adjusted—a totally artificial concept that would suppress trade and apply a general brake. That kind of protectionism arises from the hold that single interest pressure groups have over Congress. That cannot be defended in a world where trade is needed to break down political and social, as well as economic barriers. If the United States were to have recourse to protectionism, Britain, with its open distribution system, would be in the front line of those likely to be damaged by diversion of trade, and that is something that we cannot allow.

The open system, which has resulted from a concentrated retail structure in which a small number of companies play a dominant part, should also cause us to beware of the dangers posed by the fact that the ending of the existing MFA in 1991 coincides so closely with the creation of the single European market at the end of 1992. The present bilateral negotiations are based on national quotas. Any move towards single Community quotas would leave Britain uniquely vulnerable to market targeting because of the distribution and retailing structure to which I have referred.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton *rose*——

Mr. Waller: I shall not give way, because I know that a number of hon. Members are anxious to contribute to the debate.

The approach of the single market should also alert us to the dangers posed by the ability of the state trading countries of eastern Europe to take advantage of their preferential position in terms of access to Community markets, especially via the Federal Republic of Germany. I had intended to discuss China and Turkey, but, as other hon. Members have already done so, I shall not.

Protectionism per se must not be allowed to become our rallying cry. Although many existing practices throughout the world mean that we must continue to protect our industry and our workers, lowering our guard in the name of free trade—operating a policy of unilateral trade disarmament—would ensure that some of the existing practices continue untramelled and would, itself, represent a betrayal of free trade. That would be just as dangerous as retaining unneeded barriers, which would undermine the trade on which our industry depends at a time when trade in textiles has been growing twice as fast as trade in goods and services worldwide.

This is a complex issue and we must resist the urge to look for simplistic solutions, because they are bound, almost certainly, to be wrong. Presently, the failure to protect British interests would appear to be the greatest danger. In general terms, however, protectionism on the one hand and an attitude that assumes that free trade operates when, in reality, some of our competition are cheating, would achieve the same result—a state of stultification and chaos. We must steer between those two avoidable dangerous rocks that could sink us. We cannot fail because, as so many hon. Members have already said, many thousands of our fellow countrymen and women demand that we should succeed.

12.16 pm

Mr. Archy Kirkwood (Roxburgh and Berwickshire): I am pleased to speak after the hon. Member for Keighley (Mr. Waller) in this important debate. I agree with him that the debate is timely because it gives us the opportunity to consider how MFA4 is working and it also gives us a chance to consider some of the complex negotiations to be conducted in Montreal during the current round of the GATT talks.

The hon. Gentleman understandably, if rather predictably, raised the difference of opinion between my hon. Friends the Members for Yeovil (Mr. Ashdown) and for Rochdale (Sir C. Smith). It is perfectly reasonable that, within party political groupings, there should be a divergence of views on some subjects. I should point out to the hon. Gentleman that his colleague, the hon. Member for Holland with Boston (Sir R. Body), bespoke suited as he is, takes a different view from him.

These are complex issues and it is right that consumer interests should be taken into account. It is also right that the legitimate interests of less-developed countries should be considered. The industrialists in my part of the world, who take an interest in those matters, are concerned about both. The Minister was correct to say that we must achieve a balance between the interests of all parties.

I want to make an unashamedly constituency speech, because it is only fair to warn the Minister that the economy of my constituency will face potential ruin unless some guaranteed limits can be secured on the future level of imported cashmere garments coming from China to the European domestic market. I seek the Minister's assurance that the special circumstances of the Borders knitwear industry are being taken into account during the course of the current negotiations regarding the Chinese bilateral agreement and other matters.

If the Government fail to protect the interests of high quality, specialist knitwear producers like the cashmere industry working in towns like Hawick, the adverse financial circumstances for the Borders region would be very difficult to exaggerate. Hon. Members have already said that until recently the knitwear scene in the Borders, as it has been generally, has enjoyed a relatively healthy period. However, there is now apprehension about the level of activity and order books in the coming months and beyond, particularly on the export front.

The level of sterling in the international money markets has made matters much more difficult. The Minister teased the hon. Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, North (Mr. Henderson) about the rate at which sterling should be set to accommodate the interests of industry. Information from my sources is that they do not mind too much about the level of the pound, although they would obviously prefer that to be lower rather than higher. However, they would like some stability. They want to be able to plan from one season to the next with guarantee that they are in the right ball park in terms of estimating the exporting position in the markets that they will address in future. Stability counts, and in that regard the Government should consider carefully the prospect of joining the European monetary system and the increased stability that that would provide.

At home the effect of high interest rates is likely to depress consumer and retail demand. It also depresses the level of future investment that is required. In an area like the Borders, there is no regional development status of any kind to aid industry with its capital restructuring.

Mr. Alan Clark: Is the hon. Gentleman making the same point about cashmere in his constituency as that made by my hon. Friend the Member for Macclesfield (Mr. Winterton), or is his a different point?

Mr. Kirkwood: I will not burden my remarks by focusing them on cashmere. I want to set the general context, but I will refer to cashmere later.

The weak US dollar has materially increased the competitiveness of imports, particularly from those countries whose currencies are linked to the dollar. That puts pressure on markets which is reflected in the pricing policies and the margins available to industry in my constituency.

The results of all those factors taken together, in connection with the trends that are developing, suggest that factors have been coming together in a way that will produce short-time working, closures and prospective redundancies. The Minister should assure the House that he will raise those matters privately with the Chancellor of the Exchequer as a matter of urgency.

I am one of the Minister's fans. He has received fan mail from Opposition Members. I believe that he does a reasonable job, and that view is reflected among the manufacturers in my constituency who recognise that he fights. However, he must take up these matters with the Chancellor as a matter of urgency.

As a result of some of the factors coming together that I have described earlier, in the past few weeks 175 jobs were lost with the closure of Laidlaw and Fairgrieve's spinning mill at Walkerburn in the constituency of my right hon. Friend the Member for Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale (Mr. Steel). The loss of 175 jobs would be a bad blow for Bolton or Bradford, but it involves an entire village in Walkerburn. An entire village has been decimated and there are no other employment prospects. That special circumstance must be considered. If that is true for village communities like Walkerburn in the Borders, it is also true on a larger scale in towns like Hawick.

My hon. Friend the Member for Rochdale, who was given gracious mention earlier, asked me to draw attention to the difficulties in the spinning and knitting industries in his part of the world. Five cotton spinning mills were closed recently in his area. Also, acrylic spinning mills in Yorkshire have closed. A large clothing unit in Oldham announced its closure a few weeks ago, as did two clothing factories in Merseyside and a finishing works in Derbyshire. The hon. Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, North had a list of closures which was too long to mention,

[Mr. Kirkwood]

and we have not spoken of the innumerable units now working on short time, which is the chronic curse of the cyclical nature of the industry.

The catalogue of general decline may paint a dismal picture for the prospects for the industry in Lancashire, Yorkshire and other such areas. I accept that these areas have been devasted, along with the area in my constituency to which I have referred. In theory, however, there is an industrial infrastructure in Lancashire and Yorkshire, for example, that could in future create alternative job opportunities. That is not the position in the area that I represent.

The current negotiations with China are extremely important to the industry in the Borders. China is now the second largest Community supplier. It has the potential to increase its exports rapidly and on a huge scale to the detriment of the entire United Kingdom industry, but especially that which is located in the Borders. That would be to the detriment also of smaller low-cost supplying countries. Therefore, China should be treated as a dominant supplier. I hope that the Minister will listen to the pleas which have been made by hon. Members on both sides of the House that China should be treated in the same way as Korea, Hong Kong, Taiwan and Macao, whose quotas have been limited by the European Community agreement, which took effect on 1 January 1987. Are the Government pressing the Commission and the other member states to treat China as a dominant supplier and to impose access limits? The industry will be reassured if the Minister says something about the issue today.

I ask the Minister to take into account the fact that the People's Republic of China is a state trading nation, with all the associated trading distortions that that means, including pricing policies that are dictated by political and not commercial factors. China's national policy of self-sufficiency is pursued rigorously by its Government departments. What regard is being paid to the long-term implications of Hong Kong's return to China in 1997? That year may seem a long way away, but a problem is looming large on the horizon.

Is the Minister satisfied that the new inner limits for cashmere garments will be held at about their existing levels? That is a crucial matter for areas such as Hawick in my constituency. China is the sole supplier of cashmere and it could export finished garments to the United Kingdom at a lower cost than the cost of the yarn for the garments to the manufacturing industry in Hawick. The Minister has said that the negotiations have been completed. I understand that the details must be studied by committees at a European level before they are published, but it would be of considerable assistance to the industry in general, however, and specifically to the industry in the Borders, if the hon. Gentleman were to say something about the progress that has been made on inner limits.

Secondly, is the Minister satisfied that the Chinese, who have a monopoly of cashmere supply, are taking real and positive steps to eliminate the adulteration of their own material, which was referred to by the hon. Member for Macclesfield (Mr. Winterton)? Adulterated cashmere is not usable in the high-quality end of the market that is supplied by towns such as Hawick. Have talks taken place to resolve that matter through the Community economic co-operation agreement with China? If so, what are the results of the talks? That is another important matter on which I hope the House will be advised by the Minister.

What representations have been made to the Chinese on the unilateral rejection of contract prices for cashmere over the past couple of years? The Government must make known to the Chinese the level of damage that conduct of that sort does to its own hard-won international reputation as an honourable trading partner, in addition to the dislocation that it causes to manufacturers, which see agreed deals and prices change in the middle of knitting up their orders.

The three questions which I have put to the Minister require urgent attention if confidence is to be retained in the Borders industry and the necessary investment decisions made to secure employment in future.

More generally, I am sceptical about arrangements for policing quotas agreed under the MFA. Knitwear import figures for 1983 to 1987 show that, over that period, their value rose from £578 million to £1,072 million. If that is true, it is an increase of 85·5 per cent. Either quotas are being breached or exporting countries are milking the agreement for all it is worth—using all the devices that we know exist to manipulate their quotas to the maximum allowed.

The MFA should eventually be taken back within the ambit of the GATT rules. Of course we must allow increasing access by Third world countries that are genuinely underdeveloped, but we must not be taken for mugs in the short term by countries such as Brazil, Turkey and South Korea. South Korea, for example, exports £2 of general goods to the United Kingdom for every £1 that we export to South Korea—but it exports £4,000 in value of knitted garments for every £1 that we export there. It pays a 14 per cent. tariff, but we pay 50 per cent., and that is clearly unfair.

Finally, speaking for my constituency. I believe that the MFA, with all its imperfections, has helped to prevent even more closures. It is important that it should continue —and if circumstances do not change, the Government may need to consider its renewal in 1991.

We know that there will be pressure from several Third world countries for an immediate end to the MFA, and no doubt it will increase during the GATT negotiations in Montreal. All sectors of the industry in my constituency argue that the Government must resist such pressure and refuse to countenance any progressive or gradual integration into GATT, however desirable that may be as a longer-term goal, until such time as the United Kingdom industry enjoys genuine, reciprocal access to those markets that currently present such substantial tariff and non-tariff barriers that they make impossible any kind of free trade on fair terms.

12.31 pm

Mrs. Elizabeth Peacock (Batley and Spen): To many right hon. and hon. Members, a debate on the intricacies of the multi-fibre arrangement may seem unattractive and unimportant, and perhaps that is reflected in the small number of hon. Members present in the Chamber. However, those of us who represent constituencies in which the textile industry plays a great part in providing employment know that the opposite is true and that it is an extremely important industry.

Although it is often an arcane and frustrating area of international relations, the MFA, under the umbrella of the GATT, is vital to businesses throughout the country, and particularly to those in Yorkshire and in my constituency. The hon. Member for Roxburgh and Berwickshire (Mr. Kirkwood) almost apologised to the House for making a constituency speech. I often do so, and will continue that tradition today.

Before referring to the problems that have arisen over MFA renewal negotiations, I remind the House, as other right hon. and hon. Members have done, of the importance of the United Kingdom textile industry. Earlier, we heard that it provides much of the country's wealth—the spending of which the House often devotes much time to debating—and long may it continue to do so. Textiles and clothing represent the United Kingdom's fifth largest industrial sector. Although that point has already been made, there is no harm in re-emphasising it. It is bigger than the computer and aerospace industry in terms of export earnings, having an annual turnover of about £9 billion.

The industry continues to provide nearly half a million jobs throughout the country—in east Lancashire, west Yorkshire, the east midlands and Scotland. In some of those areas the prosperity that the Government have generated in recent years is beginning to have an effect. In my part of Yorkshire, investment in manufacturing industry is tremendous. Factories are growing like mushrooms there, and we welcome that. Against that background, all countries are trying to regulate the flow of exports and imports, which in 1985 totalled a mammoth £100 billion.

Before dealing with the MFA in detail, it is important to note that Britain's exports have done reasonably well in recent years. In 1987 they rose by 8 per cent. to £3·3 billion, and productivity also increased by 8 per cent. The vital investment that is needed in new technology totalled about £387 million. I assure my hon. Friend the Minister that we do not all think that today's textile industry is failing. It is a vibrant and successful industry, and I am sorry that my hon. Friend the Member for Holland with Boston (Sir R. Body), who told us about his suit, is not present. It is an excellent industry, and I could take him to many places in Yorkshire where he could have excellent suits made from excellent Yorkshire cloth. In my constituency there is a very good tailors, Sladding, who have been established for 100 years and whose ancestors trained in Savile Row. They still make good Yorkshire suits. Therefore, there is no need for any right hon. or hon. Gentleman to say that he cannot have Yorkshire suits made from Yorkshire cloth.

Wool textile exports continue to rise, and when the final figures are available they will show that 1988 was a record year. British companies continue to develop their export drive and many of them make regular trips to Japan and the far east. There is a steady demand for quality cloth in the fashion industry. United Kingdom companies continue to campaign for good quality school leavers who can be trained to provide a skilled work force for the 1990s. Already, companies in west Yorkshire are finding it difficult to attract sufficient 16 to 19-year-olds to maintain current standards. As the numbers of school leavers fall during the next 10 years, that problem will become more acute. The industry is responding marvellously, with video recruiting packages aimed at schools throughout west Yorkshire and the rest of the country. Companies consider it their responsibility to attract young people into a thriving textile industry which uses high technology and certainly is not the dark Satanic mills industry of the past. Such long-term views about the health of the industry continue to pay off, with the Confederation of British Wool Textiles Ltd. winning one of the Government's prestigious national training awards for its much-admired career structure for skilled workers.

Hon. Members may wonder why such a go-ahead industry needs international regulations such as the MFA. Why should healthy companies have anything to fear from fair competition in an open market? I should emphasise "fair competition", as that is the purpose of the debate. The answer is obvious to many of us with textile companies in our constituencies. Some foreign competition is not in any sense fair. We have heard many examples of that this morning. The world market in some products is clearly distorted.

The MFA purports to regulate the annual growth rates of exports by state trading nations, developing countries and newly industrialised countries. The agreement deters any particular country from taking harsh unilateral measures that could lead to a disastrous trade war. It helps to iron out the regional imbalances in global trade in textile products and guarantees certain developing nations access to the markets of the developed world, and we need to ensure that that will continue. That access would disappear under the potential dominance of countries such as China in a world trade war. However, many countries frequently act in breach of the MFA or similar agreements such as the treaty of Ankara. As that has already been mentioned, I shall not dwell too long on it, but it is important.

The flood of cheap imports of acrylic yarn continues, mostly from Turkey, but also from Mexico, causing significant problems for many companies in the north of England My hon. Friend is well aware of my interest in that subject. Although there are job losses due to cheap imports, that is not a new phenomenon in the textile industry. My local newspaper has a column entitled "25 Years Ago", which said:

> "Employment in the town was another problem, as there has been a steady decline in the big three industries in the area since the war."—

so we are not talking simply about the past eight years under the Conservative Government—

> "At least one woollen mill had closed each year, mining was declining sharply and the rag trade had been badly hit by the introduction of synthetic fibres."

Perhaps we have just moved on and we are now having problems with synthetic fibres coming in from other countries.

I referred earlier to the job losses at Thomas Burnleys in Gomersal. They are much to be regretted. Thomas Burnleys is part of the Coats Viyella group, which has been successful because of its policy of reinvestment and re-equipment. However, acrylic yarn imports have led to its beginning to suffer. I accept what my hon. Friend said about having done everything that he possibly could about acrylic yarn imports. As he has worked hard, but the right results have not been achieved, I suggest that he should consider taking action before job losses become even worse. The available evidence suggests to those in the textile industry that Turkey is granting export subsidies to its textile industry and shutting out imports by imposing high tariffs. In some cases the duty on textile imports into Turkey is about 122 per cent. There is also a mysterious contribution to the state housing fund. I am not sure what

[Mrs. Elizabeth Peacock]

that has to do with textiles, but perhaps my hon. Friend will consider adding such a subsidy here; it would help to improve housing investment in this country. Many hon. Members will be aware of the fact that Turkey is not a signatory to the MFA. The problems of cheaper imports from and dumping by Turkey are a foretaste of what will happen if the MFA is not renewed. Unfair trade costs jobs in this country.

I apologise to my hon. Friend in advance for the fact that I may not be able to stay to hear his speech, but I shall read carefully what he says. There are occasions when I do not care to put off constituency duties, much as I should like to hear the Minister. I hope that he will press as hard as he can for fair trade between the United Kingdom and other countries, such as Turkey and Mexico. That is all that we ask. We do not ask for the introduction of special protectionist measures. I hope that the Government will campaign vigorously for the renewal of the MFA. I suggest that it should be a high priority. The agreement cannot be phased out when the reasons for its introduction remain. Unfair trade practices such as dumping can only lead to a suicidal trade war if they remain unchecked.

If the Government say unequivocally that they believe that there is a future for a capital-intensive, highly-skilled and competitive United Kingdom textile industry—I believe that they have said that in the past and that they will continue to support such a policy—I hope that my hon. Friend will assure us that he is prepared to do all that he can internationally to promote that aspect of our industry. If he is unable to give such a simple undertaking, I am sure that many hon. Members and my constituents in particular will want to know why. The MFA is the most pressing of these negotiations. It must not become, as has been recently rumoured in the press, a bargaining counter for nations that are anxious to phase out the GATT agreement as a tit-for-tat step towards an unbridled market. Jobs in this country, particularly those of my constituents, must not become pawns in an international game.

The United Kingdom textile industry is successful. Since 1980 output per person has risen by a staggering 40 per cent. With such an output, how can we say that we are not an efficient industry? The industry wants fair trade from the MFA, not trade regulation. I cannot emphasise too much that we want fair trade and the right to compete on equal terms with our competitors. Yorkshire people have a reputation for not asking for help very often, but we are doing so now. We want to be given a fair chance to show that, if allowed to compete on equal terms with producers in other countries, we can be the best in world markets.

12·44 pm

Mrs. Alice Mahon (Halifax): This is the second time within a few weks that I have spoken on the industry. I hope not to repeat the arguments that I made in the Adjournment debate on 31 October, but the Minister promised me a written reply to my questions. I have yet to receive it, so perhaps I shall have to repeat myself on one or two issues.

I should like to concentrate my initial remarks on the textile industry's employees. I say to the Minister—I hope that the message gets home—that we have listened time after time, year after year, to phrases such as "retrenchment", "acknowledgment of the industry's skills and its good work force". We are asking for protection of the work force and some acknowledgment of its contribution to the country not only recently but for many years. When I listen to Ministers paying tribute to the skills and adaptability of the work force, I think how much better it would be if the Government rewarded it with some commitment and promises. Today, the Government have an opportunity to do so. Some of the fine talk that we have heard should be transferred into benefits.

The work force has not been treated well over the past few years. Conservative Members have referred to its increased output and higher productivity. Often, that has been achieved at the expense of long hours and, as my hon. Friend the Member for Bradford, West (Mr. Madden) said, institutionalised overtime, low pay and insecurity. The work force is going through an insecure period.

Many thousands of the work force, of whom I have many in my constituency, were brought into this country from the Third world, but have been abandoned under various policies. The hon. Member for Keighley (Mr. Waller) said that I blamed the Government for that. I make no apology whatever for blaming directly on the Government what has happened to good firms in my constituency over the past 10 years. We have been down this road before, which is why Labour Members are again warning the Government. We recognise the same fears as were expressed in the early 1980s, when factory after factory closed and people were thrown on the scrap heap.

Mr. Greville Janner (Leicester, West): May I say how much I welcome what my hon. Friend is saying? Does she realise that in recent months there have been 3,000 redundancies in the Leicester area alone, 2,000 of which were at the Corah factory in my constituency? The people of Leicester urge the Government to listen to my hon. Friend and take action, because it seems that there will be a great recession in the area, which relies much on hosiery, knitwear and footwear.

Mrs. Mahon: I received a letter from the National Union of Hosiery and Knitwear Workers, which confirmed what my hon. Friend has said and identified the loss of 5,000 jobs. I do not know whether my hon. and learned Friend is aware of this, but the letter says:

> "In addition to the 5,000 jobs which have been identified as lost by the Union because of the composition of the work force, 70 per cent. female, factories can reduce their labour force very rapidly by natural wastage without announcing redundancies. This has happened recently and would substantially increase the 5,000 jobs which have been lost."

There is an element of hidden unemployment, which is always present when we discuss female labour.

Conservative Members are in a position to bring some pressure to bear on the Government. Everything that is happening to the economy cannot be divorced from what is happening to the industry. The cost of energy has risen far higher than the rate of inflation, and we all remember the 10 per cent. tax that the Chancellor imposed to finance tax cuts. The industry has been exposed to excessive increases in the cost of water, which is used in many of the industry's processes, and it is feared that privatisation will further increase that cost.

High interest rates cannot be ignored and hon. Members must draw the attention of the Chancellor of the Exchequer to that. It is a crazy system. It is a crazy way to run the economy and it is very damaging. I welcome the

point made by the hon. Member for Macclesfield (Mr. Winterton) about manufacturing industry creating the country's wealth. That is true, but, from being the workshop of the world, we are becoming an international supermarket and dumping ground for other people's goods.

I agree with the hon. Member for Batley and Spen (Mrs. Peacock) that we do not want special favours, although I would probably go further than she does in asking for favours. We at least want fair competition and, at present, we are not being exposed to such competition. There is no coherent policy for the industry. Will the Minister tell us today what he has in store for the industry?

Philosophically speaking, we are not opposed to free trade, but we recognise the dangers. Opposition Members are not fools. Many of us have been closely associated with manufacturing industry. Most of my family worked in the textile industry. We all breathed a sigh of relief when the United States Congress failed to override the President's veto on the Textile Trade and Apparel Bill.

Will the Minister consider the inclusion of a social clause in the multi-fibre arrangement? There are dreadful abuses of human rights in Turkey, for example, involving people working in the industry there. A social clause could perhaps do something to help. After all, we are a trading nation and, as such, we are internationalists. When trade unionists in other countries with which we trade are imprisoned simply for belonging to a trade union, we cannot, and should not, separate ourselves from that suffering.

Many other hon. Members want to speak, but I wish to draw attention to our fears for the industry. Those fears are reinforced when we see that Professor Silberston has been appointed yet again to produce a report. I do not hold the Minister responsible for his appointment: we recognise that it was made by someone in another place. I shall not refer at length to the press release from the British Clothing Industry Association, the British Textile Confederation and the Knitting Industries Federation in criticism of the 1984 report by Professor Silberston, but those organisations stated that major flaws invalidated the conclusions of the Silberston report. They went on:

"The Silberston report cannot provide a basis for the formulation of responsible Government policy."

They concluded:

"It is an illusion to suppose that the phasing out of the MFA on the basis suggested by this Report would lead to the vast international trade in textiles and clothing becoming either free or fair. The MFA brings order and stability to international trade in textiles and clothing, which is far preferable to the disorder that would take its place. Without the MFA, unilateral actions by individual countries would certainly provoke similar actions by others forced to protect themselves from the upsurges of diverted imports that would result. The evidence offered in the Silberston Report does not justify its conclusions. It cannot provide a basis for the formulation of responsible Government policy".

The cynical appointment of Professor Silberston leaves Opposition Members with little confidence to pass on to the people who lobbied us.

I should like to draw the Minister's attention to the proposal, which is all part and parcel of the free market philosophy, to abolish the export promotion levy. The National Wool Textile Export Corporation referred to its astonishment at the proposal and said that astonishment was perhaps

"not too strong a word"

to use.

I should like the Minister to give us a guarantee that that measure will not be thrown on to the altar of the free market.

We are asking the Minister to take a holistic view of the industry when he tackles his right hon. Friend the Chancellor and the Prime Minister about the future of the industry. Five thousand people in my constituency and 500,000 in the country rely on the industry for a living. That is how we will have to earn our living when the oil runs out, and it is one of the few ways in which we can get out of the horrific mess of the trade deficit.

I should like the Minister to give us a firm commitment about the MFA because that is part and parcel of the fight back. I know that the Minister is sympathetic, so I appeal to other Conservative Members who have textile industry interests in their constituencies to bring pressure to bear on the Government, the Treasury and the Chancellor to support the Minister. I hope that he will take into account one or two of the issues raised today.

12.55 pm

Mr. Ken Hargreaves (Hyndburn): I shall begin by informing the hon. Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, North (Mr. Henderson) that my constituent, Peter Hargreaves, to whom he referred, is not related to James Hargreaves, and nor am I, despite the fact that we both come from Oswaldtwistle, where the spinning jenny was invented. The only thing that I have in common with James Hargreaves is that he died a pauper and I expect that I shall, despite yesterday's announcement.

The reason for the timing of this debate remains somewhat obscure, given that the existing agreement lasts until 1991. Nevertheless, the debate gives us a chance to rehearse before the Minister the reasons for our support of the MFA and why we think it must continue after 1991. My only worry is that, although the MFA will be with us until 1991, the Minister may not. Ministers have a nasty habit of moving on, and it may well be that my hon. Friend's career will have reached even greater heights by then and we will have rehearsed our arguments and support in vain.

I am grateful for this opportunity to make a short speech. Not many years ago a debate on textiles would have resulted in a heavy post-bag from my constituents. That is not so today, and it is a sad reflection of the massive reduction in textile jobs in Hyndburn. Nevertheless, the textile industry is still important to north-east Lancashire as a whole, not least in Pendle, in which it is the largest single employer. My hon. Friend the Member for Pendle (Mr. Lee) regrets that because of ministerial duties he is unable to be present.

I have received only one letter urging my support for the continuation of the MFA, but my hon. Friend the Member for Pendle has received several. They make interesting reading. For example Thomas Mason of Primet Mills, Colne wonders who has had the benefit of the high street boom, commenting that the great British public are certainly not buying shirts. All the letters make basically the same three points.

First, they say that the MFA is imperfect but that it offers the best protection for employment. Secondly, they say that in the long term jobs can be protected only by modernising plant, and that can be done only if the industry is confident that there is a market for its products. Thirdly, there is concern about the downturn in trading

[Mr. Ken Hargreaves]

activity over the past few months, which, the Blackburn and District Textile Manufacturers Association says, has resulted in a number of companies arranging, or considering, short-time working.

There is no doubt that there is growing apprehension about the level of activity in the textile indusry. The considerable success in exports, not least by the Hilden Manufacturing Company in Oswaldtwistle, which won the Queen's award for export and industry, is threatened by the strength of sterling. At home the effect of higher interest rates is likely further to depress demand. In those circumstances, the need for a strong MFA is greater than ever before.

The fourth renewal of the MFA in July 1986 provided the supplying countries with considerable scope for increased access to the Community market, and those opportunities have been seized. Textile and clothing imports from MFA supplying countries have increased from 205,000 tonnes in 1985 to 331,000 tonnes in 1987 —a 62 per cent. increase. Only the constraints of the MFA have held back an even faster and more damaging wave of imports.

In supporting the MFA, hon. Members from textile areas are asking, not for protection from fair competition, but for protection from unfair competition. I accept that the MFA has given the United Kingdom's textile and clothing industry more protection from the growth of the low-cost imports than any other United Kingdom manufacturing sector. Given the textile industry's history, it is no more than the people of that industry deserve.

Having lived all my life in a textile area, I have seen at first hand the problems caused to ordinary working people by job losses in textiles. Mili towns such as Accrington were devastated. I should not like that to happen in other areas. It was tragic to see skilled, hard-working people, with an industrial relations record second to none, who had readily accepted attempts to improve competitiveness —shift working, job flexibility and low wage increases— thrown on the scrap heap. It was a bewildering experience for them, and they were given no large redundancy payments.

The textile industry and the people in it have earned our support. It is often said that by protecting our textiles we are hurting the people in the Third world countries. I want help to be given to those countries, but that help must come from the country as a whole. It must come from other countries as well, not just from one section of one country. The remaining textile workers in my constituency cannot be asked to accept an increased burden if workers in the United States, Japan and Australia are not prepared to do so.

As we have seen from the figures, the MFA has allowed European Community imports to grow, and by providing guaranteed and growing access to developed markets it has greatly assisted developing countries to advance their exports in an orderly trading environment. If we abandoned the MFA it would lead to chaos, not least in Third world countries. Political pressure would build up in each developed country to enact strong protectionist legislation, which would have serious and mainly negative implications for textiles and world trade generally.

For that and the other reasons that I have outlined, I support the MFA and its continuation in 1991. In the meantime, I look forward with great interest, and not a little anxiety, to the further report by Professor Silberston. I hope that the major flaws which invalidated much of his previous report will not be repeated in the next one.

1.2 pm

Mr. Bob Cryer (Bradford, South): I understand that during my absence for a minute or so at the beginning of the debate the Minister referred to my absence. My pervasive presence in the Chamber——

Mr. Alan Clark: Who told the hon. Gentleman that?

Mr. Cryer: If that was not so and the Minister was merely missing me, I am happy to know that my absence, even for only a minute, is recognised. I thought that I would mention that because two or three people have raised it with me.

Hon. Members have mentioned the importance of the textile industry to more than 500,000 employees. Lest anyone be under an illusion, it is not an antique industry. It has much investment and is modern and up to date, and should be recognised as such. The MFA should be renewed, subject to a number of qualifications about its application.

I have been a supporter of the MFA since its inception because it is better to plan trade than to leave it to market forces. It allows ordered access for the developing countries. That access has been increasing since the MFA's inception, and I do not think that any group can say that it has been unfairly penalised. As my hon. Friend the Member for Halifax (Mrs. Mahon) said, we need a social clause for the MFA and the GATT—a sort of fair wages clause—by which we can ensure that there are trade union rights and health and safety standards for the countries which are seeking access through the MFA. That was the kind of request that was made in the 1970s during debates in the Chamber.

A letter from Initial Service Textiles states:

"We understand that there will be a debate in the House of Commons on Friday this week about the textile industry and the renewal of the Multi-fibre Agreement.

We believe that the renewal of the Multi-fibre Agreement is vital for the future of the British Textile Industry and also the European Textile Industry."

I imagine that it is referring to that section of Europe called the Common Market. It continued:

"We have been at the forefront in investing heavily in capital equipment to make our factories some of the most modern in the world. Our Company has been increasing its turnover by 20 per cent. per annum and has been expanding its export sales to the EEC year after year.

Whilst we have no objection to fair competition, we need to ensure that effective controls are put on textile producing areas where there is, in our opinion, unfair competition. The use of Government subsidies such as in Turkey, Pakistan and India combined with wage rates in certain countries of £50·00 per month are hard to combat.

We believe that the renewal of the Multi-fibre Agreement in some form is essential to ensure that this sort of competition is controlled."

I endorse that viewpoint, and am glad to put it on the record.

One problem, which has been echoed across the Chamber, is that the application of the MFA is not in the Government's hands. The Minister must, to the best of his ability, use his influence to counter the indifference of the EEC. Although the Government may already be attempting to do that, the fact remains that the Government have capitulated time and again to the EEC.

The Single European Act is one example. I understand that a three-line Whip was imposed on that measure, which gave the EEC yet more power. The Government have virtually capitulated over origin markings, against the wishes of the textile industry. Consumers have the right to know comprehensively the source of products on sale in this country. The Common Market does not like that because it does not want individual member states to be recognised—it wants a universal Euro blur. We must recognise the pressures coming from the Common Market and the Government must be prepared to stand against them.

Mr. Alan Clark: The hon. Gentleman was a Member of the European Parliament and he knows how these matters work. He and I have our views about the Single European Act, but it exists and majority voting applies. To say that we must stand up to Common Market pressures is just an empty phrase.

Mr. Cryer: The Minister knows that the Strasbourg Assembly does not apply the MFA. That is done by the Commission.

Mr. Alan Clark: The Council of Ministers.

Mr. Cryer: I accept that the Council of Ministers makes decisions and that it has majority voting on a number of issues, including the MFA, but surely the Commission can be pressurised rather more effectively than has happened to date. I accept that it is a difficult process, but the Government could use the threat of a repeal of section 2 of the European Communities Act 1972. The Minister might have a sympathetic streak towards that, but he will not get far in the Government if he says so. Some leverage must be exercised against the Euro blur, which is too often favoured by the Council of Ministers and the Commission. When the MFA was renegotiated in 1978, the then Commissioner in charge—a Viscount—put forward views opposed to those of the Government and we summoned him to London to explain that. He was a little upset, but he was forced to come, and strong views were expressed to him.

As a nation, we must be prepared to recoup from the Commission, for example, our anti-dumping powers. I am not suggesting that we break agreements, but we should attempt to negotiate our way out of such agreements. We must be in a position where we can make better judgments. The problem is that, after receiving representations, the Minister's judgment cannot be exercised because he is bound by the terms of various agreements, the application of which is sometimes not in his hands. That is the difficulty. There are times when the nation needs to make a judgment about circumstances affecting manufacturing industry and then to apply that judgment. That includes trading relations with other countries, the rights of access for developing nations and the need to preserve sections of our manufacturing industry and the jobs that go with them.

In that context, I want to mention Turkey, which is not a signatory to the MFA, although strong elements in the Community want Turkey to join the Community. Turkey is in breach of the treaty of Ankara in a number of ways. It promised not to apply massive duties, but it does. I asked the Minister in an intervention about the question of definition under the agreement with Turkey.

It is a difficult one, but we need more information from the Minister. The industry has provided information and has an anti-dumping application in process at the moment.

Efforts could be made again to renegotiate the relevant section of the agreement, because it has proved damaging. Up to last summer, 600 jobs had been lost in the Bradford travel-to-work area as a result of the import of Turkish acrylic fibre yarns. Bradford has a slogan about "Bradford bouncing back". In view of those job losses, Bradford is bouncing backwards.

The textile industry has undergone a great deal of diminution. There are 500,000 jobs in the industry now, whereas a few years ago there were 700,000 jobs in textiles and clothing, and the erosion of jobs has gone too far. I hope that the Minister can develop the criteria for damage, so that they will be of greater advantage to our country. The Minister must recognise that once damage has been done, it cannot easily be reversed.

The Government's general economic policy is not a help. That is reflected in a letter from the British Clothing Industry Association, the British Textile Confederation and the Knitting Industries' Federation, that is, in the words of the employers, not the employees. The letter says:

"But we now share a growing apprehension about the level of activity over the coming months and beyond. On the export front, where we have had considerable success, the strengthening of sterling has made it difficult to maintain the pace of advance. At home, the effect of higher interest rates is likely to depress consumer and retail demand. The weak United States dollar has materially increased the competitiveness of imports, particularly from those countries in the Far East whose currencies are linked to the dollar, and this has had a twofold impact: pressure on the market place, and pressure on prices and margins, reflected in some areas of the textile industry by short-time working, closures and redundancies. There is concern about future orders across a growing area of our joint industries."

That must be linked to the huge trade deficit, which has been growing under the present Government. Between January and September, in textiles and clothing it was £2·5 billion. It has been emphasised that workers in the industry have been co-operative over the years and in return for their co-operation in every improvement, with three-shift working and so on, many have been kicked in the teeth, with redundancies and mill closures. The workers in the industry deserve better.

The industry does not deserve the privatisation of water supplies, which will almost certainly lead to increased prices. The Confederation of British Wool Textiles Ltd. has expressed the view that it is opposed to water privatisation. Again, that is the view of the employers, not of the employees. Neither employers nor workers deserve the prospect of increased electricity charges. Electricity is a basic component of manufacturing industry. No matter how reasonable the Minister appears to be, he is part of a driving force that has the ideology of privatising virtually everything in sight. That is damaging for British manufacturing industry, and the workers must be warned never to put their trust in a Tory Government.

It is ironic, when we are talking about the textile industry and the need to retain jobs in it, that the current issue of *CBI News* contains a big advertisement saying:

"Just think Hong Kong and you've got it made."

The CBI is not backing British industry by giving space to that advertisement which does not seem to provide much benefit for workers. I hope that the Minister will take that point on board. We know that he has some sympathy for

[Mr. Cryer]

the industry and we hope that he will try to translate that into practical action, in spite of all the difficulties that he faces from his colleagues.

1.14 pm

Mr. David Tredinnick (Bosworth): I want to argue the case, not just for the continuation of the multi-fibre arrangements, but for the continuation of an effective MFA after 1991. I do so, proudly representing 90 hosiery and knitwear companies in my Bosworth constituency, which employ about 16,000 workers, and against a background of the recent loss of 5,000 jobs in the east Midlands. These losses include 200 redundancies in my constituency, mostly in the dyeing and finishing trades, including 80 at Sunnydale Knitwear in Hinckley and another 30 at Trinity Dyeworks.

I will argue for an effective MFA because, when the MFA was renegotiated in 1986, many concessions were made that increased access from low-cost suppliers. I advise my hon. Friend the Minister for Trade that there should not be the same level of concessions in 1991, given the difficulties of the high exchange rate that the industry faces at the moment and the effects of the watering down of the MFA in 1986.

The first factor that reduced the effectiveness of the MFA in 1986 was the substantial uplift of quota levels in the first year of the new agreement. Secondly, the new annual quota growth rates were generally higher than under the previous agreement. Thirdly, the flexibility allowed to exporting countries to transfer quota from one year to another or one product to another was increased. Fourthly, quota transfer between EEC member states was allowed automatically, within limits—a new facility.

I shall dwell on that point for a moment as it is significant, because, if quotas can be exchanged and used throughout the EEC, there is nothing to stop a predator country or a low-cost producing country from targeting one particular country in one year, and knocking out its industry. This country—and London in particular—is an ideal target, because within 1 square mile of London a potential buyer could capture 80 per cent. of the market. To expand on that, 14 retail outlets account for 80 per cent. of the United Kingdom's garment sales. What a target that would be for a country such as China. What is to stop a country, under the new arrangements, saying, "Let us go for London this year. Let us wipe out the London market. Let us go for it." By London, I mean the hosiery and knitwear companies in Hinckley, Earl Shilton, Barwell and Anstey, which I represent and whose products are sold in the London market. We must be careful about that.

Hon. Members have referred to the textile and clothing trade deficit. I shall not dwell on that, except to say that the figures show that imports from MFA suppliers have increased sharply. However, it is clear that the MFA's strengths have held back what would have been a faster and more damaging wave of imports had the MFA not existed.

I turn briefly to three issues, two of which have been touched on in the debate. The first is China. In an intervention I referred to the damage caused to the industry in my constituency. I am grateful to my hon. Friend the Minister for allowing me to intervene in his opening speech. The plain fact is that China is a dominant supplier, and it should be treated as such. If ever we needed encouragement to do so, it comes in a letter that my hon. Friend has kindly made available from the China International Convention Service Ltd. It said:

> "The Chinese Ministry of Textile Industry (MTI) has recently worked out a development program for the 1988-90 period with emphasis on 'upgrading the products, development of new textile technology, strengthening technical renovation of existing factories, and improving key technology' . . . the textile industry is given investment priority by the Chinese Government."

If ever there was a warning, it is contained in that letter from the highest authorities in Peking.

The high import tariffs imposed by Turkey and the problems that they cause to manufacturers have been highlighted. We should place those charges on the record, because I believe that they are almost unbelievable and illustrate the problem faced by exporters in Hinckley. If knitted outwear manufacturers in my constituency want to export to Turkey, they must first pay a basic tariff of 40 per cent., then there is the municipal tax of 15 per cent. of the basic tariff, then they face customs charges of 2 per cent., followed by a stamp duty of 10 per cent., topped up by an import premium of 8 per cent. That is followed by 5 per cent. wharf dues and a $20 per kilogram housing fund. All that comes to 122 per cent. I am supposed to go to my constituency and say, "Have a go at Turkey," when the Turks can sell to Britain without paying a cent. of duty. It is just not on.

Another reason for maintaining a tough MFA is the change that will take place in German trading arrangements in 1992. Currently, East Germany, because of its obvious historic relationship with West Germany, has special trading rights to sell into West Germany. The deal is that East German goods shipped to West Germany cannot be exported to the EEC. After 1992, however, all goods from Germany will be exported throughout the EEC. That will create a new problem. First, we shall have a flood of cheap, politically priced goods from East Germany coming to all the EEC countries, including Britain. Secondly, other COMECON or east bloc countries will push goods which, will be underpriced, through the German bridgehead, and straight into Europe. Surely that is the best reason for keeping an effective MFA.

I have looked at the gloomy side of the industry, but I should like to end on a more optimistic note. Because of the protection of the MFA, many manufacturers in my constituency are now gearing up with new equipment, new knitting machines and computer technology for design in fully-fashioned knitwear, despite the cost. One manufacturer that I visited the other day told me that he is now attacking the Italian high fashion market. Hon. Members will know just how difficult a market that is to penetrate.

The MFA is providing protection and manufacturers are moving with the times, but we must not be fooled. We cannot do away with the MFA in 1991; we must extend it. If we do so, normality in GATT will return. The MFA must be extended, and it must be effective.

1.23 pm

Mr. Frank Haynes (Ashfield): I shall be brief in the interests of other hon. Members who want to speak.

With reference to what my hon. Friend the Member for Oldham, Central and Royton (Mr. Lamond) said, I was not asking for the Minister's resignation. The Minister is not responding.

Mr. Alan Clark: The hon. Gentleman would have done me a good turn if he had. It would have kept me in place a bit longer.

Mr. Haynes: The Minister has not done a bad job over the years. I have been here and I have praised him on numerous occasions because of his efforts, but at the moment we have a problem and I want to talk to the Minister about it.

The Minister may be unaware that, yesterday I asked the Leader of the House whether he knew that we were to have a debate on the MFA today. I suggested to the right hon. Gentleman that this debate would probably be a talking shop for the Government. I was hoping for some action. The Department of Trade and Industry must take some decisions with a view to helping the industry, which is in serious difficulties. As I said earlier, in Mansfield and Ashfield we have lost 1,200 jobs in the hosiery and knitwear industry in a matter of weeks. That creates a massive problem for jobs. There are many reasons why there are difficulties. I will stick to basics, and I will not be technical and pour out statistics such as those that we have heard today.

The Government must face several problems. They must consider the present balance of trade. Imports are pouring into this country, espcially from China, Turkey Taiwan and Hong Kong, at the expense of jobs in our industry. The Minister must badger the Chancellor of the Exchequer because credit is out of control. When we regain control of credit, there will be a massive full stop and we will feel it in industry, not only in the hosiery and knitwear industry, but in other national industries as well. Jobs will be hit.

Earlier it was said that we were not looking for protection for the industry. However, the Government have a responsibility to British industry. What have the manufacturers and trade unionists done over many years? They have worked together to modernise the industry and they have helped to reduce manpower. However, because of that modernisation, and in addition to the other problems such as the balance of trade and dumping in this country, matters have become worse. We are now squealing at the Government to pull up their socks and do something.

Earlier I said that the Minister had done a fair job. However, we have a real problem, and he must understand exactly what is happening. With no disrespect to anyone else, it seems to me that the Minister is entering the negotiations without the proper advice. He should have people in his team from the industry and the trade union movement because they know what is happening in the industry. He would then get the right advice. It is all very well to say that the MFA runs out in 1991, and I have heard hon. Members appeal for an extension. However, I am worried about what will happen in 1992. If our industry is on the floor in 1992, it will not pick itself up again because of the competition across the water and around the world.

The Minister must recognise that he needs the proper advice for his negotiations. We are not looking for protection; we are looking for fairness for the industries that the Government are supposed to be helping. The word "help" has been writ large by hon. Members on both sides of the Chamber today. That word stands out a mile because the industry is crying out for it and only one organisation can provide that help—the Government. The Government must not sit back as the Minister is sitting on the Treasury Front Bench. The Minister must give us some guarantees. He must provide the help that is needed if we are to save a marvellous industry that employs so many people. If nothing is done, the number of jobs in the industry will diminish. My constituency has suffered from pit closures, as has that of my hon. Friend the Member for Mansfield (Mr. Meale). Mining is no longer the leading industry in our constituencies. The hosiery and knitwear industry is way out in front, but slowly and surely it is declining just as the mining industry has declined.

The Government were responsible for the decline of coal mining. If they are not careful, they will be blamed for the serious decline in hosiery, knitwear and textiles generally. I appeal to the Minister to do the right thing. I understand that he can do that only if he has the right information and advice, which must come from those who work or participate in the industry.

That is really all that I have to say. I shall not go on and on like some hon. Members have done today. I do not intend to pour out statistics on this, that or the other. I appeal to the Government to help the industry and, at the same time, to help the British economy.

1.32 pm

Mr. Graham Riddick (Colne Valley): On the last occasion on which I took up the remarks of the hon. Member for Ashfield (Mr. Haynes), he tried to cross the Floor to beat me up. Our views today are probably not as polarised as they were during the passage through the House of what was then the Employment Bill.

I am pleased to have the opportunity for the first time since becoming a Member of this place last year to participate in a debate on the multi-fibre arrangement. My Liberal predecessor, Richard Wainwright, participated in the previous debate. He described the Colne Valley constituency as a traditional textile and Socialist seat. I am pleased to tell the House that the constituency is still definitely a traditional textile area. It is most definitely not a Socialist seat.

I sought to intervene during the speech of the hon. Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, North (Mr. Henderson), who spoke from the Opposition Front Bench, to refer to the privatisation of the water authorities. Unfortunately, he would not allow me to do so. I wanted to say that the chairman of Yorkshire Water has written to the Yorkshire and Humberside Association of Chambers of Trade to say that, if he were to hazard a guess, he does not think that prices will rise any more under privatised industry than if the industry remains in public hands. That is important to bear in mind when the statement comes from the chairman of that authority.

Most of the producers in my constituency tend to be involved in high-quality woollens and worsteds. That means that the MFA tends to have less impact on them than on those in other areas, including west Yorkshire. As many others have said, however, the importance of the

[Mr. Graham Riddick]

textile and clothing industries in the United Kingdom must not be underestimated. They produce sales of more than £13 billion per annum and employ about 500,000 people. It is clear that we are talking about a major and important industry. Therefore, our approach to the MFA must be considered, not ideological. Ideologically, I should like to see the arrangement abolished. That is because I believe in free and open trade between nations. By placing restrictions in the way of free trade, consumers usually suffer by having to pay higher prices. Secondly, the pace of necessary economic change can be impeded.

Notwithstanding that belief, I and everyone must consider the world as it really is. There are several factors that would make it premature and unwise to press for the abolition of the arrangement once the current one ends. I believe in free trade, but that trade must be fair between countries. If we break down all barriers to imports into the United Kingdom, no purpose is served if we find that we are unable to export to other countries because of the trade barriers that they have erected. By the same token, we should not offer our markets openly and freely to countries that heavily subsidise their textile industries. That has been a common theme throughout the debate. I was reassured by the comments of my hon. Friend the Minister on that score.

Another important factor is that the MFA plays a useful role in keeping at bay the protectionists in the United States. I have no doubt that if the MFA did not exist, the American Congress would have erected considerable barriers to imports, which would have undoubtedly hit hard our country and less developed producer countries. A number of complicating factors surround the whole issue.

I was amazed by a pronouncement made two or three years ago by the then Liberal party. Like everybody else, I am somewhat confused as to what that party is now called. Where is the Liberal party today?

Incidentally, the House may be amused to know that, last weekend, there was the ludicrous and hilarious spectacle of the leader of the SLD group on my local council of Kirklees attending the founding conference of the old Liberal party. Subsequently he was quoted as saying that he will remain leader of the council's SLD group. That proves what many of us have long suspected —that no Liberal feels at home in any one party but prefers to straddle as many parties, and therefore as many options, as possible.

I was amazed at the Liberal party's statement of two or three years ago that the current MFA must be the last. That is what was said by the party's official spokesman at that time.

Mr. Tredinnick: It is amazing if the SLD is against the multi-fibre arrangement. I am sure that my constituents will take a dim view of that. Will my hon. Friend elaborate, because I am not sure that I understand him correctly?

Mr. Riddick: It is always difficult comprehending Liberal party policy, but my understanding is that that party made crystal clear its belief that the current MFA should be the last, and that my predecessor, as the Member of Parliament for Colne Valley, Mr. Richard Wainwright, argued strongly that that was the case. That argument was also made by the hon. Member for Yeovil (Mr. Ashdown).

Mr. James Lamond: I was present on that occasion. I advise the hon. Member for Bosworth (Mr. Tredinnick) to read the record of that debate, which bears out what was said by his hon. Friend the Member for Colne Valley (Mr. Riddick). He will also find that the hon. Member for Rochdale (Sir C. Smith), who, unfortunately, has not graced the Chamber with his presence, was bitterly opposed to the then Liberal party's policy—and not for the first time.

Mr. Riddick: It will not have been the first time that the hon. Member for Rochdale (Sir C. Smith) was the only Liberal Member of Parliament talking any sense. I wonder whether the Liberal party's approach to the MFA was a contributory factor to its being wiped out in Yorkshire in the last general election.

Mr. Tredinnick: If that really is Liberal party policy, it will play a significant part in the thinking of the Leicestershire electorate as they approach next year's county council elections.

Mr. Riddick: I feel sure that my hon. Friend will bring Liberal policy to the attention of his constituents.

The main reason why I was so amazed was that it is unusual to find the Liberal party coming out with a clear and decisive policy on any subject.

Mr. Haynes: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Is this a debate on the MFA, or a party political broadcast?

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Sir Paul Dean): The hon. Member for Colne Valley (Mr. Riddick) is referring to the MFA, although there have been occasions when he has allowed himself to be diverted.

Mr. Riddick: It is important that my constituents should be aware of the position taken by the Liberal party and by SLD Members on this important issue, for it is significant to the people of west Yorkshire. I am surprised at the intervention of the hon. Member for Ashfield, who usually likes matters to be understood as clearly as possible.

The matter to which I refer is not typical Liberal fudge but a policy which everyone can understand. I applaud the fact that the Liberals made it clear where they stood on the issue, even if it was the wrong stance. I believe that it was wrong for some of the reasons that I have already mentioned and because, if one gives notice to developing producer nations that the MFA will end in 1991, those countries are bound to prevaricate on reducing their own barriers to our textile exports.

Before leaving Liberal policy, I should mention the speech of the hon. Member for Roxburgh and Berwickshire (Mr. Kirkwood), who unfortunately is not present. As he said, he made a constituency speech. At least he would appear to agree with the hon. Member for Rochdale in that he wants to keep the MFA, but he did not change the official Liberal policy or approach to the matter.

It is only right that such a debate should address an issue which the industry inevitably raises with politicians, and which has been mentioned frequently by Opposition Members—high interest rates and the value of sterling.

The industry, which is currently investing heavily and which is an important exporter, is hit if the pound appreciates and interest rates are high. But I defend the Government's current economic position. Inflation is the number one enemy of the textile industry as well as the rest of industry. Interest rates are the most effective tool for dealing with the current problem and for allocating the available resources to those people and industries who most need them and therefore are prepared to pay the high interest rates. The current high level of sterling reflects not only high interest rates but the high esteem with which the British economy is viewed by investors and market makers abroad.

With the enormous economic improvements that have taken place under this Government, the pound is destined to stay high and any future improvement in the British economy will again be reflected in the price of sterling. Indeed, because the Chancellor tried to feather-bed industry generally, he reduced interest rates too far earlier in the year and that has now led to a higher interest rate than would otherwise have been needed. Therefore, the textile industry will have to continue with its effort to improve productivity and competitiveness.

All is not doom and gloom. The CBI magazine, which I received this morning, forecasts that, despite all the problems facing British industry, Britain's economy will grow by 3·4 per cent. next year and manufacturing output will rise by 4·8 per cent. By no stretch of the imagination can those be described as disappointing production figures.

The textile industry has made enormous strides in recent years. Exports of wool textiles are at a record level this year and woollen exporters to Japan continue to make great strides. Exports to Taiwan and South Korea will have more than doubled during the past two years to some £25 million, which just goes to show what our industry can do when trade barriers are reduced and our industry is given the chance to compete on equal terms.

I am very impressed with the efforts which the industry is making in training—which I do not think have been mentioned in the debate—and getting into schools to tell youngsters about the opportunities it offers. For example, there is one manager for every eight operatives; therefore, prospects are good. There has been increasing liaison with careers officers and a recent link with technical colleges in Huddersfield and Bradford so that existing operatives may receive extra training at those colleges. All those moves augur well for the industry's future, and indeed its training efforts were rewarded only recently when it received one of the Government's national training awards. I congratulate the industry on its efforts in training.

In my constituency, there are a number of very successful textile companies. One of the most dramatic success stories involved Drakes Fibres and F. Drake and Co. of Golcar massively expanding their production and export sales of polypropylene filament yarn. That was despite the unfair and illegal subsidy that the French Government made to one of their direct competitors and that, to its shame, the European Commission did nothing about. I wonder, incidentally whether the Minister has received a translation of the Commission's judgment in that case. He had not received one when the matter was last discussed in the House.

The EEC's role in these matters is becoming increasingly important. What steps is the EEC taking to stop unfair subsidies within EEC countries? I believe that Italy still provides massive subsidies for its textile industry. What are the Minister's views on the EEC's ability to negotiate single Community quotas in the future? They could make Britain particularly vulnerable, as the concentration of United Kingdom buying power lies with five or six major retailers, headed by Marks and Spencer.

I shall ask my hon. Friend about Turkey, although, unlike Opposition Members, I do not blame him for all the problems that Turkish imports have created. Why has the European Commission so lamentably failed to do anything about the grossly unfair and highly subsidised imports from Turkey? Some people in the industry, as well as the hon. Member for Bradford, South (Mr. Cryer), who is not in his place, believe that the EEC has taken no positive action because Turkey is regarded as a particularly sensitive matter, both politically and strategically, and that we cannot therefore afford to upset the Turks. I do not believe that, because the EEC is allowing Mexico massively to increase its exports of acrylic yarns to this country. One wonders whether the EEC has the will to tackle these problems, particularly as Turkey and Mexico are outside the MFA. What steps has my right hon. Friend taken to tackle these problems?

How can British textile exporters compete when they are faced by tariffs that in Brazil are as high as 105 per cent. and in Turkey 122 per cent.? I know that the Minister is totally frustrated and believes that he is in a straitjacket, since we are at the mercy of the EEC and the European Commission.

The textile and clothing industries have made it clear that they would be happy if we returned to the normal GATT rules and if they were allowed to compete freely in world markets. However, I agree with them that that cannot happen and that the MFA will have to remain in place until all artificial trade barriers are abolished and unfair Government subsidies removed. Until that happens, the MFA must remain.

1.47 pm

Mr. Pat Wall (Bradford, North): I thank those who sit on the two Front Benches and the Whips for organising this debate in such a way that all hon. Members who wish to speak on the subject will be allowed to do so.

Historically, the textile industry has been a barometer for the rest of British industry. What happens in textiles today will happen tomorrow in other industries. That happened during the 1975 recession. The present redundancies, lay-offs and short-time working are the result of the worsening position of exports compared with imports, the sharp increase in interest rates and the consequent gross over-valuation of the pound compared with the American dollar and other leading European currencies. The importance of those trends in the textile industry has, perhaps, been over-emphasised and I apologise for repeating them briefly, but the industry is the fifth most important in Britain. It accounts for a quarter of Britain's total trade deficit, but nevertheless is the fifth largest exporter.

The textile industry has a special social significance. Some sections of it are located in the south, but in the main it is located in areas of high unemployment and social deprivation, where the problem of high interest rates is felt especially. Firms in prosperous areas that have more stable, established and growing markets may be able to deal with high interest rates for a while, but in areas such

[Mr. Pat Wall]

as the West Riding of Yorkshire, which has experienced tremendous social problems since 1975, the battle of clawing money back, reinvesting in new methods and technologies and achieving higher productivity has not been easily won. Recent figures show that unemployment is falling faster in more prosperous areas than in the more socially deprived areas of high unemployment, but if there is a large-scale loss of textile workers' jobs there will be a complete reversal of the few gains that we have made over the past two or three years.

Since the 1975 recession, the industry has made considerable efforts to improve. Since 1980, productivity in wool and yarns has risen by over 40 per cent., by over 50 per cent. in carpets and over 70 per cent. in bleaching dyeing and raising. Since 1981, profits have risen from about 1 to 4 per cent. to 10 per cent. more recently.

I must emphasise that workers in the textile, clothing and footwear industries have made the greatest sacrifices. Employment has fallen by 46 per cent., but workers have increased productivity by about the same figure. The average earnings of most textile workers remain at £20 a week less than the average throughout manufacturing industry.

The Government have abandoned manufacturing industry in favour of finance, and the Minister is faced with a difficult problem. It is generally accepted in the House that he has a genuine interest in manufacturing industry and is aware of its importance, but the party that he represents, especially the Cabinet, has abandoned manufacturing industry in favour of financial interests, which is crazy. Some 90 per cent. of trade on the world stock exchanges concerns not manufacturing, trade or goods and services but speculation. The value of our manufacturing exports worldwide is six times greater than that of service industries. It must be an obvious truth to anyone but the Government that manufacturing is the sole source of wealth in a modern society. The taking of raw materials, part-finished goods and machines, and the application of human labour, skill, nerves and imagination to make useful products or machines to create further products is the basis of society's wealth. We would not have dentists, a Health Service, supermarkets or nice restaurants if that wealth were not created in the first place by manufacturing industries. That neglect of manufacturing, which is highlighted in the textile industry, is the Government's responsibility.

The textile industry's demands are modest. The industry is asking for an organised and orderly method of conducting trade and the multi-fibre arrangement provides that. It is not a perfect arrangement. It does not work entirely as it should, but it allows the important elements of the textile trade to operate. For example, textiles connected with house wares affect the world economy. Since the war, there has been a sharpening of the division of labour, but textile and clothing industries remain in the most advanced and technically developed countries and those countries that are attempting to emerge as advanced economies.

The industry has asked for the maintenance of the agreement which recognises the historic role of textiles in the more advanced countries and the needs of exploited workers in Asia, Latin America and other parts of the world. I support all those hon. Members who have spoken for the continuation of the agreement and for the improvement of MFA5. They have asked that China be recognised for what it is—a dominant supplier to the textile industry.

Reference has also been made to dumping, particularly the dumping of Turkish acrylic products. I see that every day because I live opposite a mill which, for two years, has been prosperous and where the workers have had regular overtime. I believe that they worked far too much overtime, but they had to do so. For the first time in over two years, they are on short time as a direct result of the present situation.

The question of timescale is at issue. The Turkish acrylic yarn incident highlighted the Government's slowness to react. We debated that matter only a few weeks ago in an Adjournment debate initiated by my hon. Friend the Member for Halifax (Mrs. Mahon). We debated the wool textile industry in an Adjournment debate that I initiated in May. Well before that, the industry, the unions and hon. Members raised the issue in the House. However, when the damage has been done and the redundancies have been made, we are told that a meeting will take place and those involved might come to an agreement, but the net result of that meeting will be the fixing of a high level figure.

When mills close and machines are removed, they are not easily replaced, just as, when shipyards are closed, they are not easily replaced. Thirty per cent. of British manufacturing industry was destroyed, but, when we moved into an easier market and a boom period, that could not be rebuilt overnight to meet the nation's needs and has thus led to the continuation of an increased volume of imports.

We hope that the textile industry will be safeguarded in view of 1992 and its implications, not only in respect of imports from East Germany, but because Britain may become the dumping ground for the whole of Europe when a single tariff agreement is introduced.

I support my hon. Friend the Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, North (Mr. Henderson) in his plea for a social clause. I shall never be a little Englander and I have never been a strong supporter of import controls. However, I have travelled to Hong Kong, Taiwan, South Korea, Malaysia, Singapore, Thailand and Sri Lanka on many occasions and I have told the story in the House about the working conditions that I saw in the textile trade in South Korea. I went there in connection with the trade in housewares. I saw those lovely, hard-working people in South Korea. There were girls living in dormitories working 60 hours a week with two days off after 28 days. Those people are trying to form trade unions and obtain civil liberties and the right to vote. We should support the right of people to organise freely and form trade unions independent of the state so that they can obtain improved working conditions. That would be better understood by Korean, Taiwanese or Hong Kong workers than import barriers and import controls. They would understand something that offered them some improvement in their working conditions.

I strongly support my hon. Friend the Member for Bradford, West (Mr. Madden) in his demand for an accelerated investment programme in textiles and for improved training. Textile workers undervalue their skills. Their skills should be recognised and there should be a proper training programme. Young people should be attracted to the industry and given a sense of security.

As a Socialist, I look forward to the day when the textile, clothing and footwear industry is owned and controlled democratically by the working people who produce the wealth in it. I look forward to the day when they will be able to share in that wealth. I look forward to a world in which trade is not left to the market. The existence of the MFA and GATT and their effect on the Group of Seven bankers shows that the world market does not solve all the problems that face mankind. I look forward to a world in which trade is organised in a friendly and democratic way. That would be in the interest of all the peoples of the world and would help bring about an improvement in their standard of living.

I do not expect support from the Government for that. However, the Government defend the market economy and say that they stand in defence of British industry. As my hon. Friend the Member for Bradford, West said, industry pays plenty of money to ensure that the Conservative party is returned to power. It is for the Government to show that they can protect the interests of nearly half a million textile workers and their families in Britain and ensure that the industry looks forward to a secure future.

2.2 pm

Mr. Henderson: With the leave of the House, I should like to respond to some of the points that have been made. It is interesting that Members on both sides of the House made it clear that the Minister has a reputation for being refreshingly frank during Question Time. I am not sure that the Minister welcomes such tributes from the Floor of the House, so I shall not labour the point. I know that the House is looking for the Minister to be equally frank in his response to the debate today.

I realise that the Minister might not be able to move the Chancellor of the Exchequer on interest rates or the rate of exchange, but I hope that he will put to his right hon. Friend the case for industry, and particularly the case for the textile and clothing industry. Industrialists and workers in the textile and clothing community believe that, apart from the details of trade, the main issue now affecting industry is the Government's macro-economic policy. I hope that the Minister will take the views expressed in this debate to the Chancellor.

The Minister's Department is directly responsible for trade regulation. I hope that he will provide clarity on trade issues. We have heard from the hon. Member for Macclesfield (Mr. Winterton) and the hon. Member for Roxburgh and Berwickshire (Mr. Kirkwood) of the fears about the potential impact on their constituencies of a dramatic increase of imports from China.

We live in a changing world. Economies and growth rates change. Formerly, agricultural or semi-industrial countries quickly become industrial. In reviewing our trade agreements, whether the GATT, the MFA or the bilateral agreements flowing from them, it is necessary continually to examine developments in different countries. I hope that the Minister will make a statement on the terms of renegotiation of the bilateral deal with China and tell us when we may hear some details.

I have been impressed by the near unanimity in the House on the need for a renewal of the multi-fibre arrangement. The hon. Member for Macclesfield and my hon. Friend for Oldham, Central and Royton (Mr. Lamond) reminded us of that need. If I understood correctly, even the hon. Member for Holland with Boston (Sir R. Body) recognised that, to have a future as a trading country, Britain needs to insist on fair trading agreements throughout the world.

Hon. Members have recognised the need for regulations and fair trade. They know the alternative and that it will cause damage and devastation to industry and large parts of Britain. They know that unless we can conclude sensible and equitable arrangements on trade we will face the horrific alternative of beggar-thy-neighbour protectionism. Those hon. Members who have spoken, who by and large have a specific interest in the textile industry, must pass on to those hon. Members who have no axe to grind in respect of that industry that, if protectionism is allowed to apply to textiles, it will not be long before protectionism and beggar-thy-neighbour policies apply to other industries. In the long term, that is bad news for hon. Members who represent largely exporting industries. I hope that they will join us in putting pressure on the Minister and the Government to insist that there is an early commitment on MFA renewal. I hope that the Minister can give hope to industrialists who seek to invest and who believe that they have export markets to tap, but need to be given a guarantee of stability and security.

Concern has been expressed about trade with Turkey. We have heard of the breach of the treaty of Ankara, which regulated trade between the EC and Turkey. My hon. Friends the Members for Halifax (Mrs. Mahon) and for Bradford, North (Mr. Wall) and the hon. Member for Batley and Spen (Mrs. Peacock) referred to matters affecting our unacceptable trade agreement with Turkey. If that country has ambitions to be part of the EEC, it must begin to behave to the minimum standards required within the EEC. It is unacceptable that the Turkish Government should provide investment grants greater than the level of investment. That must stop if equity is to be restored. It is unacceptable that there should be a range of subsidies that cumulatively amount to 122 per cent., as was mentioned by the hon. Member for Bosworth (Mr. Tredinnick).

Trade union rights are important. If there is to be fair trade, those who prepare and manufacture goods must have basic minimum conditions. Indeed, that was what President Reagan said when he reached an accommodation with the American unions. That must be a key issue for countries which hope to participate in our fair trading practices. I hope that during any future negotiations on the MFA the Government will insist on the insertion of such a vital social clause. I hope that the Minister will tell us what action he believes will bring about the regulation of our trade with Turkey.

We have had a fairly full debate on the textile industry and its future priorities. I am pleased that that has happened while there are talks in Montreal about future trading relationships. It is also right to have such a debate at the mid-term of MFA4, when we can evaluate its impact on the real economy.

I hope that the Minister can give some hope, not only to hon. Members who have raised many points during the debate, but to the workers in the industry, the industrialists, the textile communities and the consumers of such vital products.

2.12 pm

Mr. Alan Clark: With the leave of the House, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I have been present throughout the debate other than for brief absences totalling three minutes 18 seconds. I have heard every speech, all of which have been useful and constructive. I shall do my best to reply in the time available to the points raised.

My prognosis of the conduct of the hon. Member for Leicester, East (Mr. Vaz) was correct. Following a rather disparaging, rambling intervention early in my opening speech, he departed for a social engagement. That, however, does nothing but contrast favourably with the conduct of his hon. and learned Friend the Member for Leicester, West (Mr. Janner), whose sense of self-importance is so great that he does not even sign his letters on this subject, but leaves it to his research assistant. I am sure that he whole House will join me in our wildly diffused sense of chagrin at the absence of Mr. Peter Bruinvels, who used to represent a Leicester constituency.

The hon. Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, North (Mr. Henderson) made a number of cogent points. I welcome his statement that international trade agreements are essential to the prosperity of the industry. Indeed, it is within that framework that we are having this debate. All hon. Members accepted that, with the possible exception of the hon. Member for Leicester, East in his rather short and dotty intervention. The question of ramie was raised. It is important—although it is not included in MFA4—and there is provision in the current arrangement for action to be taken against disruptive imports of ramie textile and clothing products. We have been monitoring the position closely and imports of such products into the United Kingdom at present are at a fairly modest level and not at a level at which distress has been expressed to us.

The hon. Member for Roxburgh and Berwickshire (Mr. Kirkwood) made two important points. In an intervention, he raised the question of the inner limit for category 5 imports from China and he asked whether it is in the new agreement. It is, but for reasons that he will appreciate, I cannot give details at this minute. He and my hon. Friend the Member for Macclesfield (Mr. Winterton), who has, unfortunately, had to leave the House——

Mr. Cryer: For a social engagement.

Mr. Clark: My hon. Friend raised the important question of cashmere supplies. I am aware of the concerns of the users of cashmere at the deterioration in the quality of cashmere supplies. We have established a system for taking up specific complaints with the Chinese authorities through our embassy, and the Community has taken up the issue in the recent negotiations. The Chinese Government have recognised the concern of cashmere buyers in the Community over problems with the implementation of commercial contracts including quality aspects.

The Chinese Government have undertaken:

"to endeavour in consultation with the organisations responsible for export of these products to find remedies for these problems, to ensure that the quality of the product is improved in order to meet the standards required by European industry and to enter into consultations in the event of difficulties in the provision and delivery of the products."

They also indicated a willingness to assist Community industrialists wishing to buy cashmere and other similar raw materials such as silk or angora in the future.

Mr. Kirkwood: Will the Minister give way?

Mr. Clark: No, because I gave way 15 times in my opening speech and the House would probably prefer me to go through the important points that were raised before I give way.

My hon. Friend the Member for Bosworth (Mr. Tredinnick) raised the question of Chinese underwear. That will be covered by the quota under the new bilateral agreement with China.

My hon. Friend the Member for Macclesfield also touched on the question of imports and how they are sometimes needed by British manufacturers. At intervals, we have had the curious paradox that an hon. Member complained about an anti-dumping provision when it affected an industry in his constituency which needed an import and yet that same hon. Member complained that other imports were not subject to anti-dumping provisions on the ground that they offered competition to manufacturers in his constituency. I do not deny that both those contentions are valid. They illustrate the great complexity of international trade and the need for vigilance and co-operation with industry and others affected and for close and continuing monitoring and scrutiny. My Department relies as much on hon. Members for that as it does on its contacts in industry.

The hon. Member for Oldham, Central and Royton (Mr. Lamond) raised, among other points, the question of serious injury, as did his hon. Friend the Member for Bradford, South (Mr. Cryer). The question of criteria is difficult. I have said this on many occasions and I repeat it now. There must be some systematic evidence, above all of a fall in domestic production, which can be shown to be caused by rising imports from the "low-cost supplying country" in question. Factors to be taken into account include systematic evidence of falling employment in the domestic industry, falling orders and rising stocks. Those elements are undesirable in themselves and can occur separately and independently, but they must be attributable to rising imports from the "low-cost supplying country." That is the key phrase that encompasses the link, without which it will not be possible to establish injury.

That brings me conveniently to the question of polyester fibre anti-dumping. In the Commission we have discussed ways in which the problems of the users of polyester fibre can be overcome. Those discussions will continue in Brussels next week. The question of what is available from EEC sources is not entirely straightforward. As I have said, it is a classic case which shows the continuing conflict of interest that can arise at any time in relation to complaints about dumping. Hon. Members have been urging me to find ways to make it easier to take action against dumping by Turkey in the case where the Commission has taken action and imposed provisional duties. However, I am also urged to ensure that those duties are not confirmed because of the adverse effect on our own industry. I quite understand the reasons in each case, but hon. Members should realise that I often have to make difficult judgments in weighing the relative advantage and interest of their constituents in different sectors.

In that context, I should like to mention the constructive and sympathetic speech of my hon. Friend the Member for Holland with Boston (Sir R. Body). It was the only speech from the consumer side. He properly drew the House's attention to the fact that poor people with low

earnings are those most affected by small differences in the cost of clothing and apparel. That point was well understood. I shall stick to the point that I made when I opened the debate that although poor consumers may be the most affected, they would be even poorer if they were put out of work by the incursion of the goods that are affecting their standard of living and quality of life being provided to them at a lower cost.

Although this idea has never been systematically put to the test, I sometimes think that there are more people in this country than the Consumers Association credits who would not mind paying an extra 5p or 7p on the price of a tee-shirt or whatever if they knew that in so doing they were helping our domestic industry and their compatriots, their friends' and neighbours' prospects for employment and, indeed, the whole of British industry and the British economy. That point has never been properly surveyed. I fully appreciate the points made by my hon. Friend the Member for Holland with Boston that such consumer considerations impact most strongly on the poorer sections in our community.

Many hon. Members raised the difficult question of the social clause. I understand them to be arguing for sanctions against supplying countries that fail to meet adequate social and working conditions. It is true tha. the first article of the MFA states that a principal aim in the implementation of the arrangement shall be to further the economic and social development of developing countries.

The Community pressed for that to be emphasised in the new protocol and that was done. To go further and introduce new restrictions where certain social conditions were not met would not, in the view of many, have been desirable. Social and working conditions are more likely to be improved by allowing a country to sell its goods than by preventing this. There are proposals for a GATT working party to examine the question of workers' rights in developing countries. The Government would be prepared to support an agreement to establish a working party. I must tell the House that, to date, all such proposals have been received with great hostility by the developing countries.

It is common sense to consider that—it is a view shared across the Chamber—China is becoming a dominant supplier, if it has not already attained that standing. That must be recognised at some point in the future, but I used those words because present Chinese exports to the United Kingdom do not account for more than 1·6 per cent. of imports. Therefore, in relation to the level of imports into the United Kingdom, China cannot presently be described as a dominant supplier.

I have been urged by a number of hon. Members to comment on the future of the MFA. I have been impressed by the argument from my hon. Friends the Members for Colne Valley (Mr. Riddick) and for Keighley (Mr. Waller) and others that the importance of the MFA is not solely something to be assessed in a purely protectionist context and that it has an importance that the less-developed countries appreciate. When I was in Pakistan I found it extremely easy to explain to my interrogators just exactly what the consequences to their economy would be were all restrictions on textiles to be removed, because they, along with many others on the border with China, would suffer acutely from a free-for-all.

The MFA has a genuine and salutary regulatory effect just as much on the less-developed countries as on the more sophisticated and adaptable economies of the Community and the OECD.

I cannot give a personal commitment that the MFA will continue after 1991. The House will appreciate that that is not solely a decision for me, and competence in this matter lies with the Community and the Commissioner who negotiates on our behalf. We have a commitment in the Uruguay round to examine the modalities. I said at the start of the debate that that is a pretty imprecise interpreter's word that can be construed in a number of different ways. The modality is for returning textiles to strengthened GATT rules. It must include looking at the future of the MFA, but that must be done within the context of considering that any such return must be progressive and must be accompanied by satisfactory liberalisation by all countries. I hasten to say that progressive is the opposite of instantaneous. That liberalisation should affect the less-developed countries as well as the newly industrialised economies. The rules must be strengthened and made more effective, especially those concerning safeguards on fair trade, intellectual property and market access.

Time and again hon. Members have drawn my attention to the need for fairness and the abuses that are put in the path of our exporters by other countries. I am grateful that my hon. Friend the Member for Bosworth (Mr. Tredinnick) cited, yet again, the outrageous fiscal obstacles that the Turks put in the way of our exporters.

If it is of any consolation or comfort to the House, I can state that if the multi-fibre arrangement is to be discarded and if such an action is not accompanied by a satisfactory liberalisation and by a genuine strengthening of GATT rules and by proper discipline, I will not be the Minister who comes to the Dispatch Box and announces it.

It being half past Two o'clock, the motion for the Adjournment of the House lapsed, without Question put.

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Ordered,

That, at the sitting on Wednesday 14th December, if proceedings on the Motion in the name of the Prime Minister relating to British Shipbuilders have not been disposed of before Seven o'clock, Mr. Speaker shall at that hour put the Question on any Amendment which may have been moved, and shall then put forthwith the Question on any other Amendments selected by him which may then be moved, and on the Main Question or the Main Question, as amended. —*[Mr. Garel-Jones.]*

Electricity Generation

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Garel-Jones.]*

2.30 pm

Mr. Paul Flynn (Newport, West): This is very much a story of a man of our time, of Thatcher's man—homo Thatcherus. He is the inevitable result of elevating competition to the level of the supreme virtue, the view that dominates and corrupts the thinking of the Government. My constituency has just had a merciful deliverance from the excesses of homo Thatcherus in the shape of Mr. Angelo Casfikis who planned to reopen a polluting, clapped-out power station under the terms of the Energy Act 1983. Other areas may not be so fortunate because I understand that Mr. Casfikis still has interests in two other sites.

Under the Energy Act 1983, the Central Electricity Generating Board will do business with anyone so long as he has the money. There is no provision in the Act to guarantee that power stations are sold to people who are responsible and have good reputations except in the case of nuclear power stations. We are told that we must rely on the protection of the watchdog—the pollution inspectorate.

The pollution inspectorate is not a watchdog. It is a pussycat without teeth or claws. The recent resignations of Mr. Rod Perryman and Mr. David Mills reinforce the view that the inspectorate is in what one member of its staff called an utterly disastrous state—under-funded, under-staffed and feeble in regulatory muscle.

Generating electricity by coal presents devastating pollution threats of ashes, soot, 24-hour noise, airborne dust, smoke, sulphur and nitrous oxides and—as is only now becoming apparent and understood—the threat of carcinogens and pollution from the trace elements of arsenic, beryllium, chromium and other trace elements that occur from the stack and in the fly ash and the products of desulphurisation. They present an additional hazard to rivers and water courses. Our knowledge of the hazards of incineration has outpaced pollution controls.

The public need guarantees that their shield against pollution is tough and absolute, that aspirant operators can prove that they are people of high financial probity and that their business careers have demonstrated exemplary standards of responsibility and accomplishment. A power station at Rogerstone, even in the hands of the CEGB, was an atrocious neighbour with a dismal record of complaints, many caused by the silly decision and ministerial diktat to site it on the floor of a valley. That site amplifies all the irritants of pollution.

Does Mr. Angelo Casfikis match up to those high standards? On Monday and Tuesday of this week I tried to contact Mr. Casfikis to give him an opportunity to contradict any of the details of his colourful career that I am about to give to the House. He was not available, and he has not taken the opportunity that I offered to contact me. However, his representative said that if I mentioned his conviction for fraud, for which he was heavily fined, would I mention that others were involved in the crime? I have now done that.

Mr. Casfikis's business record is dreadful. He has set up company after company, milked them and allowed them to run into receivership. However, he always built a lifeboat company which he, the captain, could use to sail off into safety, usually with a cargo aboard, taking with him in most cases the assets of the wrecked company.

In 1971, he started a company called A. C. Meats (Wholesale). It was wound up in 1975 with unsecured creditors of £211,000 and assets of £8,000. He immediately registered a new company called Fromeat (International). That company was wound up on the petition of Uniservice of Geneva, to which he owed £54,000. That took place in 1983, but not before he used funds to secure a mortgage on an aircraft for himself at a cost of £180,000. Fropak (International) was registered in 1983 and dissolved in 1986. Fropak (Middle East) was registered in 1982 and dissolved in 1988. Another company, Vivahurst, was registered in 1981 and dissolved in 1988. Its only transaction was the securing of a mortgage on a Mercedes car for Mr. Casfikis. Frocontractors was founded in 1980 and found to have unsatisfactory accounts in 1983 due to irrecoverable debt.

As a meat trader, Mr. Casfikis was convicted of fraud. As a contractor to Nigeria, he enriched himself with company funds, wrecking a multi-million pound project and inflicting what the Plateau Investment Co. described as an "immeasurable loss". He then tried to import rice from America to Nigeria. That, too, failed. The winding-up order of the official receiver for Fromeat states:

"The liquidation of the company is attributable to the actions of Angelo Casfikis."

A search earlier this year revealed outstanding county court debts against Fromeat (International) at Liverpool county court and Fro-contractors at Epsom and Barnet county courts, one being for £1,100. A search today revealed an outstanding debt order of £552 against Pentwyn, No. 3 at Macclesfield county court. For non-payment of a debt of over £100,000 against Fro-contractors, judgment was given to Mr. David Taylor. Mr. Casfikis liquidated the company three days later and Mr. Taylor was told that it was not worth the price of a stamp to attempt to recover his £100,000.

That is enough evidence to justify insisting that Mr. Angelo Casfikis should carry a warning that states, "This man can damage your financial health. This man should be shunned as a business leper." But no, this is the age of Thatcher man, homo Thatcherus. Mr. Casfikis has been warmly welcomed by Department of Energy Ministers. He boasted that he could pick up a telephone and see a Minister in 24 hours. He has been entertained by Ministers, including the Secretary of State, not once, not twice, but five times. The last time was during September. Few hon. Members could match that.

Why do Ministers continue to court and encourage Mr. Casfikis? The Department of Energy, the Welsh Office and the CEGB were warned of most of the allegations and suspicions in April and July, and later in letters that I wrote. Is that all in the past? Is that all over? Is Mr. Casfikis a changed man now?

The House should know that Mr. Casfikis has two other companies—the Park Level colliery of Godregraig and Pentwyn colliery of Rhiwfawr Cwmllynfell. Both are in the hands of administrative receivers, one as recently as six weeks ago. The insolvency policy unit told me in a letter of 7 December that the companies are at least £80,000 in trouble. It informed me also that income tax and national insurance contributions have not been accounted for. I have two letters, one from the Department of Social

Security and the other from the Department of Employment, which explain that national insurance contributions have not been paid by Mr. Casfikis over the past two years.

In addition to the tribulations of sickness and unemployment that have been suffered by the men who worked for the companies, they now discover that their employer, Mr. Angelo Casfikis, has been thieving from their pay packets over a long period, with the result that they are not entitled to that for which they paid—sickness benefit and unemployment benefit.

Do Ministers believe that a criminal record, failure in the meat trade, failure in factory building, failure as a rice importer and failure as a mine owner qualify Mr. Casfikis to be, as was described by *The Sunday Times*,

"Britain's first power station broker"?

Homo Thatcherus: is this his way of life—the inevitable and ugly consequence of a creed that sees competition as a supreme virtue and holds that rampant, permissive competition, red in tooth and claw, should be given free rein to dominate, pollute, cheat and abuse?

Homo Thatcherus has a varied habitat. One day he is flattered and feted by Ministers in Millbank, the next he is picking the pockets of his own workers for pennies. Is Mr. Casfikis to continue setting up new companies, looting them and abandoning the wreckage of debts, redundancy and the damage done to innocent lives caught in his schemes? He seems to be doing that with the support and encouragement of Ministers in the Department of Energy.

On 14 February, *The Sunday Times* reported that, in a meeting with the Secretary of State for Energy, Mr. Casfikis was told that the Government would see whether private generators could be compensated because they might be unfairly forced to produce clean energy. I raised with Ministers and with the CEGB the question of what protection one might expect.

In a letter dated 23 November, the Minister informed me that, when I asked whether his Department had undertaken an investigation into Mr. Casfikis's business activities, it was for the CEGB to form its own commercial judgment of those with whom it chose to do business. He added that it was not the Government's job to make commercial assessments. If it is not, what went on in the discussions with the Secretary of State for Energy and with the Under-Secretary of State, who is to respond to this debate?

In a letter from the CEGB dated 24 November, I am informed that it would be invidious for the board to investigate the private circumstances of all its potential contractors before signing contracts. Its chairman adds:

"We could be accused of discrimination and unfair trading if we attach undue weight to an individual's past record."

If that is so, who is to protect areas such as Rogerstone?

Will the Minister answer my questions? Will the Energy Act and future electricity Acts attract more crooks to the generating business? Did the Minister encourage Mr. Casfikis at any time? Did he intervene, as Mr. Casfikis suggests, on his behalf in any way to put pressure on the CEGB? If not, why did the Minister see Mr. Casfikis five times, the last occasion being on 30 September? What further protection does the Minister propose giving in order to guarantee that no one with an appalling record such as that of Angelo Casfikis will be allowed to generate electricity in Britain and to ravage the habitat and peace of mind of local communities?

2.42 pm

The Under-Secretary of State for Energy (Mr. Michael Spicer): The hon. Member for Newport, West (Mr. Flynn) has made a string of personal attacks under the cover of privilege, and from those he has drawn several general conclusions and asked questions about the workings of the Energy Act 1983, about our proposals for its replacement, and in particular for the privatisation of the electricity supply industry.

The hon. Gentleman will not be surprised if I draw rather different conclusions from him about the working of the 1983 Act. The main provisions of the 1983 Act, he will remember, are to allow anybody to generate as a main business; to offer a guaranteed market for independently produced electricity; and to allow common carrier access both to the national grid and the local distribution networks for independent generators.

The Act breaks the CEGB's statutory monopoly on generation by allowing private companies to generate and supply electricity as their main business. While no ministerial consent is required for the construction of a private generating station—with the exception of a private nuclear power station, as the hon. Gentleman mentioned—such projects continue to be subject to local planning authority procedures.

Where area boards are obliged to purchase electricity from private generators, the Act sets out the basis on which the industry is to frame its tariffs. Such purchases are to be on terms that will not increase the prices payable to the boards' customers. The price offered therefore represents a saving made by the board by not having to purchase an equivalent supply of electricity from the CEGB.

The so called "avoided cost" principle has turned out to be one of the main defects of the 1983 Act. It has been an important reason for the continued effective monopoly of the CEGB and for the fact that in practice large-scale competition has not been able to develop. That is mainly because of the way the CEGB has chosen to define avoided costs in framing its tariffs, which has not allowed independent generators a proper return on their investment. Similarly, area boards have been reluctant to offer to purchase independently produced electricity except where they are obliged to do so under the terms of the 1983 Act.

However, in recognition of the Government's desire to see greater competition, the CEGB decided to sell off redundant power stations at Rogerstone, Connahs Quay and Barrow-in-Furness, and it is the CEGB which currently determines the terms on which the stations might be sold. One of those conditions, incidentally, is that before any final sale can go ahead, the prospective purchaser needs to have obtained the necessary planning consents. That of course has been critical in the context of the particular case to which hon. Member for Newport, West referred in the debate.

Under the terms of the 1983 Act, the South Wales board is bound to purchase the electricity from the independent generator, but only at a price commensurate with the avoided cost principle. The generator must also comply with new emission controls. That is a direct answer to the hon. Gentleman's question about what emission control standards are forthcoming. The generator must comply with new emission controls, whereby new or re-opened coal-fired power stations must be fitted with

[Mr. Michael Spicer]

equipment aimed at reducing sulphur dioxide emmisions. Of course, the planning associated with that requirement was another reason for that particular application not going ahead.

I have met several potential independent generators, and officials in my Department have now had more than 100 meetings with independent generators, so there is nothing extraordinary about the Government meeting potential independent generators. I explained to Mr. Casfikis, as I would explain to any other potential independent generator, that the role of the Department of Energy in this context, particularly under the 1983 Act, is almost non-existent. I hope that answers some of the hon. Gentleman's questions.

Mr. Flynn: I wish to make two points. First, the control of pollution is a matter for the British inspectorate and a number of other bodies, which is a matter of great doubt. Secondly, did it really take five meetings to tell Mr. Casfikis that the Department could not help him in any way?

Mr. Spicer: On the hon. Gentleman's first point about pollution, the Government have introduced stringent new standards in regard to sulphur dioxide which apply to new or reconverted power stations. That is rather a critical point in this case, and for the hon. Gentleman to imply that in some way or other our electricity policies are increasing the level of pollution in Britain is to fly in the face of what the Government are doing. We are increasing substantially the anti-pollution standards, and that process will continue. The application in question fell down on that precise point.

The answer to whether it took me several meetings to explain to Mr. Casfikis that the Government had no locus in this matter, is yes. I met Mr. Casfikis at his request on two or three occasions, and on each occasion it was explained to him what could be done under the terms of the 1983 Act. We explained to him our proposals for a privatised electricity industry and what could be done outside the terms of the 1983 Act with regard to the avoided cost principle.

I anticipated the hon. Gentleman's question by looking at the minutes of the meetings. They refer constantly to the fact that I said that the Government had no locus in the matter and that it must be decided by the CEGB and the area electricity board—in the latter case whether it wants to buy the electricity, and in the former case whether it wants to sell the power stations.

The hon. Gentleman has raised an important point about whether the 1983 Act is to be blamed for what is happening. It is important to look at the wider policy implications. I draw very different conclusions about the working of the 1983 Act from those that he draws. The restrictive nature of the Energy Act 1983—the fact that it has left the CEGB as a monopoly and also the fact that the avoided cost principle has proved to be a deterrent to major new entrants—is the real issue.

Since we published our White Paper on the future of the electricity supply industry earlier this year and declared our intention seriously to open the industry to new entrants, there has been a flood of interest from major energy-related companies. Whereas under the 1983 Act the field had been left to small companies dependent on the CEGB—I stress that point—the position now is that we know that at least 16 projects are being proposed by major international companies that will be serious competitors to the two successor companies to the CEGB.

Furthermore in direct answer to a point that was made by the hon. Member, I should tell him that clause 3(1)(b) of the Electricity Bill, the Second Reading of which we shall debate next week, specifically gives to the Secretary of State and the Director of Electricity Supply the duty to secure that licence holders—licence holding has not been a feature of previous legislation—are able to finance the carrying on of the activities that they are authorised by their licences to carry on.

As to the specific case of Rogerstone, to which the hon. Gentleman referred, he will know that, in the event, the local planning authority turned down the application from Independent Power and Energy which would have enabled the site to reopen for generation. I also understand from the South Wales board that it did not prove possible to agree satisfactory commercial terms for the purchase of electricity from Rogerstone. Independent Power and Energy had originally hoped to agree a contract outside the terms of the 1983 Act.

In those circumstances, I am told by the CEGB that it will not proceed with the sale of the site to Independent Power and Energy and that it will put it out to fresh tender. The board is of course aware—from the hon. Gentleman as much as from others—of the local pressure to make the site available for alternative industrial or housing use rather than have the station reopened. I am sure that the CEGB will bear in mind these concerns, but the terms on which the site is ultimately sold—this is the fundamental point that I wish to make to the hon. Gentleman—will, under the present legislation, be a matter for the commercial judgment of the board, with a willing seller and a potentially willing buyer.

I do not expect the hon. Gentleman necessarily to accept all the Government's arguments, but I hope he will accept our response to the questions that he has put to us.

Question put and agreed to.

Adjourned accordingly at seven minutes to Three o'clock.

House of Commons

Monday 12 December 1988

The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

Oral Answers to Questions

ENERGY

Electricity Privatisation

2. **Mr. Speller:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he will ensure that Her Majesty's Government take on no liability for the cost of decommissioning any nuclear power stations built after the electricity generating industry has been privatised.

The Secretary of State for Energy (Mr. Cecil Parkinson): After privatisation, electricity customers will continue to pay, as they do now, the anticipated costs of decommissioning. The electricity industry already makes full provision for these costs and will continue to do so over the lifetimes of future stations. But the Government are taking powers in the Electricity Bill to enable them to contribute, subject to parliamentary scrutiny, to unanticipated increases in the costs arising from changes in public policy.

Mr. Speller: Does my right hon. Friend agree that once an industry is privatised it is the duty of the private owner to take all risks and not to pass them to anyone else? I do not question for a second the need for payment for existing plants that Governments of all complexions have put up in the past, but how does my right hon. Friend cover the case after privatisation of people being told by the private owner that Government will carry the cost of insurance?

Mr. Parkinson: As I pointed out, it will be for the industry to make provision for anticipated costs. However, if the nuclear installations inspectorate suddenly decided that, instead of allowing the decommissioning of power stations to take place over X years, they should take place in half X years, that could give rise to costs. That is an example of a change in public policy that the company would not have been able to anticipate. In those circumstances, and only in those circumstances, it would be reasonable for the taxpayer to contribute.

Mr. Lofthouse: Is the Secretary of State aware that Mr. Christopher Harding, chairman of British Nuclear Fuels, recently told a Select Committee that BNF was contractually committed to the CEGB to the tune of £1,400 million to take nuclear waste at its disposal plant? Will that cost fall on the private sector, or will it be met by the Government?

Mr. Parkinson: The hon. Gentleman makes a mistake which seems to be entrenched in the thinking of Opposition Front Bench spokesmen. Nuclear costs are being incurred now. Last year, £700 million was set aside in the accounts of the CEGB to meet the cost of future decommissioning and waste processing. A huge provision —to date, £3·5 billion—has been set aside, and that is built into the prices that customers are presently paying.

Dr. Michael Clark: In the forthcoming Bill, will my right hon. Friend consider quite precisely what the limits of expenditure may be for the private sector when it inherits the nuclear power stations so that investors will know precisely their liabilities and the best possible price can be obtained for Big G and Little G?

Mr. Parkinson: We are saying that all anticipated costs will have to be met—as they are now and as they have been for the last 30 years, although that seems to take the Opposition by surprise—by the customer. Those costs will continue to be paid. We are proposing to expose those costs and to say that if there is to be an increase in payment or a grant as a result of a change in public policy, we shall come to the House and explain it. For the first time, the House will know about nuclear costs and can have justified to it any costs incurred by the Government in making these grants.

Mr. Blair: Is the Minister not aware that the costs anticipated by the Central Elecriticity Generating Board are generally thought to be incredibly low? Is it not the case that his Bill will provide for grants or loans up to £2·5 billion per time? Why should the private sector take the profit while the public sector retains the risk?

Mr. Parkinson: I had hoped that the hon. Gentleman was being misquoted in the press, but clearly he is totally misinformed. What exists at the moment is a liability to meet decommissioning costs. At present that is paid by the customer, but it is totally underwritten by the Government. We are saying that in future a third party will be available to share part of that risk. That party is the shareholder. The more risk that we leave with the Government, the higher the price that the industry will obtain. From what the hon. Gentleman says, one would think that it is the City which receives the price and the taxpayer who pays it. It is the other way round. If he got that into his head, he might start to understand these matters.

Mr. Stern: On a directly related subject, does my right hon. Friend agree that it will fall to the privatised industry to bear the costs—however great they may be, at any time in the future—of the poisons that have been poured into the atmosphere by fossil-fuelled power generation for an untold number of years?

Mr. Parkinson: Yes. We hear a great deal about this. If I catch your eye, Mr. Speaker, I shall take part in the later debate. In that debate we shall talk about the costs of alternative sources of energy, which are substantial. Each year, as taxpayers and customers, we are spending an amount equal almost to the total amount of grants for which the Electricity Bill will provide.

Coal Industry

3. **Mr. Eadie:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what discussions he has had with the chairman of British Coal about future contraction of manpower in the coal industry.

Mr. Parkinson: I meet the chairman of British Coal regularly to discuss all matters affecting the industry.

Mr. Eadie: The Secretary of State must be aware that productivity in the coal industry has increased by 75 per cent., that operating costs have decreased by 30 per cent. and that in the first quarter of this year British Coal made an operating profit of £190 million. Why must there be pit closures and redundancies for miners as a consequence of these figures?

Mr. Parkinson: I confirm that the improvements in productivity and so on are as the hon. Gentleman has set out, and I compliment those who work in the industry on them. Moreover, that operating profit is made up substantially from surface mining, and large losses are still being made by some deep-mine pits. Until those losses can be eliminated, there will, I am afraid, continue to be pit closures.

Mr. Thurnham: Would not the prospects for employment in the industry be much improved if there were an acceptance of six-day working? Is this not the way forward for the industry?

Mr. Parkinson: If we can add modern working practices to the £6 billion worth of investment the Government have made in equipment in the industry in the past 10 years, the prospects of the industry will be brighter.

Mr. Skinner: The Secretary of State made it clear earlier that billions of pounds of taxpayers' money is to be used to bail out the nuclear power industry. My hon. Friend the Member for Midlothian (Mr. Eadie) and I are asking why it is, if the Secretary of State can find the money to bolster nuclear power in the way that he has just announced, that he cannot do the same to stop contraction in the pits. There is 300 years-worth of coal beneath the ground and the Secretary of State should be maximising production of coal, using more manpower than is employed in the coal-fields with the result that we are less dependent on nuclear power which, in the Secretary of State's own words, is costing the taxpayer a fortune.

Mr. Parkinson: Nuclear power is being paid for entirely by the customers of the electricity supply industry. We are talking about the possibility of grants if there is a change in public policy. As the hon. Gentleman pressed the point, I can tell him that there is a precedent for subsidising losses in an industry—the coal industry, which we have subsidised to the tune of £1 billion per year for every year since we have been in power. What is more, the CEGB estimates that is is paying about £500 million more than it needs to pay for its coal. The answer to the hon. Gentleman is that there is a subsidy, it is being paid for by the taxpayer and the customer, it amounts to £1·5 billion and it is being paid to the coal industry.

Mr. Barron: In the matters that he discusses with the chairman of British Coal, has the Secretary of State discussed whether there are likely to be compulsory redundancies in the next round of redundancies to be announced next August? Can the Minister give us an assurance that compulsory redundancies will not be within any agreement?

Mr. Parkinson: The question of compulsory redundancies has never been raised with me and I am sure that the hon. Gentleman will confirm that under this Government redundancies have been paid on a far more generous scale to those in the industry than ever before. We have no reason to wish to depart from that.

British Coal

4. **Mr. Patchett:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy when he last met the chairman of British Coal; and what matters were discussed.

9. **Mr. Cummings:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy when he next intends to meet the chairman of British Coal; and what he proposes to discuss.

11. **Mr. Win Griffiths:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy when he last met the chairman of British Coal; and what was discussed.

The Under-Secretary of State for Energy (Mr. Michael Spicer): As my right hon. Friend has just said, he and I have regular meetings with the chairman of British Coal to discuss all aspects of the coal industry.

Mr. Patchett: Did the Minister discuss with the chairman the future funding of the pressurised fluidised bed project in Grimethorpe in my constituncy? If private funds are not forthcoming, will the Government make money available to enable the project to be completed and made commercially viable, or is the Minister happy to throw away Britain's lead in this technology?

Mr. Spicer: As the hon. Gentleman will probably know, the chairman has written recently to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State suggesting a new hybrid technology called the topping cycle. We shall be discussing this matter with British Coal. We shall want to assess with British Coal the level and nature of possible industrial interest in the proposal.

Mr. Andy Stewart: When my hon. Friend next meets the chairman, will he ask him to consider making suitable premises available in Wales for the Union of Democratic Mineworkers to recruit new members? My hon. Friend will be aware of the hostility of Welsh local authorities to the union's decision to expand into Wales, they apparently not believing in democracy.

Mr. Spicer: I and the House have noted what my hon. Friend has said. It is for the chairman to decide whether that action would be appropriate. There would have to be discussions with the union.

Mr. Hardy: Has the Minister discussed with the chairman the position of former miners who accepted redundancy on conditions that now seem to be rather less than well founded? Is he aware that some of my constituents accepted redundancy on the assumption and the advice that they were entering into early retirement, asumption and advice that now appear to justify their sense of betrayal?

Mr. Spicer: The arrangements were made purely voluntarily. The redundancy arrangements have been more than generous in the past and were welcomed by most of those concerned at the time.

Mr. Raffan: When my hon. Friend next meets the chairman, will he impress upon him the need to keep individual Members fully informed about the British Coal Opencast Executive's plans for individual constituencies? Will he impress upon the chairman that there is widespread concern on both sides of the House about the working methods of the executive and the need for the chairman to keep the executive on a shorter leash than he does now?

Mr. Spicer: I shall pass on what my hon. Friend has said about opencast coaling. All sides of the industry and local authorities are pleased with the new guidelines that have been issued by the Department of the Environment to ensure that everyone knows where he stands in terms of planning applications for opencast coaling. I think that those planning applications will prove fruitful in the end.

Mr. Douglas: Has the Minister had an opportunity to discuss with the chairman his recent visit to the Longannet complex and the precarious nature of the complex given the impending privatisation of the South of Scotland Electricity Board? Will he comment on the contractual relationship between the SSEB and British Coal, and the need to ensure that coal from the deep mines in the Longannet complex is burnt in the attendant power stations?

Mr. Spicer: I can tell the hon. Gentleman that my visit to the Longannet complex was impressive— *[Interruption.]* I mean that I was impressed. I said to the representatives of the complex that if the present rates of increased productivity continue and if thereby it is possible to produce coal at a competitive price the complex will stand in a good position. Under privatisation, and with our plans to expand the interconnector between Scotland and the rest of the United Kingdom, the coal can produce electricity which can be sold freely into the British system. We are offering every opportunity so long as Longannet continues to improve its competitiveness.

Offshore Oil and Gas (Safety)

5. **Mr. Doran:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what recent consideration he has given to the improvement of safety in the offshore oil and gas industry.

15. **Mr. Ernie Ross:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what recent consideration he has given to improvements in safety in the offshore oil and gas industry.

The Minister of State, Department of Energy (Mr. Peter Morrison): Safety standards remain under continuous review.

Mr. Doran: Some months ago the Secretary of State announced his intention to introduce statutory safety committees and safety representatives for the North sea and as the Minister will know that announcement was warmly welcomed by Opposition Members. Since then, however, we have heard nothing. Will he give us some idea when the regulations will be introduced?

Mr. Morrison: The hon. Gentleman is absolutely correct. The consultation document will, I hope, be available in about the middle of January. The period of consultation will then last for six weeks, and I hope that the necessary regulations will be introduced as soon as possible thereafter.

Mr. Ernie Ross: The Minister will know that the Select Committee on Employment recently received evidence from the Health and Safety Commission on its responsibility for health and safety offshore. It confirmed to us in a note that it had subcontracted that responsibility to the Minister's Department. Given the record of accidents in the North sea, does the Minister honestly think that one arm of Government is getting value for money from his Department?

Mr. Morrison: I am aware that the Select Committee looked at the matter carefully. I read the evidence from beginning to end, and was aware of some of the points being made.

As the hon. Gentleman will know, during the public inquiry Lord Cullen has a remit to look into the matter very carefully. The present safety regime is operated according to the majority report of the Burgoyne committee set up by the then Secretary of State, the right hon. Member for Chesterfield (Mr. Benn).

Mrs. Margaret Ewing: Has the Minister's Department made any assessment of the costs involved in enhancing safety regulations on the North sea, and will he give a commitment that all costs will be met?

Mr. Morrison: None of the specific costs are available to me at present, but no cost is too high for proper safety.

Gas Industry

6. **Mr. Rost:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy when he last met the chairman of British Gas to discuss the recent Monopolies and Mergers Report on the gas industry.

Mr. Peter Morrison: My right hon. Friend met the chairman of British Gas three weeks ago, and the MMC report was among the topics discussed.

Mr. Rost: In view of the MMC's devastatingly critical report on British Gas's discriminatory pricing in the industrial market, which has confirmed all the criticisms made by industry over a long period, will my right hon. Friend give an assurance that the director-general of Ofgas will in future be given powers to monitor and control the industrial as well as the domestic market?

Mr. Morrison: As my hon. Friend knows, the director-general of Ofgas is currently discussing with British Gas the recommendations in the MMC report and how they can best be put into practice. He will have power, with British Gas, to come forward with amendments to the authorisation. In the event of their not being able to agree, it will be for my right hon. and noble Friend the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry to come forward with his new regulations.

Mr. Malcolm Bruce: Does the Minister accept that the reference of British Gas and industrial prices to the MMC was forecast by many of us who were involved in the passage of the privatisation legislation? We warned that

this would happen. Does the Minister now accept that those in industry, particularly high energy users, are very disillusioned about the effects of privatisation? Having been ripped off by British Gas for four years, they are extremely concerned that they will be ripped off by the electricity industry as well.

Mr. Morrison: I think that the hon. Gentleman will remember that at the time of the passage of the Bill privatising British Gas it was consistently made clear that British Gas would be subject to the normal laws relating to competition, and the right process was put into practice —namely, that the Gas Comnsumers Council could make a recommendation to the director-general of Fair Trading. That is precisely what has happened in the event. As the hon. Gentleman knows and my hon. Friend the Member for Erewash (Mr. Rost), has said, the recommendations from the MMC have been brought forward to make British Gas more competitive. That seems the right way to proceed.

Electricity Council

7. **Mr. Flynn:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy when he next intends to meet the chairman of the Electricity Council; and what matters he proposes to discuss.

Mr. Michael Spicer: My right hon. Friend and I meet the chairman of the Electricity Council regularly to discuss a range of issues.

Mr. Flynn: The next time the Minister meets the chairman, will he take the opportunity to discuss the vast potential for tidal power which, if linked with pump storage hydro-electric schemes, could produce a fifth of our national electricity requirements in a way that is entirely demand-responsive and would contribute to base load electricity? Why do we not pay more attention to tidal power? It does not pollute, produce radioactivity or add to our burden of carbon dioxide; it is free, it has enormous power, it is British and it is eternal.

Mr. Spicer: The figure is even greater than the one that the hon. Gentleman mentioned. The Mersey and Severn barrage proposals could produce 6·5 per cent. We are taking a great and close interest in this. The Government have sponsored a good deal of research, particularly environmental research, on the basis of which decisions will be taken in the new year. We shall have those research studies before us then and we shall be able to form a view about the environmental aspects because, as the hon. Gentleman knows, there are environmental questions. Thereafter, it will be a matter of whether the industry decides to go ahead. It will do so on the basis of the non-fossil fuel obligation, which applies as much to renewables, particularly tidal power, as to nuclear power —a point often forgotten by the Opposition.

Dr. Glyn: Is my hon. Friend aware of the severe power cuts in Windsor—which lasted, with short intervals, for two days—and of the fire? When he has consultations with the chairman, will he please ask for a proper expianation of why the cuts occurred for so long and how such cuts can be prevented in the future?

Mr. Spicer: I shall certainly pass on what my hon. Friend has said and I shall try to obtain an answer as soon as possible.

Mr. Michael: Does the Minister accept that people will be concerned at the idea that the mere free flow of market forces will determine whether tidal power comes into being? Will the Minister give us an idea of his best estimate of the first date on which the Severn barrage, for example, could be producing electricity into the grid system?

Mr. Spicer: As I said in the last part of my answer to the hon. Member for Newport, West (Mr. Flynn), tidal power will come under the same arrangements under the non-fossil fuel obligation as nuclear power. That is often conveniently forgotten by the Opposition. It will have an advantage to that extent, because it will be able to compete within that obligation against nuclear power and other forms of renewables.

Nuclear Safety

8. **Mr. Hannam:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy how many fatalities there have been among employees in the nuclear power generating industry in the United Kingdom over the last 10 years; and what are the figures for other forms of energy production.

Mr. Parkinson: I understand that in the 10 years to end March 1988 there were five fatalities among employees in the nuclear power generation industry. None involved radiation. There were 57 other fatalities in the rest of the electricity production and distribution industry, 79 on offshore oil and gas installations and 366 in the coal mining industry.

Mr. Hannam: I thank my right hon. Friend for that interesting reply. Does it not confirm that nuclear power is not only the safest in terms of environmental protection, but offers the greatest degree of safety for employees in the industry? Is it not advisable that all those who have reservations about nuclear power should study that reply carefully?

Mr. Parkinson: Yes, I think that the energy debate has been carried out on a simplistic basis before. If the true costs in terms of lives lost, danger, pollution and damage to the atmosphere are brought into account, the arguments start to be much closer and far less easy to decide about than the Opposition seem prepared to admit.

Ms. Short: I am sure that the Secretary of State does not wish to mislead anyone. A number of recent studies have shown serious estimates of fatalities among the population living near nuclear power stations. Will the Secretary of State give us those figures because they must also be taken into account in estimating the danger of the nuclear industry?

Mr. Parkinson: The hon. Lady is wrong. There is a phenomenon called the leukaemia cluster and there are leukaemia clusters near nuclear power stations. However, there are also leukaemia clusters in New Zealand, where there is no nuclear power of any kind. The phenomenon is not understood and we are investigating it carefully because we want to understand it. I hope that the hon. Lady will start to understand it before she begins to talk in future.

Mr. Stern: Does my right hon. Friend agree that for local authorities to divert funds is just as good a way of producing fatalities as any other, particularly when those funds are diverted from, for example, social services? Would my right hon. Friend care to estimate the cost in terms of human illness and loss of life of funds being diverted by west country local authorities such as Somerset to put up meaningless opposition to the proposed Hinkley B reactor?

Mr. Parkinson: I congratulate my hon. Friend on the way in which he worked that question into this one. There are better ways of using local authority funds than opposing Hinkley Point C but it is the purpose of local authorities to decide what is in the interests of their taxpayers, and they seem to agree with me.

Electricity (Privatisation)

12. **Mrs. Fyfe:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what are his proposals for price controls after the privatisation of the electricity industry.

17. **Mr. Murphy:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what are his latest proposals for price control on the privatised electricity industry.

Mr. Michael Spicer: Prices charged for supply will be regulated by an RPI−X+Y formula. Separate controls will apply to charges by the national grid company and by the supply companies for use of their transmission and distribution systems.

Mrs. Fyfe: When the Under-Secretary spoke in Miami earlier this year he was anxious to reassure American capital that the industry would be lightly regulated. Does he stand by that statement? Is he really more anxious to please American capital than the British domestic and industrial electricity user?

Mr. Spicer: The measure of regulation will depend on the degree of competition that we can introduce into the industry. At the generating end of the industry, which represents 70 per cent. of costs, there will be a lot of competition and, therefore, light regulation.

Mrs. Fyfe: Answer the question.

Mr. Spicer: If the hon. Lady will listen, I shall answer her. At the distribution end of the industry, where there is not so much scope for competition, there will be heavier regulation, aimed at ensuring that the consumer benefits all round.

Mr. Murphy: Does the Minister agree that the 15 per cent. increase in electricity prices, which was double what the electricity industry wanted, will have the most disastrous effect on electricity-intensive industries, including the British Steel Corporation in south Wales? What guarantee does he propose to give the House that the burden on industy of increased prices will not be worsened by privatisation?

Mr. Spicer: Under privatisation, there will be pressure on costs and therefore price rises will be considerably smaller than they would be in the state-controlled industry. During the past five years of Conservative Government, prices for the domestic consumer have decreased by 10 per cent. in real terms, whereas during the last five years of the Labour Government they increased by 30 per cent. The hon. Gentleman will know, too, that as a result, British electricity prices now fall within the middle range of European prices. I hope that that answers his question.

Mr. Morgan: When the formula RPI-X+Y formula is applied, will the baseline used be that requested by the electricity industry, which asked for price increases half as great as those imposed by the Government last April and next April or will it be the much higher baseline that the Government have decided to put to the industry as a form of hypothermia tax? Will Ministers realise that the example set by the Government last April and this April is the one that the industry will expect to follow and do they not now agree that the 15 per cent. price rise is an absolute disaster for the electricity industry and, above all, its consumers?

Mr. Spicer: The hon. Gentleman does not realise, but will no doubt discover, that the Government do not lay down prices. We set financial targets for the industry. In a monopoly controlled industry those targets are often interpreted in terms of costs being passed straight through into prices, rather than there being any actual effect on costs. Under privatisation, great pressure will be placed on costs. Therefore, Opposition Members' fears will prove unfounded as they are based on the premise that costs must always be passed straight through, into prices which we do not believe.

Nuclear Waste

16. **Mr. Kirkwood:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what is the latest estimate of the cost to the electricity supply industry of disposing of nuclear waste to the year 2000.

19. **Mr. Macdonald:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy how much nuclear waste disposal will cost after the privatisation of electricity; and who will pay for it.

Mr. Michael Spicer: Provisions by the electricity supply industry in England and Wales for dealing with nuclear waste total over £3 billion. After privatisation as now, these costs will be charged to customers in their electricity prices.

Mr. Kirkwood: What evidence does the Minister have that the £3 billion that he has just announced will be enough? Is he aware that there is widespread worry, in the industry and outside it, that that figure will not come anywhere near to meeting the task of effecting safe disposal?

Mr. Spicer: Had the hon. Gentleman been here earlier, he would have heard my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State say that the provisions are made on an audited basis by experts in the industry. We have every confidence in the provisions that have been made for decommissioning.

Mr. Madden: Does the Minister recollect ever receiving letters from the hon. Member for Exeter (Mr. Hannam) or from any other Members of Parliament asking that nuclear waste be dumped in their constituencies or that nuclear power stations be built there?

Mr. Spicer: Clearly, no right hon. or hon. Member would particularly wish to write asking that nuclear waste be deposited in his constituency. That is why Nirex has

undertaken a nationwide survey and why we, and Nirex in particular, have not agreed to exempt any area. That would be invidious. The answer is that we shall find suitable storage for nuclear waste.

Elderly People (Heating)

18. **Mr. Simon Hughes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy when he last met representatives of charities involved in caring for the elderly to discuss what action his Department can take to relieve the heating problems of the elderly; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Morrison: My Department and I are in regular contact with charities concerned with heating for the elderly. Specifically, the Energy Efficiency Office provides financial assistance to Neighbourhood Energy Action and Energy Action Scotland.

Mr. Hughes: With winter death rates for the elderly increasing over summer rates in England and Wales by 31 per cent.; in Scotland by 32 per cent; and in Northern Ireland by 33 per cent., compared with increases in Scandinavia of only 9, 11 and at most 13 per cent., is it not time that the Government took action to alleviate the hypothermia death rate among the elderly? Is not the easiest and most effective way the abolition of gas and electricity standing charges?

Mr. Morrison: The direct answer is no. In many cases that would mean increased costs for the very people about whom the hon. Gentleman and I are concerned. He will be aware that significantly increased budgets have been given to community insulation projects and the housing insulation scheme.

Mr. Kennedy: Further to the question of my hon. Friend the Member for Southwark and Bermondsey (Mr. Hughes), is there not a complete contradiction running through Government policy? The Department of Health encourages old people in particular to take advantage of helplines and other facilities that it is promoting, whereas the Department of Social Security has cut back on housing benefits and on essentials such as heating, so that elderly people, many of whom have never been in debt before, are cutting back on essentials, including heating, rather than go into debt to their local authorities. Therefore, the Department of Energy is caught between a deeply unfair and regressive Government policy that is hurting the elderly. Will the right hon. Gentleman's Department make efforts to show the light to other Government Departments that are doing so much damage?

Mr. Morrison: The hon. Gentleman will be aware of the codes of practice and of the provision made for pensioners, whereby their supplies will not be cut off between the months of October and March. That is a constructive way forward.

Mr. Harry Greenway: Is my right hon. Friend aware that the experiment in which pensioners were invited to pay a lower standing charge if they were small consumers has been withdrawn? Is he aware also that standing charges now account for a month's basic pension? Will he consider again whether something can be done about the level of standing charges for pensioners?

Mr. Morrison: As I have told the hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey (Mr. Hughes), the question of standing charges has been looked at for some years, and it has been the considered view that a reduction would not in practice benefit the very people about whom my hon. Friend and Opposition Members are concerned.

Electricity Privatisation

20. **Mr. Pike:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what representations he has received regarding the protection of consumer interest arising from proposals to privatise the electricity industry.

Mr. Michael Spicer: I continue to receive a number of representations on this topic. The Electricity Consumers Council has welcomed the proposals in the Electricity Bill for protecting consumers' interests.

Mr. Pike: Does the Minister recognise that there is genuine concern among many other organisations representing consumers, and among consumers themselves, in that experience has shown that it is the consumer who has been taken for a ride as a result of privatisation? Will the Minister give an assurance that, if the Electricity Bill must be forced through, every possible step will be taken to ensure the best possible protection for the consumer?

Mr. Spicer: I am happy to give the hon. Gentleman that assurance. The essence of the Bill is the benefit that it will bring to consumers. At present, one monopoly producer largely determines the cost of electricity. In future, it will be subject to the force of competition, not to mention the multitude of consumer rights that, for the first time, will be brought in by the Bill.

Mr. Dykes: In addition to electricity supply, the consumer will purchase goods—especially white goods—from the showrooms of area boards. Therefore, will the Minister meticulously examine the need to ensure that the consumer is protected from the dangers of hidden subsidies, interest-free credit and all the other devices that may obtain now, but may not later when the monopoly effect increases?

Mr. Spicer: The retail end of the business will be transparently accountable and kept separate from the rest of the business.

ATTORNEY-GENERAL

"A Hero from Zero"

60. **Mr. Rooker:** To ask the Attorney-General if he will meet the Director of Public Prosecutions to discuss what resources he plans to allocate to examining the book, "A Hero From Zero" sent to right hon. and hon. Members by Lonrho plc, for possible breaches of the law.

The Solicitor-General (Sir Nicholas Lyell): Both the Director of Public Prosecutions, with whom the Law Officers have discussed this matter, and the director of the Serious Fraud Office have received copies of the inspectors' report on the takeover of the House of Fraser Group and of this book. Each is receiving appropriate consideration.

Mr. Rooker: I thank the Solicitor-General for that learned reply. Has it not yet dawned on the Law Officers that there is a prima facie case for believing that, in 1985,

Ministers at the Department of Trade and Industry allowed a known crook to buy the House of Fraser simply because he had sat at the Prime Minister's dinner table? If the Al Fayeds are telling the truth, there has been a tax fraud on a massive scale. Will the DTI inspector's report that was referred to last Friday by Lord Young be published? He said that the report would not be published because it was in the public interest not to do so. That will not wash. The Law Officers must take a grip on the matter and operate as Law Officers rather than simply Ministers appointed by the Prime Minister.

The Solicitor-General: The hon. Gentleman should realise that the prosecution service is independent. Those matters are being considered by the director of the Serious Fraud Office and the Director of Public Prosecutions. They will reach their independent and impartial decision. The publication of the report is a matter for the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry.

Legal Aid

61. **Mr. Brazier:** To ask the Attorney-General what steps the Lord Chancellor is taking to monitor decisions on the granting of legal aid by the Law Society.

The Solicitor-General: Individual decisions on legal aid in civil cases are a matter for the local legal aid committees. The Law Society reports annually to the Lord Chancellor. It provides details of the number of applications granted and refused and whether the reasons for those refusals are on legal or financial grounds.

Mr. Brazier: I welcome the changes planned for next April in the administration of legal aid, but they should go further. Is the Minister aware of two cases in my constituency? In one, a woman suffering from heart trouble was refused legal aid on the ground that her husband had not committed violence against her "for several weeks". In the other, legal aid was granted to a man who a few months earlier put in a substantial planning application and said that he could finance it without borrowing.

The Solicitor-General: It is important to remember that these decisions are taken by independent authorities. There would be a right of appeal from local legal aid committees to the area committee. The Legal Aid Board, when it takes over the functions of the Law Society, will examine the working of the entire system.

Mr. Madden: Will the Minister arrange for a new legal aid fund to be established in Bradford to help the many ratepayers of that city who wish to take legal action against the injustices heaped upon them by the new Conservative administration? Will the Minister explain how, when there is a High Court action in London on Wednesday and Thursday of this week involving the sale of old people's homes which we have been prevented from discussing on the ground that it is sub judice, Bradford council can debate these matters tomorrow and propose to sell homes and adjust the sale price on the life expectancy of the old people living in them?

The Solicitor-General: Even in Bradford, those are matters for the independent decision of the legal aid committee, with the usual appeal process. I am sure that Bradford would not wish, any more than any other area, to interfere with the operation of the courts.

Mr. Bowis: Will my hon. and learned Friend monitor the cost of legal aid? Is it not true that too often clients who win their cases do not actually receive compensation or damages because the whole of the award has been soaked up by legal costs?

The Solicitor-General: I am sure that that is one of the matters that the Legal Aid Board will be studying when it takes over from the Law Society.

Director of Public Prosecutions

62. **Mr. Janner:** To ask the Attorney-General when he last met the Director of Public Prosecutions; and what matters were discussed.

The Solicitor-General: On Tuesday 6 December 1988. We discussed matters of departmental interest.

Mr. Janner: Did the hon. and learned Gentleman discuss with the Director the possible impact of the Malicious Communications Act 1988 and whether prosecution could now be taken against those who put into the mail such grossly offensive literature as "Holocaust News" and other racist and anti-semitic documents? Is not that Act wide enough for the Government to take action against those whom they have wanted to prosecute previously, but who have walked away freely from the net of the law?

The Solicitor-General: The matter of "Holocaust News" has been carefully considered by the Director and the Law Officers, as the hon. and learned Gentleman knows. The Malicious Communications Act 1988 does not appear to have any application to that case.

Mr. Favell: When my hon. and learned Friend last met the Director of Public Prosecutions did he discuss with him the remand prisoner problem described in a consensus report by the Law Society and other interested parties as "tottering daily on the edge of a crisis"?
Is he satisfied with the speed with which the Director is bringing prisoners to trial? Do the Director, the Solicitor-General and the Attorney-General have any objection to private remand centres as a means to ease the problem?

The Solicitor-General: I shall answer that part of the question that is relevant to my Department's responsibility. By and large, I am satisfied with the speed with which the Crown Prosecution Service is bringing suspects to trial. It must be remembered that part of its remit is to review each case to determine whether it is proper to bring the case to trial. That takes slightly longer than was previously the case, for very proper reasons. Other than that point, the others raised by my hon. Friend fall within the responsibility of my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary.

Mr. Skinner: Has the Solicitor-General discussed with the Director of Public Prosecutions the case of Roberto Fiore, whose extradition has been sought by Italy since 1981 because of his link to the fascist group that was held responsible for the Bologna railway station bomb that killed 85 people?

Why are the Home Office, the Solicitor-General and the Director of Public Prosecutions dragging their feet on that

extradition while the Prime Minister and other Ministers are getting stuck into the Belgian and Irish authorities because of Patrick Ryan? This case has been going on for more than seven years.

The Solicitor-General: I have no reason to think that there is any foot-dragging, but extradition is a matter for my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary.

Belgian Attorney-General

63. **Mr. Adley:** To ask the Attorney-General if he will seek a meeting with his Belgian counterpart to discuss co-operation on matters of common concern.

The Attorney-General (Sir Patrick Mayhew): No, Sir. The fullest co-operation was accorded to the Belgian prosecuting authorities by the Crown prosecution service in the Heysel stadium extradition case and the Belgian prosecuting authorities reciprocated in the recent case of Ryan. I grateful for that. An extradition treaty has been in existence for nearly 90 years. Its provisions have hitherto worked well. As to recent events, I think that the Government's views are now generally well known.

Mr. Adley: I thank my right hon. and learned Friend for his reply. Does he think that some advantage would be gained by the closest possible co-operation between the EEC states on extradition procedures? Does he think that one of the co-ordinating activities on which all 12 member states might agree would be to seek a system whereby politicians do not have the power, and thus the temptation, to overrule decisions taken by courts in their countries?

The Attorney-General: My hon. Friend's suggestion will be carefully noted. It is legitimate to observe that whatever procedures and machinery are put in place, there will always remain the necessity for the will to operate them.

Mr. Fraser: Will the Attorney-General seek an explanation from his Belgian counterpart on what seems to be a bizarre decision by the Belgian Cabinet to overrule its courts on the extradition of Mr. Ryan? We have enjoyed cordial and co-operative relations with Belgium. The effect of the Belgian Government's decision was to place the Irish Attorney-General in the invidious position of being asked to process in his sovereign state an extradition that had immediately beforehand been rejected by another sovereign state.

The Attorney-General: The Belgian Government are in no doubt about the great surprise that their decision occasioned to the British Government, for precisely the reasons that the hon. Gentleman has put forward—the legal grounds that were put forward as the basis of the Belgian Government's decision evidently escaped the attention of the Belgian courts, which were satisfied.

OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT

Immunisation

67. **Mr. Chapman:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on progress on the UNICEF global immunisation programme and the United Kingdom contribution to it.

The Minister for Overseas Development (Mr. Chris Patten): There has been no significant change in the figures I gave my hon. Friend on 24 October, when UNICEF had committed about $302 million to immunisation projects, some 71 per cent. of its estimated requirement. Programmes continue to develop, but the initial spurt in activity has eased off as campaigns are completed and continuing immunisation activities are incorporated in new country programmes.

Mr. Chapman: I commend UNICEF's ambitious initiative in making it possible for all children of the world to be immunised against six preventable diseases. I also commend my hon. Friend for making available a record £7·5 million to UNICEF's general resources fund, in addition to the £6 million contribution to the special fund, most of which will go to the immunisation programme. Does my hon. Friend agree that, if money is still needed, the Government will continue to set a fine example which will be admired by every hon. Member and the public in one of the most worthy objectives of all time?

Mr. Patten: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for his interest in this subject. Our total contributions to UNICEF have doubled from about £7·5 million in the 1985-86 financial year to over £15 million in the last financial year. We will continue to give UNICEF's work the priority that it deserves. Through our general health programmes, we will also continue to try to focus as much as possible on the development of primary health care facilities in developing countries.

Sub-Saharan Africa

Ms. Armstrong: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs which country in membership of the development assistance committee of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development has decreased its net official development assistance (disbursements) to sub-Saharan Africa in 1986 prices and exchange rates between 1980 and 1987 by the highest percentage; and by what percentage.

Mr. Chris Patten: New Zealand, by 73 per cent.

Ms. Armstrong: Will the Minister comment on the British contribution? Will he confirm that because our contribution has gone down in percentage terms, sub-Saharan Africa lost about £600 million in that period? Will he assure the House that there is a commitment to enable sub-Saharan Africa to get out of its continuing problems? It now has a debt repayment problem and a loss of income, which means that it is getting into further problems. This country, with its economic growth that the Minister keeps telling us about, is in an ideal position to help sub-Saharan Africa.

Mr. Patten: I have the passing impression that I did not give the hon. Lady the answer that she was expecting. In our bilateral and multilateral programmes, we contributed £530 million to sub-Saharan Africa in 1987. We have taken the lead in trying to cope with the African debt problem. I am sure that the hon. Lady will have been delighted also by my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer's

announcement last week that we will be prepared to contribute up to $100 million to Nigeria to help the programme that it is agreeing with the IMF, provided other donors also give support.

Mr. Jacques Arnold: Has my hon. Friend noted the comments of the development assistance committee in praising the British programme for its concentration on the poorest countries, not least in sub-Saharan Africa?

Mr. Patten: Yes, we concentrate more aid on poor countries than do many other donors. The average for OECD donor countries as a whole is about 60 per cent. to poor countries whereas our figure is about 80 per cent. That is wholly right. It is also why we attempt to convince our colleagues in the European Community to adopt poverty criteria rather than political criteria for allocations under the Asia-Latin America programme.

Miss Lestor: As I have written to the Minister, he is no doubt aware that in its report, which he must have seen, the development assistance committee has expressed its concern at the decline in our aid

"in real terms during much of the 1980s and that as a proportion of GNP it was now considerably below DAC average."

The OECD also states:

"that the time has come to reverse the downward trend in the United Kingdom's ODA/GNP ratio, also as a contribution to improved aid burden-sharing among DAC members, and to make sustained progress towards

the United Nations target. Does the Minister agree with those views? Can he give an assurance that this year the trend will be reversed?

Mr. Patten: I agree with what the development assistance committee of the OECD said in its statement about the effectiveness of our aid programme, about the extent to which it takes account of environmental factors and about the extent to which it is directed towards the alleviation of poverty. I also welcome what the development assistance committee said about our aid programme now growing in real terms—a reflection of the growing strength of our economy, to which the hon. Member for Durham, North-West (Mrs. Armstrong) paid such glittering and fulsome tribute earlier. I am delighted that our aid programme will be growing by 18 per cent. in cash terms over the next three years or 5 per cent. in real terms.

Ms. Short: That is less than inflation.

Mr. Patten: I said 5 per cent. in real terms. Perhaps the hon. Lady could take a course in basic economics. I am delighted that we should be able to add to that with the new money that would go to Nigeria, provided that the other conditions which I mentioned earlier are met.

Rain Forests

69. **Mr. Jack:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what programmes to safeguard the rain forests his Department is supporting; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Chris Patten: Details of our existing activities to protect rain forests are given in a supplement to "British Overseas Development", a copy of which I am placing in the Library. In future we will encourage recipient countries to direct more of our aid to forestry and will increase commitments through international research and British charities.

Mr. Jack: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for that answer and his commitment to the rain forests. My nine-year-old son, Edmund, many members of the public and ecological bodies are worried that we are losing the race against time in the destruction of the rain forests. What hope can my hon. Friend give that a sense of new urgency will be promoted by the British Government in pursuit of further initiatives to ensure that his ecological legacy remains at the disposal of the whole world?

Mr. Patten: My hon. Friend's nine-year-old son is as worried about the subject as is my nine-year-old daughter, Alice, and they are both entirely right to be worried about this issue, to which my hon. Friend has paid such attention during his time in the House. We are funding well over 70 bilateral research and non-governmental organisation projects in the forestry sector. We have committed about £80 million to projects which are currently under way. I believe that we should do more and I am delighted that my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister has committed us to that in her speeches to the Conservative party conference and the Royal Society. I look forward to some of the results of that in the years ahead. As my hon. Friend said, this is an extremely important subject.

70. **Mr. Fearn:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he has any plans to initiate discussion with any developing countries to offer increased aid in return for guarantees about the protection of areas of tropical rain forest.

74. **Mr. Kirkwood:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he has any plans to initiate discussions with developing countries to offer increased aid in return for the implementation of measures to protect areas of tropical rain forest.

Mr. Chris Patten: I shall be encouraging recipient countries to direct more of our aid to forestry, but I support the view of the Brundtland commission that aid should not be subject to blanket environmental conditionality. Instead we should help countries to improve their capacity to tackle environmental problems and encourage international agencies to take full account of environmental aspects when preparing loans.

Mr. Fearn: What have the Government's representatives in the United Nations been doing about rain forests in general?

Mr. Patten: Our ambassador to the United Nations in New York, who was formerly the permanent secretary in my Department, is one of the foremost environmentalists in this country. Like our other representatives abroad, for example, at the World Bank, he has been pressing that the environmental impact of development should be taken into account.

Mr. Kirkwood: Will the Minister acknowledge that experts say that at the present state of erosion tropical rain forests will disappear by 2020 if some urgent action is not taken immediately? Is he aware that the only way to do that effectively is to make sure that the people who are getting a commercial return from taking out the rain

forests are accommodated and subsidised through the aid packages that we offer abroad? Is the Minister's Department considering that?

Mr. Patten: That is one of the approaches being considered under the tropical forestry action plan. However, the problem is more complicated than that, which is why we have put so much money into, for example, inventories and management of the rain forests of western Africa. It is why, as I said earlier, we have committed £80 million to forestry projects that are at present under way and, above all, it is why we shall commit more resources to trying to develop appropriate institutions in developing countries so that they have capacity in environmental matters, which they do not have at present.

Railway Accident (Clapham Junction)

3.30 pm

The Secretary of State for Transport (Mr. Paul Channon): At about 8.15 this morning a serious train accident occurred some 300 yards west of Clapham junction station when the 06.14 Poole-Waterloo passenger train ran into the rear of the 07.18 Basingstoke-Waterloo train. An empty train from Waterloo then ran into the wreckage. At least 30 persons are known to be dead and it is feared that the number will be higher; there are 113 injured, 31 very seriously.

I am sure that the House will join with me in expressing our deep sympathy with the families and relatives of the dead and with those who have been injured. [HON. MEMBERS: "Hear, hear."]

British Rail has already started its investigations into the accident and will immediately take any steps that may be required.

Both my hon. Friend the Minister of State and I have visited the site this morning, accompanied by the deputy chief inspecting officer of railways. Another inspecting officer from the railway inspectorate was already on the scene. I intend to appoint an inspector to conduct a full independent inquiry into the accident, in public, under the provisions of the Regulation of Railways Act 1871. A further announcement will be made as soon as possible about the timing of the inquiry. It is, of course, too soon to know the cause of the accident.

The line is unlikely to be cleared for at least 24 hours. British Rail has announced some alternative arrangements for passengers returning home tonight. An emergency telephone number for casualty inquiries has also been announced.

The emergency services responded to the disaster magnificently and I pay tribute to their dedicated work in rescuing the survivors and dealing with this appalling tragedy.

Mr. John Prescott (Kingston upon Hull, East): On behalf of the Opposition, I begin by offering our deepest sympathies to the relatives and friends of all those who were killed or injured in today's terrible tragedy. The work of the emergency services in responding so swiftly and with such skill and courage in the most difficult circumstances will no doubt have saved lives. Once again this House and the whole nation will admire their sheer professionalism and dedication.

I should like to add a personal note of thanks to the Secretary of State and the Minister of State for the way in which they have kept me informed, despite the many calls on their time, since news of the terrible disaster unfolded.

This terrible tragedy—the worst rail disaster for many years—comes only a matter of weeks after the publication of the Fennell report into the King's Cross fire in which 31 people lost their lives and follows the Manchester air disaster and the P and O ferry tragedy, all of which have naturally heightened public concern about passenger safety.

May I assure the Secretary of State that we welcome the fact that, just as I called for in relation to the Piper Alpha tragedy, there will be a twin-track approach to investigating this terrible tragedy, thus ensuring that under the agency agreement with the Health and Safety Executive there is an immediate inquiry into the specific technical reasons for the accident and that any immediate lessons can be acted on straight away, as well as the fact that there will be a fuller, independent public inquiry?

However, I am concerned about the nature and terms of reference of the public inquiry. Is the Secretary of State aware that the latest report of his chief railway inspector reveals that deaths and major injuries on British Rail have increased by 62 per cent. over five years, collisions by 18 per cent., and derailments by 6 per cent.? In those circumstances, will the Secretary of State consider a public inquiry that is independent of the Department of Transport?

Will he ensure that the terms of reference of such an inquiry are wider than those for the Fennell report and that the inquiry will be able to investigate all aspects of passenger safety on British Rail? Could the inquiry investigate the effects that financial considerations have had on passenger safety on British Rail and the fears for safety that have arisen from increased congestion? Will the inquiry consider, too, whether it is time to transfer the responsibility for health and safety on our railways from the Department of Transport to the independent Health and Safety Executive?

This is the second tragic accident involving major loss of life that has hit London's passenger transport system in little more than a year. There is a growing crisis of confidence in safety, among both the hundreds and thousands who commute each day into London and passengers throughout the country. Will the Secretary of State ensure that he acts swiftly to resolve the crisis of confidence and also to reverse his earlier judgment not to provide immediate Government time to debate the King's Cross report?

I assure the Secretary of State that he will have our full co-operation in helping to maintain the traditional reputation of British Rail as one of the safest railway operators in the world.

Mr. Channon: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for a great deal of what he has said in his supplementary questions. I am grateful, too, for what he said about me, and especially for what he said about the emergency services, which on this occasion, as so often, did an outstanding job. Indeed, I believe that the fire brigade arrived on the scene within five minutes or less of this appalling disaster. It certainly deserves the thanks of the House.

Naturally, I have not had time to consider in detail the terms of reference of the inquiry, but I shall bear in mind what the hon. Gentleman has said.

I have noted what the hon. Gentleman said about financial considerations. We must see what the inquiry reports, but the House will be well aware of the large investment being made at present in British Rail.

I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for what he said about British Rail's general safety record. However, I must tell him that, in general, the rate of significant accidents per train mile has been steadily reducing for 20 years. Of course, as the House knows well, the level of safety of trains is very much higher than that of road vehicles. However, I shall consider the serious points that the hon. Gentleman has made.

Sir David Price (Eastleigh): As one of those many hon. Members whose constituents were on the train involved, may I add to those already offered by my right hon.

[Sir David Price]

Friend, and my hon. Friends' sympathy to the families? Will my right hon. Friend ensure that the proper and necessary public inquiry will have wide enough terms of reference to embrace the total operations of Clapham junction? I believe that the House knows that that railway station probably has more trains passing through it than any other in the world and hence has more complex control systems than any other station. That should be a major factor for the consideration of the inquiry.

Mr. Channon: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for his comments. I shall consider carefully what he has said about the terms of reference, and I shall hope to arrive at terms of reference that will be acceptable to all sides of the House.

Mr. Robert Adley (Christchurch): In joining my colleagues from other Dorset and Hampshire constituencies in thanking the emergency services in London for what they have done, I ask my right hon. Friend two questions. Will he ask British Rail to investigate the effect of such a high-velocity crash on passengers in very crowded trains of open-plan stock compared with what might have happened in the more old-fashioned corridor stock? Will my right hon. Friend ask British Rail to supply immediately a list of how many signal and track improvement schemes are presently delayed pending the availability of funds under the public service obligation grant?

Mr. Channon: What my hon. Friend has raised in his supplementary questions are clearly matters that must be investigated, and I shall ensure that they are.

Mr. Andrew Hunter (Basingstoke): My right hon. Friend will know that many of my constituents were involved in this morning's tragedy. On behalf of the people of Basingstoke, will he convey their profound gratitude to the emergency services for their compassion and dedication when they responded so promptly to the emergency?

Will my right hon. Friend take note that, whereas today the dominant emotions are grief, sorrow and distress, some of today's anguish may become tomorrow's anger? Will he ensure that answers to the questions "Why did this happen?" and "What can be done to ensure that it never happens again?" are relentlessly pursued?

Mr. Channon: Yes, Sir. I entirely agree with what my hon. Friend says, and that is what I shall do.

Mr. Tom Cox (Tooting): May I, as the Member who represents Wandsworth, fully support the statement that the Secretary of State has made, especially with regard to the tragic loss of life and the appalling suffering that the injured will face for many months?

My hon. Friend the Member for Kingston upon Hull, East (Mr. Prescott) asked about the terms of reference of the inquiry. When those terms of reference are decided upon, will the right hon. Gentleman please take note of the repeated questions that London Members have put to him and to his predecessors about the services coming into London and the gross overcrowding?

Will the right hon. Gentleman assure the House and those people who have been sadly bereaved or seriously injured that the Government will do everything they can to be as generous as possible to those people? I make that point because, sadly, we have heard many times in this House of the Government's concern, only to read, a few weeks later, of the restrictions and the problems that people have experienced. Can we be assured that that will not happen in this case?

Mr. Channon: I entirely endorse what the hon. Gentleman said in the first part of his question, and I am grateful to him.

I am sure that the hon. Gentleman will welcome the fact that present investment in British Rail, both in cash and in real terms, is now running at, probably, its highest ever level and is certainly much higher than it has been for 20 years in real terms. I am sure that he will welcome the amount of investment that is taking place, but all such matters must be considered carefully.

Mr. John Butterfill (Bournemouth, West): I know that my constituents of Poole and Bournemouth would wish to be associated with the thanks that has been given to members of the rescue services. When my right hon. Friend conducts the inquiry, will he expand it to include the design of the railway carriages and their ability to withstand the type of impact that they faced today? From the pictures that I have seen of today's accident, the carriages had collapsed considerably; that must have added to the loss of life.

Mr. Channon: I am grateful to my hon. Friend, and of course I shall consider the points that he makes. The particular sort of rolling stock that was involved in today's accident has been on the railways for some time. It is not a new design, nor is it the very oldest; it is the perfectly ordinary type of rolling stock that has been in operation for some years. However, I shall certainly bear in mind what my hon. Friend has said.

Dr. John Marek (Wrexham): Rather than bearing it in mind, will the Secretary of State, here and now, assure the House that, contrary to what happened at King's Cross inquiry, evidence will be admissible about the level of subsidy and the effects of the so-called Government efficiency savings? Will he also assure the House that the problems of overcrowding and safety, as referred to in paragraph 6 of the foreword and summary of the chief railway inspector's report, entitled "Railway Safety", will be addressed at that inquiry?

Mr. Channon: I take note of what the hon. Gentleman has said. I am sure, as I have said a number of times this afternoon, that he will welcome the fact that a record amount of investment is presently taking place in British Rail. Investment is projected to be even higher in real terms than it is at present. All relevant matters must be considered by the inquiry because we want to get at the truth, to discover why the accident occurred and what can be done to make sure that it does not happen again.

Mr. John Ward (Poole): My right hon. Friend will expect me to associate my constituents with the remarks that he has already made. May I also thank him and my hon. Friend the Minister of State for their prompt attendance and for making the information available quickly?

It would be wrong to jump to conclusions this afternoon. The whole purpose of having the type of inquiry that my right hon. Friend has outlined is to find the

facts. We should wait for those facts before making a judgment. Would it be possible to increase the number of lines on the emergency number? That would be a help, because a number of people from Poole and Bournemouth have been trying to get throught, but have found the number continuously engaged.

Mr. Channon: I am grateful to my hon. Friend. I agree that it is wrong for us to prejudge the inquiry's outcome only a few hours after this terrible disaster. The Metropolitan police informed me that there would be extra emergency lines, and I hope that, by now, that has been achieved. I shall certainly convey my hon. Friend's suggestion to the police at the earliest moment.

Mr. James Molyneaux (Lagan Valley): On behalf of the people of Northern Ireland, may I extend our sincere sympathy to the bereaved, those who have been injured and those hon. Members representing the constituencies most affected?

Mr. Channon: I am grateful to the right hon. Gentleman. I remember his generous remarks on the occasion of the tragic King's Cross incident as well.

Mr. David Howell (Guildford): I fully share the sentiments that my right hon. Friend has expressed to the House, especially as many of my constituents use that line every weekday. We send our deepest sympathy to the bereaved. Is my right hon. Friend aware that this section of line is undergoing extensive signalling modernisation and re-equipment? Will he ensure that the inquiry will focus on the transitional difficulties that result from heavy capital expenditure, because, as we know, this line is one of the most intensively used in the world?

Mr. Channon: My right hon. Friend, with his experience, has put his finger on an important point which is obviously directly relevant to the inquiry. Although it is a matter for the inquiry to decide, I am sure that it will be an important factor in its consideration.

Mr. Matthew Taylor (Truro): May I, on behalf of my hon. Friends, join the House in extending our sympathy and condolences to the bereaved, the injured and all those who have suffered from the accident. I welcome the right hon. Gentleman's statement. Will he respond a little more to calls from the House that he consider the investment strategy of British Rail and the Government, especially corporate priorities? In view of the previous understaffing and staff vacancy problems with the railway inspectorate, can the right hon. Gentleman tell the House whether the inspectorate is up to its full staffing complement?

Mr. Channon: As I told the House on another occasion, I hope that the railway inspectorate will be up to its full complement shortly after Christmas. I have told the House a number of times about the enormous investment programme for British Rail, especially Network SouthEast. My right hon. Friend the Member for Guildford (Mr. Howell) drew attention to the heavy re-investment on that line. Of course, this is a matter that the House will wish to consider for itself. I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for his opening remarks.

Mr. David Atkinson (Bournemouth, East): I thank my right hon. Friend for his kind expressions of sympathy to the bereaved and the injured, many of whom are my constituents. Can he assure the House that the bereaved families will receive support from local social services and voluntary supporting services, both now and during the forthcoming Christmas period?

Mr. Channon: I am sure that that is happening, but my hon. Friend is right to raise that matter. I shall discuss it immediately with my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Health. I assure my hon. Friend that urgent action was taken. The injured were taken to hospital with remarkable speed, considering the extreme difficulties caused by the accident and the fact that few people could work in the site at any particular moment. In my judgment, this appalling disaster has been handled in a first-class way.

Mr. Nigel Spearing (Newham, South): Is the Minister aware that yesterday afternoon I travelled on a train past this very spot and later had conversations with railway personnel about a long-standing safety matter concerning Network SouthEast—a matter which, as far as I know, was not involved in this tragedy? Will the right hon. Gentleman look into the changes in procedure in the signal department of London Underground Ltd which were introduced recently?

Does the right hon. Gentleman agree that, whatever may be the effect of time and motion efficiency studies in retail sales, production and distribution, application of such methods to organisations such as the Civil Service, schools, hospitals, maternity services and the operation of railways, may not always be efficacious and can sometimes affect safety? Will he ask his Cabinet colleagues to reflect on this matter?

Mr. Channon: I am sure that the hon. Member would expect me to say, and it is very much the case, that safety must be the paramount consideration of any rail operator. British Rail recognises that and recognises its responsibilities and has always done so. As the hon. Gentleman said, over the years British Rail's general safety record has been very good. The hon. Gentleman raised a safety point about the London underground. That is a different matter, but if he cares to write to me about it I shall immediately take it up with the chairman of London Regional Transport.

Mr. John Bowis (Battersea): I thank my right hon. Friend for his statement and I thank him and his hon. Friend the Minister of State for coming down to my constituency this morning to see this scene of horror and tragedy. He is right to send the sympathy of the House to those who have been bereaved and to those who have been injured. I and my constituents would like to join in that message. He is also right to praise the emergency services from our area and beyond who came to the rescue as best they could. Many of them said that today they saw sights that they had never seen before.

I hope that we can also thank the people working behind the scenes from Wandsworth council, in the Salvation Army and people in the community. The Salvation Army told me how impressed it had been by the way the boys from Emanuel school come out to give succour and refreshment to those who had been injured and to people who had been working through the day.

Will my right hon. Friend confirm that, although this is one of the busiest rail junctions in the country, it also has one of the safest records? That makes today's events doubly tragic for the people who use the line. I am grateful for the inquiry, and I am glad that it is to be public. I hope

[Mr. John Bowis]

that it will be swift and will take into account all possible causes, incuding, of course, signalling now that we have computer signals. I hope that it will also take account of speed, the frequency of trains and how closely they follow each other. It should also consider the wider issue of the overcrowding of trains. That could not have caused the accident, but it may have made it far worse.

Mr. Channon: I think that I would endorse everything that my hon. Friend says. I confirm what he says about the safety record until today. I was glad to have his commendation for the emergency services, because he was on the spot with my hon. Friend and me and was able to see at first hand some of the appalling conditions under which the emergency services had to work, and the outstanding work that is being done.

Mr. Bob Cryer (Bradford, South): May I endorse the Minister's praise for the emergency services and also mention those in the nursing services who will be devoting care and attention to the recovery of those who are injured? I endorse the Minister's view that railways are still the safest form of travel, compared, for example, to road transport. Can he assure the House that, if there are any pointers during the inquiry about deficiencies in maintenance workers or maintenance investment in either permanent way or signalling, he will not wait for the report to be published, which will take many months, but will take immediate action to provide grant aid to British Rail to make sure that any deficiencies of that sort are remedied immediately?

Mr. Channon: If, either during the inquiry or before it, evidence comes to light that requires immediate action that is for the Government to take, I shall not hesitate to take it. If it is for British Rail, it has assured me that it will take immediate action. It has launched its own internal inquiry and will take necessary steps as quickly as possible.

Mr. Michael Colvin (Romsey and Waterside): Will my right hon. Friend guarantee that the inquiry that he has announced will keep its doors as wide as possible, so that anyone who wishes to give evidence either orally or in writing will be able to do so? Many of my constituents have useful anecdotal evidence about the way in which the line has been operating, particularly around Clapham junction, and like me they count themselves fortunate that they were not among those who were killed or maimed today. They feel that they have a duty to give evidence, perhaps in memory of friends, loved ones or relations who lost their lives or were injured in this tragic accident.

Mr. Channon: I shall certainly bear in mind what my hon. Friend says. He makes a fair point and I shall try to see that the inquiry's terms of reference are appropriately drawn.

Mr. Harry Cohen (Leyton): I extend my constituents's and my personal condolences and sympathy to the bereaved and injured. Is the Secretary of State sitting on a report which says that new lines need to be built from suburban areas into London to alleviate the overcrowding? If he is, should that report not be published right away, so that hon. Members can see it and see where the investment needs to go? The Secretary of State will recall that, in an industrial dispute when the Government beat down the train drivers, they were warned about the problems of flexible rostering and were told that it could cause safety problems? Does the Minister realise that, if that is a contributory factor, the Government stand besmirched?

Mr. Channon: I do not want to prejudge the result of the inquiry, but the hon. Gentleman is entitled to his view. I do not agree with him, but let us see what happens. All relevant matters are for the inquiry to determine, and we shall see whether that had any effect on the accident. I think that the hon. Gentleman is referring to the central London rail study. I have not yet seen the final report on that, but the sooner that it can be published the better.

Mr. Andrew MacKay (Berkshire, East): On behalf of my constituents, many of whom were involved in this shocking accident, I thank my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for his statement, and I endorse the remarks that he made about the emergency services. May I press him on one point that has already been raised? It is that the highest priority is the best possible communication so that our constituents, many of whom have loved ones who might have been on one of the trains —although they probably were not—can be informed as quickly as possible?

Mr. Channon: Yes. I am grateful to my hon. Friend. As to communications, I said earlier that the Metropolitan police would increase the available numbers. I hope that that has been done. It may be that the numbers will have to be increased again, and we may have to use the Surrey police as well as the Metropolitan police. In view of the feeling of the House, although that is not my responsibility, I shall make sure that those views are conveyed to the Metropolitan police at once.

Mr. Tony Banks (Newham, North-West): Hon. Members on both sides of the House who represent London constituencies are proud of our emergency services, and we hope that Ministers will think on that when they come to allocate resources to those emergency services.

Is the Secretary of State aware that overcrowding is now a matter of great concern to the travelling public in London, and many observers of the transport system? Perhaps the time has now come to limit the number of people who can use British Rail and London Regional Transport trains. After all, we put limits on the number of passengers that can be carried on other forms of public transport.

If it had not been for the quick thinking of the guard on the third train, it is likely that a fourth train would have piled into the wreckage. Therefore, will the right hon. Gentleman give the House an undertaking that he will tell British Rail that, at least for the moment, it should halt any further progress towards one-person-operated trains?

Mr. Channon: I agree about the emergency services. The inquiry will have to consider what the hon. Gentleman says about trains and whether the number of people getting on them should be limited. We have to establish first that the train was overcrowded. It was full, but there is some conflict of evidence about whether it was overcrowded. As we all know, one of the trains was empty —of the three, only two were carrying passengers. I make it clear to the House that I want to make sure that the inquiry covers all relevant points, so that public and

Parliament are reassured about the future. I do not want hide anything, and I am sure that the inquiry will not want to dodge getting to the bottom of what occurred on this occasion, so that the appropriate lessons can be learned.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I hope that I have called all hon. Members whose constituencies are directly involved in this tragic accident. I do not think that this is the moment for wider discussion of the matter. We shall move on to the next statement.

Fisheries Council

3.58 pm

The Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (Mr. John MacGregor): Together with my hon. Friend the Parliamentary Secretary and my noble Friend the Minister of State, Scottish Office, I represented the United Kingdom at the meeting of the Council of Fisheries Ministers in Brussels, on 9, 10 and 11 December.

This was a very important Council for the United Kingdom on many fronts. The Council reached agreement on a complex package of proposals on total allowable catches and quotas for 1989. As a result of our efforts, the final agreement contained improvements in the fishing opportunities originally proposed for the United Kingdom for 21 stocks. These changes are in line with the scientific advice where available, but in many cases there are increases in precautionary TACs where the scientific evidence is limited but experience in the fishery suggests that some increase is possible and desirable. In particular, we secured an increase in the Commission's proposal for the precautionary TAC for Channel cod and a United Kingdom allocation for sprat in the south North sea.

For western mackerel, I am very pleased to tell the House that we have finally secured flexibility to take mackerel east of the 4 deg W line, despite the continued strong resistance of a number of other member states. We have pressed for this for over a year in the Community, and now, in 1989, our fishermen will be able to take 35,790 tonnes to the east of the line. This has been achieved without affecting the general principles of the common fisheries policy. It will be a major help to the pelagic fleet.

I turn now to North sea cod and haddock, where the main difficulties for the coming year lie. We have had to face hard decisions for these stocks, because the spawning stock biomasses are at an unprecedentedly low level. This means that, unless firm action is taken now, we would be endangering the whole future of the fishery, as I warned the House on 1 December. Consequently, the TACs had to be set at levels which would prevent further depletion of the spawning stock. Although I recognise that this is likely to affect income, it is essential to accept these TACs in order to safeguard the long-term security of our fishermen. I welcome the comment from the Scottish Fishermen's Federation that the haddock quota was probably as much as it could have hoped for, given the decision to adhere to the scientific advice.

Given this unavoidable background, we regarded it as very important to secure as high as possible a quota allocation of North Sea haddock. After long negotiations, we secured 54,380 tonnes out of the Community's fishing opportunities of 62,500 tonnes—that is, 87 per cent. as opposed to our allocation in recent years of 78 per cent. This reflected an ultimate acceptance by the Commission, then by the Council, in the face of strong opposition from the other member states affected, that we should benefit from the Hague preference. Other member states face a cut of nearly 80 per cent. in their quotas compared with less than 60 per cent. for the United Kingdom.

In response to our strong pressures on the whole of the haddock question we secured an increase in the western haddock quota, which will add a further 1,500 tonnes for our haddock fishermen. This means that the fishing

[Mr. John MacGregor]

opportunities for North sea and western haddock next year will in fact be 73 per cent. of our estimated catches this year. Total white fish opportunities next year for cod, haddock, whiting and saithe in the North sea and west of Scotland will be 10 per cent. below this year's estimated catches.

I also insisted that the TACs for cod and haddock in the North sea should be reviewed if the biological assessment of the Advisory Committee on Fisheries Management in May indicates that this might be appropriate. In the final stages, we secured Council and Commission agreement to this.

During the negotiations, we have again made a substantial transfer with the Netherlands, securing valuable increases in 14 quotas, including additional opportunities in the North sea, as well as several stocks of particular importance to our fishermen in the south-west.

The Council also considered a number of technical conservation measures. I welcome the introduction of a plaice box along the Danish, German, Dutch and Belgian coasts, and the continuation of the cod box in the German Bight, both of which are designed to protect juvenile fish.

We have also agreed two new measures to protect sole in the North sea. We persuaded the Commission to alter its proposals so as to have broadly the same conservation effect but to achieve it by means less damaging to our fleet. We secured the removal of the potentially disruptive mesh size increase. Regulating the size of beam trawls will ensure containment of the catch effort of this highly valued species; and we secured a six-month period of notice to allow fishermen reasonable time to re-equip. The restriction of larger beam trawl vessels above 1,800 brake horse power to an area north of 55 deg N will afford protection for the sole stock in the spawning period. We consulted the industry closely on all these issues.

This was a complex and difficult Council meeting, but in the context of the current stock situation, the United Kingdom has achieved a better deal than any other member state.

Dr. Norman A. Gorman (Greenock and Port Glasgow): The Minister has just made what I would call an insufferably complacent statement. He will surely acknowledge that he offers a financially bleak prospect for Scottish and English fishermen who fish the North sea for haddock and cod. Will he accept that these fishermen face a dismal new year? Surely the same holds for many who are employed in the fish processing industry. Quota reductions must be of a manageable size in the interests of both the catching and processing sectors. We have seen in the herring ban what happens when the processing sector is ignored.

Will the Minister admit that the management of the fisheries is something of a scandal? Fishermen, even in harsh financial circumstances, accept the need to conserve threatened stocks, but does the Minister agree that effective management must extend beyond an annual block of quotas that are negotiated in mid-December? At the very least, we need increased mesh sizes and an increase in the landing size of the various species. Will the Minister agree to examine the problem of discards? The savage reduction of quotas will lead to a worsening of the discards problem. I am sure that the Minister will agree with me that in this regard we lag far behind the Icelanders and Canadians.

Surely the time has come to introduce a reasonable and fair decommissioning system. Instead of a steady reduction of certain elements of the fleet, the Government have allowed an expansion to take place, with disastrous results. Will the Minister give an assurance that he will make a statement before the end of June 1989 on this mid-term review of haddock and cod quotas? That will offer a crumb of consolation to our fishermen. As for consolation prizes, I am pleased to see that agreement has finally been reached on fishing for western mackerel east of 4 deg W. Will the right hon. Gentleman review the rigour of the scientific assessments of fish stocks, which seem to be somewhat erratic?

Finally, are the Minister's officials and the European Commission considering proposals for a fisheries set-aside scheme that is analogous to the agricultural set-aside scheme?

This is surely a black day for many of our fishermen.

Mr. MacGregor: I totally reject the charge that I am complacent. It is important to have regard to the entire settlement that we have agreed and not confine ourselves to the one stock that is causing concern. It is fair to note the considerable improvement that the United Kingdom Government have secured across the board. I am grateful to the hon. Member for Greenock and Port Glasgow (Dr. Godman) for his recognition of our achievement of flexibility for the fishing of western mackerel.

I have made it clear throughout that I am well aware and deeply appreciative of the effects that the cut will have on our fishermen who catch haddock. That is why I pressed so hard for the improvements and made them my top priority in the negotiations. I think that the hon. Gentleman underestimates the impact of the changes that we have achieved. He must recognise that the scientific assessment has to be taken into account. I am sure that he agrees that we would all have been criticised, including himself, if we had ignored the scientific assessment, only to find in future years that there were no fish for our fishermen to catch. That would be to place our fishermen in the most serious state of all. That is what we had to take into account.

I am concerned about the scientific assessments. The hon. Gentleman knows that we are talking about international scientists, not Government officials. The scientists have a problem because with haddock we are talking about single-year stocks. That is where the problem arises. It is difficult to make an assessment. However, the scientists' advice that we received last year —that haddock TACs could be increased—was misconceived. It is important that we examine the way in which the advice is undertaken.

The hon. Gentleman will know that mesh sizes are being increased from 1 January. The discards problem is important. Had the United Kingdom secured pretty well the whole of the haddock TAC, five other member states would have had such tiny quotas that they would have considerably increased their discards. That would have been the likelihood. That would have offset all the conservation effects of the reduced TAC.

We were undoubtedly considering the discard question in deciding where to pitch the relative quotas, but the five other member states, which took a good deal of

persuading for the outcome to be reached, are left with only 25 per cent. of the quotas that they have fished this year, whereas in the case of the United Kingdom the haddock catch possibility has been held at 60 per cent. of this year's catches.

Expansion of the fleet reflects the profitability of fishing in recent years; and, as the hon. Gentleman knows, we are how considering how to deal with the problem.

The hon. Gentleman asked whether a statement would be made before the end of June. I cannot say whether that is possible, as the statement would have to be made after or just before the Council meeting when we receive the scientists' assessment in the May-June review. I assure the hon. Gentleman, however, that I am very alert to the importance of the matter. That is why I pressed for a review following the assessment, and we shall be considering how to give the House an appropriate opportunity to express its view then.

The hon. Gentleman will know that what might be described as the equivalent of the set-aside scheme—laying-up premiums—were available in the United Kingdom, but the uptake was very small. We must wait and see what happens in the fishery in the coming year. There are still considerable opportunities for our fishermen. I well understand the problems, but we must look at the state of the stock.

Sir Michael Shaw (Scarborough): Is my right hon. Friend aware that no fair-minded Member could ever accuse him of being insufferably complacent? No one has worked harder to look after the fishermen's interests. The problem is clearly a lack of fish.

Having said that, may I ask my right hon. Friend to realise that, along with the real hardships being endured —certainly by my fishermen—there is a worry about whether the scientists are reaching the right decisions, and whether the further decisions being made as a result are themselves right. The stocks that were estimated a few years ago, and the allowable fishing of 250,000 tonnes of cod in the North sea, have been steadily reduced year by year. The forecasting seems to be completely adrift. In the meantime I hope that, in these difficult times, every encouragement will be given to improving port and marketing facilities, so that the fish can reach the market in prime condition and fetch the best possible prices.

Mr. MacGregor: I am grateful to my hon. Friend. He is absolutely right to say that the most difficult problem is a lack of fish. I only wish that I could conjure up more fish, but I cannot. I can only secure the best possible deal for our fishermen—and that is precisely what we have done. It is plain from the facts and figures emerging from the Council meeting that, without the slightest doubt, the United Kingdom haddock fishermen have obtained far the best deal. All other fishermen face a reduced quota compared with what they expected when they went into the negotiations; we have obtained an extra 8,000 tonnes for our fishermen.

We must of course take into account the best scientific assessment that we can obtain, and there is no doubt that the state of the spawning stock biomasses for North sea cod and haddock reveals a worrying picture. I agree with my hon. Friend, however, that we need on each occasion to probe the scientists' work very closely. We did so on this occasion, and we will do the same when the review comes in May or June.

Mr. James Wallace (Orkney and Shetland): Let me start on a positive note and welcome the decision about fishing east of 4 deg W for mackerel. Will favourable consideration be given to the designation of Lerwick as a mackerel port?

The swingeing cut in haddock quotas will dismay those who depend for their livelihood on going out to catch haddock and cod. When does the Minister or his right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland propose to meet representatives of the Scottish fishing industry to discuss the financial implications of the decision, and what constructive proposals can they put forward at any such meeting? When the issue was debated in the House on 1 December, it was generally believed that the Hague preference would entitle the United Kingdom to 60,000 tonnes and that figure was not contradicted from the Government Front Bench. Can the Minister explain why there has been a shortfall of some 6,000 tonnes?

Mr. MacGregor: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for what he said about western mackerel. As he will know, the fishermen met my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland a few weeks ago, and are in regular touch with my noble Friend Lord Sanderson of Bowden. I am sure that meetings will be arranged to follow up the outcome of the weekend's Council decisions as soon as it is convenient. We were also in touch regularly with the Scottish fishermen who were in Brussels throughout the negotiations, and my noble Friend saw them yesterday morning. The Lerwick question is obviously a matter for my right hon. and learned Friend, but I am sure that he will have heard the point that the hon. Gentleman has made.

It is important to recognise that in the past the Hague preference has not been accepted in its entirety. In one instance, the United Kingdom raised criticisms of it in relation to a request from Ireland, and we succeeded in ensuring that it was not wholly achieved. In this case, if the preference had been accepted at 60,000 tonnes, that would have left 2,500 tonnes for five other member states. There was a risk, to which I have already referred, of high discards from those other member states, which would have affected the conservation issue.

I hope that the hon. Gentleman will accept, however, that the United Kingdom secured a very tough deal in getting so much of the haddock quota this year, and that our cut has been very much less than those of all other member states. We secured an extra 1,600 tonnes in the western haddock fishery, which is also available to our fishermen, and which should be added to the extra North sea stocks that we obtained.

Mr. David Harris (St. Ives): Does my right hon. Friend accept that fishermen are realistic and know that the only fish that he and his fellow Ministers can conjure up are paper fish, through inflated TACs which bear no relation to fish in the sea? He is to be congratulated in not following that course.

Will my right hon. Friend confirm that the channel cod quota is one of those that will be subject to the mid-term review next year? Will he also confirm that a number of swaps have been made with other countries for other species? That will be of assistance to the south-west fishermen in particular.

Mr. MacGregor: I am grateful to my hon. Friend. I can confirm that the channel cod question will be subject to

[Mr. MacGregor]

review. My hon. Friend will know that we obtained an increase in the original proposals to assist our fishermen. As for quota swaps, we had one with the Dutch in which we transfered 17,000 tonnes of North sea plaice which we could not fish. In return, we obtained all the Dutch quotas for different stocks in the south-west area as well as others in the Irish sea and elsewhere, including significant quantities of sole and herring in the North Sea. Most of those are highly valued by our fishermen, and I believe that they will be of great benefit to fishermen in the south-west.

Mr. Ted Garrett (Wallsend): The Minister may be surprised to learn that I am a bit of an expert on the fishing industry——

Mr. Robert Hughes (Aberdeen, North): As on most things.

Mr. Garrett: My hon. Friend is quite correct.

The right hon. Gentleman may also be surprised to realise that 15 years ago a Select Committee report on the fishing industry predicted precisely what is happening now. He will recall the first question about the depletion of herring stocks. Had we not pursued the policy that is now being pursued, there would be no herring stocks.

The Minister may be further surprised to learn that I am chairman of a Council of Europe committee on the fishing industry. We might learn something about the processing of fishing from the Portuguese and the Spanish, who have gone to warmer waters to find fish to process for commercial use. I refer, of course, to tuna.

The North Shields fishing port on Tyneside, which predicted exactly two weeks ago what the statement would say, may have been correct, that there are lessons to be learned. The primary lesson is that, as the Minister said at the end of his statement, if we do nothing, no fishing will be left.

Mr. MacGregor: The hon. Gentleman, with his great experience, is absolutely right. I can tell him—with far less experience than he has—that I have taken on board the message that he has put to the House. He is right to draw attention to the risk of repeating the herring fiasco—the near-disaster in the 1970s—and that was very much in all our minds when we accepted the total allowable catch for North sea haddock this year.

The hon. Gentleman's warning is also very pertinent. I have reflected on the advice that we received from the scientists last year for this fishery, and I am surprised now that it was such a high figure. We should therefore be careful and cautious this year on that fishery. I recognise deeply the problems that that creates in one year, but we must also recognise that those fishermen had a 50 per cent. increase in the value of their landings in the three years to 1987, which must be taken into account as well. What they would not forgive us for would be over-fishing now and then running into precisely the problems to which the hon. Gentleman has drawn attention.

Mr. Anthony Steen (South Hams): I first congratulate my right hon. Friend on achieving a great deal, for which the House must be grateful. I also want to thank my hon. Friend the Parliamentary Secretary for taking the trouble to pay a visit to Brixham fishing port and to talk to trawlermen there. They were very grateful, and they are pleased with the result that has been achieved. However, is my right hon. Friend aware that the Dutch and Belgians are notorious for ignoring quotas? Not only do they not have the policing to ensure that their ships do not go over the quota, but their ships have additional concealed fish holds and blinders in their nets?

I wonder whether my right hon. Friend is aware of that. What steps will be taken to ensure that the Dutch and Belgians do not completely ignore the quota? Will action be taken to stop them taking more than they should?

Mr. MacGregor: I am grateful for my hon. Friend's opening remarks and, in particular, his tribute to my hon. Friend the Parliamentary Secretary, who has been assiduous in going round all the fishing ports since taking on his responsibilities and in pressing our case with great vigour in the Community. My hon. Friend said that other member states were not properly controlling quotas. He will know the tremendous importance that we attach to that, and the priority that we have given in many Council meetings to ensuring that we have a thoroughly effective inspectorate of inspectors, and that other member states observe the conditions.

I hope that my hon. Friend will recognise the many steps that the Dutch Government have taken recently to put their house in order, which have caused them a great deal of difficulty and controversy. I can assure my hon. Friend that we continue to discuss these matters actively with other member states. I want to stress that the Dutch Government have been very strong in trying to deal with these matters in the past few months.

Mr. Robert Hughes: Given that we must take scientific advice seriously, what explanation can the Minister give for the sudden mood of optimism last year and the catastrophic drop in forecasts this year, which has led to savage cuts in the quotas? Why did the scientists get it so wrong? Surely they should have spotted the age profile earlier. How can the matter possibly be changed in June next year? Is that offered as a sop to fishermen for keeping quiet at the moment? If the Minister introduces some form of compensation scheme, will he repeat the errors of the past and give the money only to the boat owners and not to the working fishermen, the processors and those working in fish processing, who will lose their jobs as a result of the changes?

Mr. MacGregor: On the scientific advice, the problem on stocks—particularly in the haddock stock—is that annual fisheries have become dependent on single-year classes and those fluctuate widely for many reasons. That is one reason for receiving advice from one year to another. Single-year classes are an issue that gives us cause for concern because it implies that the remedy lies in increasing the spawning stock biomass, and that is the purpose of the current low level of TACs.

The review in May is not a sop. It is important to continue to review the scientific evidence and to change the TAC in mid-year, if the scientific evidence justifies that. That is important. However, I do not want the House to be under any misapprehension: I am not putting that forward as a way out of the problem. We shall have to wait and see what the scientific evidence is in May. There is no precedent for paying compensation to fishermen when stocks decline or disappear.

Mr. Keith Mans (Wyre): Although I welcome the statement, particularly with regard to the increase in

western mackerel, which is good news for Fleetwood in my constituency, I also want to welcome the technical and conservation measures that my right hon Friend has taken. May I urge on him the importance in future of trying to ensure that quotas are more stable, which is the best long-term means to ensure a profitable and stable industry?

Mr. MacGregor: I agree. We have been focussing this afternoon on the one quota that has given is the greatest difficulty. It is important to stress that we have stability in many other stocks, and we have seen increases in some cases.

Mr. Alex Salmond (Banff and Buchan): Has the Minister made an estimate of the number of jobs at risk from the cut in the North sea haddock quota, which is the mainstay of the Scottish fleet in volume and value? Does not the Minister's acceptance of the discard argument wholly invalidate the case for setting impossibly low TACs? Does it not show that one cannot manage a fishery by quotas alone? When will the Minister take effective action against Icelandic imports, some of which are coming in below reference prices? The Minister quoted the mildly favourable reaction from fishermen, as opposed to the welter of criticism that he has received from them. Does he not accept that the view among fishermen is that a haddock deal of 54,000 tonnes should have been accompanied by the resignation of the Minister, his hon. Friend the Parliamentary Secretary and his noble Friend the Minister of State, Scottish Office?

Mr. MacGregor: I have quoted the point about the reaction of fishermen to contrast that responsible attitude with the ludicrous response from the hon. Gentleman and his party this morning. The hon. Gentleman has taken the matter out of all perspective. I hope that he does not mean that he was hoping for a far bigger increase in the TAC this year. If he was asking for that, he was endangering the future of the fisheries. I suspect that that was a short-term reaction. It is easy for the hon. Gentleman, who has no responsibility for carrying out decisions—and never will have it—to call for that. Such a call would have the worst possible effect on the long-term future of the fishermen.

Mr. Toby Jessel (Twickenham): My right hon. Friend mentioned the interests of producers several times. Will he bear in mind equally the interests of consumers, as fish is the one form of protein that everyone agrees is thoroughly healthy? Is my right hon. Friend aware that, in Twickenham this Saturday, the price of cod was three times the price of mackerel? If there is a glut of mackerel, cannot more be done to promote its consumption—perhaps by the industry itself? Is my right hon. Friend aware that more fishmongers are opening? What are the Government going to do to meet the increasing demand for fish? Perhaps there should be more fish farms and other methods.

Mr. MacGregor: We do not actually have a glut of mackerel at present, although I agree entirely with my hon. Friend about the nutritious and other values of fish as food. That is why, through the Sea Fish Industry Authority, we have been carrying out a major marketing programme to increase the consumption of fish. I am delighted that there are now more retail shops and that the supermarkets are expanding their provision of fish.

It is very important to ensure that stocks do not disappear altogether. We find it very difficult to re-encourage the young consumer to consume herring because, given its disappearance, she has not been used to handling it. Ensuring the future viability of stocks is an important factor in ensuring that more people have more fish to eat.

Mr. Austin Mitchell (Great Grimsby): The cut in the North sea cod quota will be a serious body blow to a Grimsby industry, which is already struggling with catch difficulties with no help from the Government. Does the Minister accept that there is a disparity of treatment between farmers who, faced with the loss of earnings through natural disasters, usually receive some compensation and fishermen, who should, in this instance, receive compensation either from the Commission, which is awash with money, or from the Government, for the consequences of these decisions?

Does the Minister accept that quotas and TACs are a partial method of sustaining conservation? Is it not better to use technical measures such as the seasonal closure of grounds, the closure of spawning grounds and, most important of all, a real and substantial increase in mesh size—properly and effectively policed—to ensure proper conservation? Would that not have been a better step to take?

Mr. MacGregor: The hon. Gentleman will know that farmers have been going through a very difficult period because of the impact of the weather on their harvests, which has considerably reduced many of their incomes, and there is no compensation for that.

I agree with the hon. Gentleman that conservation measures represent just as important a part of the overall approach to the common fisheries policy. In particular, we have placed a heavy emphasis on the need to protect the juvenile cod—a stock that is of particular interest to the hon. Gentleman. This year, some member states attempted to remove the box in the Bight on which we have insisted, which helps to protect the juvenile cod. I am sure that the hon. Gentleman will be glad to observe that that has continued in place. I agree with the hon. Gentleman that it is important continually to examine conservation measures—including mesh size—and that is what we have been doing.

Mr. George Foulkes (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley): Those of us who represent fishing constituencies are genuinely worried about the effect of the decision. What will be done to ensure that non-Community countries do not come in and over-fish the stocks as well?

My second question follows on from that of my hon. Friend the Member for Great Grimsby (Mr. Mitchell). Fishermen in my constituency believe that the reason why the Government are so generous in giving compensation to farmers—I do not quarrel with that—is that there are so many farmers on the Conservative Benches. They point out to me that there are no fishermen on the Conservative Benches—and by that I mean not rod fishermen but net fishermen. Will the Minister do something to show my constituents that their attitude is just a little cynical?

Mr. MacGregor: We pay great attention to ensuring that imports from outside the Community abide by the rules. The Community's deal with Norway this year was pretty tough——

Mr. Foulkes: Iceland?

Mr. MacGregor: We are looking at the position in regard to Iceland. We need evidence that the rules are not being observed.

The hon. Gentleman referred to the contrast with farming. I would point out to him that in recent years we have been spending considerable sums on capital grants to ease the problem of the size of the fleet. We have spent sums on general marketing and have been giving the utmost attention to ensuring that we achieve the best possible outcome from each Council negotiation to protect our fishermen.

Mr. Calum Macdonald (Western Isles): I apologise to the Minister for not having been here for the early part of his statement. My question relates not so much to the quotas that he has announced as to their knock-on effect upon the prawn fisheries off the west coast. Does the Minister realise that my constituents are scared that fishermen affected by the quotas may transfer their attentions to the prawn fisheries off the west coast and that, in two or three years' time, quotas such as those now being imposed on haddock will be imposed on the prawn fisheries? Will the Minister undertake to consider that question carefully; and, if he envisages such a transfer taking place, will he introduce measures to correct the position?

Mr. MacGregor: I note that the hon. Gentleman fairly referred to what might happen in two or three years' time, so let me put the question in context. It is difficult to predict the effects on fishermen's incomes of the package agreed on white fish in the North sea and the west of Scotland, as it will depend on the market. With less fish coming on to the market, prices may well rise, although one cannot predict that with certainty. In addition to overall values, it is also important to consider the totality of North sea and west of Scotland white fish quotas.

As I said, those quotas represent 90 per cent. of our estimated catches this year. That is the context in which we must set the possible implication that the hon. Gentleman fears. We also have a review coming up mid-year, and we shall watch very carefully what happens in the fishery as a whole. I am sure that the hon. Gentleman will agree that at the same time we must ensure that the long-term future of the stocks is assured.

Mrs. Margaret Ewing (Moray): Will the Minister now answer three specific and important questions that he has so far avoided? First, what assessment has been made of the impact of the agreement on jobs—particularly for the Scottish fishing fleet as a result of the haddock TAC—given that many reports suggest that several thousand jobs could be affected directly or indirectly? Secondly, what action does he propose to take to try to stop imports from non-EEC countries at below reference prices, which are undercutting our fishermen? Thirdly, will the Minister come and make the statements that he has made today not in the cosy confines of an office in Scotland but at one of the ports along the north east fishing coast?

Mr. MacGregor: The hon. Lady is a fair person. If she examines the answers that I have given, she will find that I have clarified the position on the assessment of jobs. One simply cannot tell today what the outcome will be. We have to consider the value of the fish that are landed, and we do not know how the market will react to that. We need to take into account the fact that the white fish quotas represent 90 per cent. of this year's catches and that last year the value of United Kingdom landings in haddock was nearly 50 per cent. up on 1984. We are therefore considering peak years. We must consider all those factors, and the possibility of a review mid-year. For those reasons, it is not possible for anyone to say what the outcome is likely to be.

On the hon. Lady's second point, I have already said that we are monitoring developments in relation to reference prices. On her third point, I strongly believe in getting out and about whenever I can, subject to the commitments of the diary. My hon. Friend the Parliamentary Secretary certainly travels a great deal, and I do so whenever I can.

Mr. Frank Doran (Aberdeen, South): It is not only the fish catchers who are dismayed at the Minister's announcement; it is also those in the fish processing industry, a large part of which is situated in my constituency. The Minister will remember that the total ban on herring catching a few years ago lasted three or four years. By the time herring quotas were reintroduced, we had completely destroyed our capacity to exploit the stocks. What steps does the Minister propose to take to ensure that that does not happen again?

Mr. MacGregor: The hon. Gentleman makes a fair point. We are taking steps to achieve a realistic TAC now, precisely to avoid what happened in relation to herring.

Mr. Archy Kirkwood (Roxburgh and Berwickshire): Will the Minister accept it from me that the announcement on TACs will be greeted with dismay in towns such as Eyemouth in my constituency, where, only this weekend, the Allscot factory summarily laid off 57 employees, partly as a result of uncertainty about the supply of white fish? I understand that the Minister has difficulties in quantifying the value and volume changes implicit in the announcement, but will he next year consider giving special assistance both to the catching and to the processing sectors, if evidence is produced that the worst fears of some Opposition Members are confirmed? Will the Minister or one of his colleagues come to Eyemouth and explain the consequence of the announcement?

Mr. MacGregor: I shall certainly pass on the hon. Gentleman's request to my noble Friend the Minister of State, Scottish Office. The hon. Gentleman referred to the processing industry. As I said in answer to an earlier question, I fully understand the impact of the lack of fish and of the uncertainty to which the hon. Gentleman fairly referred. That is precisely the problem; we cannot just create fish. We must ensure that the spawning is protected if we are to have a proper supply of fish. That is precisely why we had to act as we did over the weekend, and we shall be reviewing the position throughout the year.

I hope that the hon. Gentleman will consider haddock in a wider context. I have already said that the white fish quotas are 90 per cent. of our estimated catch this year. Haddock quotas for the United Kingdom in the North sea and off the west coast of Scotland are 73 per cent. of our estimated catches this year. The fact that the catches this year are well below our quotas suggests that the main problem is a lack of fish.

Mr. Brian Wilson (Cunninghame, North): Can the Minister tell the House whether, without the global United

Kingdom white fish quota, any protection will be given to vessels having a low catching power? If no such protection is provided, will there not be a danger that quotas will be gobbled up by the extremely powerful vessels that sail from some ports?

As the Minister has responsibility for food, will he deal again with the impact of this development on consumers? Can he given any estimate of the effect on shop prices that it will have?

Finally, given the clear warning that has evolved over many years that supplies of familiar species of fish are increasingly under pressure, and with the market looking to new species all the time, will the Minister give an assurance that the short-sighted nonsense of cutting fisheries research and of threatening the existence of establishments such as Torry will be abandoned once and for all? Let there be more research and recognition of future needs, not less.

Mr. MacGregor: As to the hon. Gentleman's question concerning prices to the consumer, that is not something that one can estimate now, because it will depend on the market place. On the hon. Gentleman's first point concerning quota allocation, the way in which we do that is something that we must now decide. As to research and development, the key aspect in respect of management of the stocks to ensure long-term supplies—this is the key issue for the consumer—is the research work undertaken by our fisheries people at Lowestoft——

Mr. Doran: And Aberdeen.

Mr. MacGregor: —and in Aberdeen, and elsewhere —in relation to long-term stocks management. That aspect is not affected by the research and development review we are now undertaking.

Inmos (Sale)

4.41 pm

Mr. Doug Hoyle (Warrington, North): I beg to ask leave to move the Adjournment of the House, under Standing Order No. 20, for the purpose of discussing a specific and important matter that should have urgent consideration, namely,

"the proposed sale of Inmos by Thorn-EMI to Thomson-SGS, the Franco-Italian semiconductor manufacturer."

The matter is urgent because the sale is imminent, so right hon. and hon. Members require an immediate opportunity to discuss it. It is important because Inmos, which was set up in public ownership by the last Labour Government, is the only British company that designs, develops and mass-produces microchips. It is facing a foreign takeover, purely because it was dumped by the present Government into the private sector.

A successful information technology industry is as essential to a modern industrial nation as the steel industry was to a manufacturing country in the last century. Inmos is no lame duck, but is right at the frontier of the information technology industry. Its transputer is unique, and is a world leader in microprocesors. Transputer sales are soaring, especially in Japan. Few British companies can say that of their products. More than 200 Japanese companies are incorporating transputers into the design of their new products.

It is a matter of national interest that a successful, strategically important technology company remains in British hands and does not become a foreign subsidiary that will be dependent upon the whims of a foreign owner. We cannot allow Thorn-EMI's short-term market needs to decide Inmos's long-term future. To allow Inmos to pass into foreign hands will be a body blow to the whole of Britain's information technology industry. I ask for an emergency debate in order that we may discuss that important matter in greater detail.

Mr. Speaker: The hon. Member asks leave to move the Adjournment of the House for the purpose of discussing a specific and important matter that he believes should have urgent consideration, namely,

"the proposed sale of Inmos by Thorn-EMI to Thomson-SGS, the Franco-Italian semiconductor manufacturer."

As the House knows, Standing Order No. 20 requires me to give no reasons for the rulings that I make on these matters. I have listened carefully to what the hon. Member has said, but I regret that I do not consider that the matter that he has raised is appropriate for discussion under Standing Order No. 20. I therefore cannot submit his application to the House.

Orders of the Day

Electricity Bill

Order for Second Reading read.

[Relevant documents: Third report of the Energy Committee of Session 1987-88 on the Structure, Regulation and Economic Consequences of Electricity Supply in the Private Sector (House of Commons Paper 307), and the third special report of the Committee of the same Session containing the Government's observations on the third report (House of Commons Paper 701).]

Mr. Speaker: I must announce to the House that I have selected the reasoned amendment in the name of the hon. Member for Banff and Buchan (Mr. Salmond), and that I propose limiting speeches to 10 minutes between seven and nine o'clock this evening. I hope that right hon. and hon. Members called before seven o'clock will have regard to that limit when they are making their contributions.

4.45 pm

The Secretary of State for Energy (Mr. Cecil Parkinson): I beg to move, That the Bill be now read a Second time.

The Bill sets out the Government's proposals for the restructuring and privatisation of the electricity supply industry throughout Great Britain. Today sees an important turning point in the history of that important industry.

Virtually no one now bothers to pretend that if we were starting from scratch, we would choose to recreate the public sector monoliths that dominated key areas of the national economy in the post-war period. They are the tower blocks of our economy, the monuments to the public sector planning that lost sight of the customers' needs.

The right hon. Member for Islwyn (Mr. Kinnock) said that if his party came to power, they would try to make the market economy work better than this Government have made it work. The hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, East (Mr. Prescott) showed signs of understanding the shortcomings of a monopoly supplier when he said that he wanted to change the electricity industry and make improvements. Perhaps that is the other reason why he was moved on. For the sad truth is that nationalisation has fulfilled neither the hopes nor the promises of his supporters.

Mr. Norman Hogg (Cumbernauld and Kilsyth): How can the right hon. Gentleman make such an assertion about the North of Scotland Hydro-Electric Board, which provided electricity to people who would not have received a supply had the industry been left in private hands? In the context of the hydro-electric board, the right hon. Gentleman's comments are utter nonsense.

Mr. Parkinson: That may be the hon. Gentleman's view but it is not ours, and when the hydro-electric board finds its way into the private sector he and his constituents will be very pleased.

It was Labour's own leading post-war theorist, Tony Crosland, who first gave the game away when he likened nationalisation to

"making Marks and Spencer as efficient as the Co-op."

Some of his contemporaries, and some right hon. and hon. Members seated on the Opposition Benches today, still believe that he was paying the Co-op a compliment.

Those working in the electricity industry have always recognised the concept of public service that the nationalised industries were intended to embody, but for them, the practice has been very different from the theory. There has been insufficient pressure on costs, efficiency or prices. With the encouragement of past Governments, the industry has over-invested in plant that has not been needed and which, in some cases, has not worked. By restructuring the electricity supply industry and returning it to the private sector, we will improve its efficiency, promote competition and give customers a better deal.

Our proposals will open up a genuine market in electricity. They will remove the present institutional barriers to competition and provide a new climate that fosters competition. By giving locally based supply companies a duty to provide a supply to all their customers, they will move the key decisions from a remote monopoly producer towards the customer and the supplier.

Mr. Alex Salmond (Banff and Buchan): Will the Minister specify how he detected the demand for privatisation of the Scottish electricity industry? Did he do so from election results, or by some other means that we do not know about?

Mr. Parkinson: I know that the hon. Gentleman resents it, but we have national elections in this country. We have suffered for many years under Labour Governments elected by Scottish and Welsh majorities. He is a member of the national Parliament. The Conservative party won the election on the basis of a promise to privatise the electricity supply industry.

Suppliers will have a direct incentive to seek the cheapest sources of supply from a wide variety of generators. Private generators will benefit from access to transmission on the same terms as everyone else. In that way we shall change the whole culture of the industry from one of cost-plus and take it or leave it, to one of consumer choice and real service to the customer. At the same time, our proposals will ensure that security of supply is maintained, by preserving the integrity of the national grid system and by encouraging diversity in electricity supply.

One of the most surprising allegations is that I am taking excess regulatory powers over the electricity industry. The same people say that we took insufficient regulatory powers in previous privatisations. Perhaps they could make up their minds and decide what they really want. Presumably they want to promote competition. Regulation can help there—for instance, by obliging the industry to allow newcomers to use its wires. Presumably they want customers to be protected against exploitation. Presumably they want the industry to plan for emergencies and interruptions in fuel supply. Presumably they want the industries to meet specified standards of service. Presumably they want the industry to observe safety standards. Presumably they want the Scottish industry to be regulated from Scotland.

If that is what they want, that is what the Bill gives them. If they think that is excessive regulation, perhaps they would say what clauses should be dropped. I suspect that we shall hear nothing about that.

Mr. Alfred Morris (Manchester, Wythenshawe): The drafting of the Bill recognises that competition and the interests of consumers are not necessarily synonymous. It is also clear that where they are not, competition will have priority over consumers' interests. Since the Secretary of State has so often implied that the interests of consumers must come first, is he prepared to amend the Bill and especially clause 3(3)(a)?

Mr. Parkinson: The customer's position will be improved in two ways. First, the person who supplies the customer will have access to a market in electricity. Secondly, he will have a regulator with strong powers whose job it will be to ensure that the customer gets a fair deal. The Bill makes possible those two improvements and puts the customer in a much better position. The Electricity Consumers Council agrees wholeheartedly with that, and believes that the customer will be in a far better position under the Bill.

Mr. Tony Blair (Sedgefield): The other point made by the Electricity Consumers Council was that, if competition is to mean anything, it must mean choice for the consumer. Will the Secretary of State tell us precisely what choice will be available to a consumer who does not like his area board and wants to change? What choice is there at the point of consumption?

Mr. Parkinson: The hon. Gentleman is being wholly disingenuous and he knows it. We have made it clear that the cost of duplicating the low voltage distribution system —that is what he is asking for—would not be in the customer's interests but would increase costs enormously. We are saying that, in the 80 per cent. of consumers' bills not represented by those costs, there will be competition, and in the remaining 20 per cent. there will be regulation.

Mr. Blair: The Secretary of State has told us why it is not practically possible to provide competition for the consumer. That may be right. He claimed that he was not proposing the same for electricity as for British Telecom but was introducing something different. What choice does the consumer—not the monopoly supplier—have?

Mr. Parkinson: If the hon. Gentleman will allow me to proceed with my speech, I shall explain to him, as I explained at the Conservative party conference, which seemed to find it easier to understand, that taking two wires to every house would be wasteful and no consumer wants it. That is precisely the point that the hon. Gentleman seems unable to comprehend. The price of what is supplied will be subject to competition. The cost of supplying it will be regulated, and that cost is a small part of the overall bill.

The Bill provides a clear statutory framework for our proposals. The detailed regulatory arrangements for the industry will be contained in licences issued under the Bill, which we shall table when the Bill goes into Committee. The regulatory framework, like the Bill, will enable the six principles set out in the White Paper "Privatising Electricity" to become reality.

The first principle was that decisions about the supply of electricity should be driven by the needs of customers. Our Bill will give every owner or occupier of premises—not, as now, those within 50 yards of an existing main—a right to a supply of electricity on reasonable terms. That will extend the customers' rights. Suppliers will be able to contract for electricity from a wide range of sources with incentives to do so in the most cost-effective manner. Customers will have the right to contract directly with the generators of their choice.

We shall oblige public electricity suppliers and the national grid company to offer fair terms for carrying the electricity generated. That will give the heavy user a more direct choice in who supplies his electricity and will give those who supply the domestic customer a choice in who supplies them—something that they do not have now. At present, we have a monopoly producer compounding a monopoly distributor. That is wrong. All those provisions will exert downward pressure on costs by enabling decisions about electricity supply to be driven by customer needs.

The second principle was that competition was the best guarantee of customers' interests. To promote competition, the Bill will enable the industry to be restructured so that the generating capacity of the Central Electricity Generating Board can be split into two new companies: one, Power Gen, would own about 30 per cent. of the CEGB's existing generating capacity, all of it non-nuclear, and the other, National Power, would own the remainder. The national grid will be transferred to the joint ownership of the area boards' successors.

Privatisation will open an exciting new opportunity for independent power generators. We know already of nearly 20 proposed independent power generation projects that would amount to more than 10 per cent. of our national needs. I give the House two examples. The first, and the closest to the House—just nine miles from here—is Thames Power's proposed 1,000 MW plant at Barking Reach, which will form an important part of the overall plan to revitalise that area. Secondly, in the midlands, Hawker Siddeley is planning a 350 MW station that could produce enough electricity to supply Corby, Kettering and Northampton. There are almost 20 other major projects in the pipeline.

The third principle was that regulation should be designed to promote competition, oversee prices and protect customers' interests where natural monopolies will remain. The hon. Member for Sedgefield (Mr. Blair) seems to have discovered natural monopolies for the first time, but a great deal of the White Paper related to precisely how we should regulate them.

The Bill enables us to appoint a Director General of Electricity Supply and to staff his office. It sets out his duties, the most important of which will be to promote competition and protect the customers' interests. It allows him to issue licences to generate, transmit and supply electricity. He will regulate the industry by granting, modifying and enforcing the licences.

Opposition Members have the strange idea that regulation is a substitute for competition, but it will ensure that competition develops. It will do so in at least five ways. It will require the 12 public electricity suppliers to contract with the most competitive generators; it will penalise them through price control if they contract inefficiently; it will require the public electricity suppliers and the national grid company to allow others to use their network on terms that may be settled by the director; it will prevent the 12 public electricity suppliers and the two large generators from using their position in the market to stifle competition; and it will give new rights to independent generators and suppliers, so putting them on an equal footing with the successors to the CEGB and the area boards.

[Mr. Parkinson]

There will be more than just two generators. I have mentioned the independent generation projects being considered; there will also be opportunities to buy from Scotland, from France, from the established independent generators and even from the generating projects in the process of being launched by the area suppliers—*[Interruption.]* In theory, that could have happened after the 1983 Act. In practice, it did not, because the monopoly generator dominates the market and throws out the independent generator.

The fourth principle was that security and safety of supplies must be maintained. The integrity of the national grid will be preserved with a merit order system building on the benefits of existing arrangements. The national grid company will have a statutory duty to develop and maintain an efficient, co-ordinated and economical system of electricity transmission.

We believe that security of supply is best based on diversity in sources of supply. We believe that nuclear power is a vital part of that diversity. On at least two occasions in the past 10 years, Britain would have faced enormous difficulties but for our nuclear power stations. The oil price explosion and the miners' strike would have caused us almost insuperable problems. The original case for nuclear power remains strong, and fossil fuels remain finite. No major new alternatives to nuclear power have yet been discovered.

As the environmental arguments develop, nuclear power will increasingly be seen as the least polluting major source of electricity. Nobody knows what the price of fossil fuels will be in the decades ahead, but we can all be reasonably certain that they will be a great deal higher than they are now.

To encourage diversity of supply, a statutory obligation will be placed on each public electricity supplier to purchase a minimum amount of non-fossil-fuelled generating capacity, and that includes renewables. It will ensure that any costs associated with this requirement are shared by all electricity users. That obligation will not therefore affect the overall level of prices, but it will enable customers to identify the cost of diversity.

Mr. Malcolm Bruce (Gordon): Why will not the Secretary of State allow effective energy conservation measures to contribute towards that percentage of saving? Does he acknowledge that investing money in energy efficiency can release more units of electricity than investing in power generation? That should be taken as part of that quota.

Mr. Parkinson: I shall deal with that point in a minute or two. I should like to deal with it within the framework of my speech: I hope that the hon. Gentleman accepts that.

Mr. Stanley Orme (Salford, East): Is it not true that the Secretary of State will have to rig the market on the cost of nuclear power, both for the four PWRs that are in the pipeline to be built between now and the end of the 1990s and for the decommissioning of plants? Surely market forces will not operate. Can the right hon. Gentleman explain why the taxpayer should have to pay for that aspect?

Mr. Parkinson: I have already said why we need a nuclear component in our electricity supply. Security of supplies demands diversity. The hon. Gentleman is a moderate man and he did not want Mr. Scargill to win the miners' strike any more than we did. If we had not had nuclear power in 1985, Mr. Scargill would have won—*[Interruption.]* Oh yes, he would. If there had been no nuclear power during the oil price explosion, the lights would have gone out. There is a strong case for diversity, which is why we are determined to ensure that that happens. As we said in our election manifesto in 1987, we believe that maintaining a strong nuclear industry is a vital part of that diversity, and that is what we shall achieve.

Mr. George Foulkes (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley): Answer the question.

Mr. Parkinson: I have. The hon. Gentleman does not understand the answer, so he should go away and think about it.

Electricity customers will continue to pay, as they do now, the anticipated costs of dealing with spent nuclear fuel and retired nuclear plant. The electricity industry already makes full provision for those costs, and the Government stand behind the CEGB and British Nuclear Fuels. That is the current position. If there are unanticipated increases in the costs—for example, through changes to safety or environmental requirements—the Bill enables the Government to contribute to them. That is right, because such costs are likely to arise from changes in public policy. Our approach will give investors and the industry a more certain future against which to plan, and it will subject costs to scrutiny by Parliament.

From recent statements by the hon. Member for Sedgefield, one would have thought that it was entirely novel for the Government to be prepared to assist an energy industry. He has, of course, said very little about the coal tax that we have been paying for years, both as consumers and as taxpayers. The coal industry has made tremendous efforts, especially since 1985, to reduce its prices and improve its performance. Nevertheless, over the past nine years, the Government have given the coal industry more than £1 billion a year in grants and payments.

Payments to the coal industry do not stop there. In addition, the CEGB estimates that last year it could have saved up to £550 million if its coal had been bought at competitive prices. Those figures show the real scale of the coal tax we are paying now, not the theoretical tax that the hon. Gentleman invented.

The taxpayer has been picking up the cost of fossil-fuel-produced electricity both as a customer and as a taxpayer, making up the loss incurred because the coal is uncompetitive.

Mr. Peter Hardy (Wentworth): Does the right hon. Gentleman accept that, had the CEGB sought to replace the purchase of British coal by the purchase of imports, that increased demand on the international coal trade would have had an enormous inflationary effect on prices? That is one reason why the right hon. Gentleman's Department has been supporting the coal industry.

Mr. Parkinson: The coal industry itself recognises the validity of what I have been saying, because in recent years it had been forced to reduce its costs. The CEGB estimates put the figure much higher than the one that I used. Whichever way we look at it, a substantial premium is being paid by the electricity user to British Coal. At the other end, the taxpayer is picking up £1 billion a year in

deficit grants and redundant mineworkers' payments scheme grants paid to the industry. Nothing that the hon. Gentleman says can change those figures.

Mr. Blair: The right hon. Gentleman's reason for imposing a nuclear tax on the industry appears to be the fact that we are already paying a coal tax. Surely the key contradiction is why, if he believes in privatisation, the coal industry should be left to the market but the nuclear industry be given special protection.

Mr. Parkinson: The nuclear industry will have no more protection than the coal industry already has—*[Interruption.]* Some 70 per cent. of all our generating capacity is coal burning—*[Interruption.]* Of course it is privileged; we have developed the technology to burn coal and we have insisted on burning British coal. If there is to be a privileged fuel in future, it will be—as it has been in the past—coal, which will have a five times bigger share of the market than nuclear power.

On safety, the Electricity Supply Regulations lay down the procedures and standards that public electricity suppliers must observe on quality and safety of supply. They have been fully revised and brought up to date and will ensure that the electricity supply system will remain every bit as safe and secure after privatisation as it is now.

Dr. Alan Glyn (Windsor and Maidenhead): Nowhere in the Bill can I see continuity of supply. If supply is cut off, a person's deep freeze or refrigerator or other appliance dependent upon electricity will not work. Is there any means by which he may be compensated for any loss he may have sustained?

Mr. Parkinson: Under the present system, the answer is no. Under our system, if the industry fails to perform and restore power and fails to meet targets, there will be brand new rights for customers. I am about to talk about them at this very moment.

The fifth principle was that customers should be given new rights, not just safeguards. I have already referred to the new right to require a supply. Our proposals for consumer protection give customers new rights in two important areas. First, the Bill enables the director general to specify standards which public electricity suppliers should achieve when supplying electricity to domestic premises—for instance, in keeping appointments. If a standard is not met, a customer will receive compensation. That is entirely new.

Secondly, the Bill enables the director general to set standards of overall performance which public electricity suppliers should achieve. The director general will collect and publish information relating to suppliers' performance under both schemes. That will enable comparisons to be drawn between the performance of different suppliers as a further spur to improve standards of customer service. All the benefits of the existing arrangements for consumer protection will be retained in the new stucture after privatisation.

Mr. Robert Hughes (Aberdeen, North): What will happen to standing charges after privatisation? Currently, standing charges bear heavily on the poorest in our society—the pensioners and the low paid.

Mr. Parkinson: As the hon. Gentleman knows, the matter was examined carefully. We were told that to abolish standing charges would be an extremely inefficient way to help the elderly. Yes, many standing charges are paid by people with second homes, for instance. The hon. Gentleman is effectively saying, "Let us relieve well-to-do sections." The matter was examined in great detail, and it was on the advice of consumer councils that standing charges were maintained.

The hon. Member for Sedgefield said on 1 December that the Bill does not mention the efficient use of electricity. But if he had read the Bill—I have had my doubts in recent days—and had got as far as clause 3, he would have found that the Bill places a duty on the Secretary of State and on the director general to promote the efficient use of electricity. Supply companies will be required by their licences to provide guidance to their customers on the efficient use of electricity.

The Electricity Bill also carries out a long overdue and highly necessary modernisation and codification of the law on electricity supply. It sets out a new and comprehensive supply code suitable for the industry in its new role. No fewer than 18 whole Acts—the earliest dating back to 1882—are to be replaced and brought up to date in this Bill.

Mr. Hugh Dykes (Harrow, East): Bearing in mind the fact that area boards or replacement companies will retain their complete geographical monopoly, how will my right hon. Friend ensure that showrooms are properly administered to the benefit of consumers? There is evidence, although hazy and vague, that showrooms are inefficiently run by some—not all—area boards. If that were to persist, the consumer would not be served, and costs at the margin would be higher than they would otherwise be.

Mr. Parkinson: Showrooms and the non-monopoly parts of the business will be separately accounted for to prevent cross-subsidisation, which would be the way to reinforce unfair competition. That will not be allowed by the regulator.

The sixth principle was that all who work in the industry should be offered a direct stake in their future, with new career opportunities and with freedom to manage their commercial affairs without Government interference. The industry's employees will be transferred to the successor companies which will take over the undertakings where they are working. Their rights and terms and conditions of employment will be safeguarded.

The rules of the existing electricity supply pension scheme will be amended so that the scheme can continue for the benefit of the employees and pensioners of the industry. These will be attractive provisions at the time of flotation to enable employees to acquire shares in the successor companies. I hope that Opposition Members get the same satisfaction as I do from the fact that the unions are anxious to join the Government in discussing the level of the shareholdings that their members are looking forward to having.

The Government's proposals for Scotland were set out in the White Paper "Privatisation of the Scottish Electricity Industry", published last March. That document set out the six guiding aims of my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland for the privatisation of the industry in Scotland. The Bill will enable those aims to be put into effect.

Mr. Foulkes: Will the Secretary of State explain precisely why privatisation of the Scottish industry had to be dealt with in this Bill and not in a separate Bill?

Mr. Parkinson: As a result of the Government and the usual channels getting together, the hon. Gentleman will have an opportunity tomorrow to hear from my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland precisely why the Bill is sensibly combined with this one.

Mr. Foulkes: Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Parkinson: No.

Mr. Foulkes: It is important.

Mr. Parkinson: To whom?

Mr. Foulkes: To the House.

Mr. Parkinson: I shall give way to the hon. Gentleman.

Mr. Foulkes: The Secretary of State is the principal responsible Minister. Is he saying that he does not know why there is not a separate Bill? He should explain why, so that my hon. Friend the Member for Sedgefield (Mr. Blair) knows about it when he speaks.

Mr. Parkinson: We have explained on several occasions. We believe that the measure incorporates the two measures into one Bill. There is a precedent for that.

Mr. Dick Douglas (Dunfermline, West): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. We may have to check *Hansard*, but the Minister said that he and the usual channels had something to do with this being in the one Bill.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Sir Paul Dean): That is not a point of order for the Chair.

Mr. Parkinson: That is how we come to have two days of debate, the second of which will be opened by my right hon. and learned Friend. There is a precedent. The industry was nationalised in England and Scotland in one Bill in 1947. We are just privatising it in one Bill in 1988.

I should now like to dispose of the myths about our proposals which the hon. Member for Sedgefield, among others, has been spreading. The first concerns electricity prices after privatisation. The hon. Member has chosen to travel around the country proclaiming that the privatisation of electricity will result in a price increase of 25 per cent. by 1990. That bogus figure is based on his confusion and lack of understanding of the subject.

First, the hon. Gentleman includes all the price increases that result from the increase in the industry's financial targets. They were announced last November. They are nothing new. They were explained. The only thing that is new are the two new increases invented by the hon. Gentleman—one for a non-existent nuclear tax and one to pay dividends. Both are pure fiction. Customers pay nuclear costs now and dividends will be paid, as interest has been paid, out of the profits the industry is making. Not only does the hon. Gentleman invent new costs, but he absolutely ignores any possibility of reducing existing costs.

As the hon. Member knows full well, the increases in the industry's financial target would have been necessary even if it had remained in the public sector. They have nothing at all to do with privatisation. They have everything to do with ensuring that the taxpayer earns a reasonable return and preventing the misallocation of resources. When the hon. Gentleman's party was last in power, it recognised that principle.

If Governments invested at an unreasonable rate of return, they were wasting taxpayers' money and pre-empting scarce resources.

The last Labour Government set nationalised industries a target rate of return on investment of 5 per cent. which they said was necessary to prevent the misallocation of national resources.

Mr. Salmond: The Secretary of State will know from evidence to the Select Committee that the Hydro Board certainly anticipates a doubling of its rate of return as it moves into the private sector. Does he say that that has nothing to do with privatisation?

Mr. Parkinson: My right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland will give the hon. Gentleman all the answers that he wants about the Hydro Board in the course of the Scottish day tomorrow *[Interruption.]* I suspect that that is how it will turn out, whether it is called that or not.

We believe that it is right that the electricity supply industry, like other industries in the public sector, should earn a reasonable rate of return. But the financial targets that we have set the electricity supply industry for 1988-89 and 1989-90 still fall short of the figure that the Labour Government declared desirable. Those targets could scarcely be called excessive.

Some statements by Opposition Members appear to suggest that, far from the electricity supply industry earning a reasonable rate of return on its assets, the Government should set the industry a lower financial target. I have to say to the House that to do so would be to sell the taxpayer and the nation short. It is the taxpayer who will be selling this industry and the investor who will buy it. If we sell the industry on the cheap, it is the investor who will benefit and the taxpayer who will lose. We want the electricity supply industry to earn a reasonable rate of return on its assets. One result of that will be that the taxpayer will receive a fair price when the industry is privatised.

If we really wanted to fatten up the industry, it would be easy. We could simply follow the precedent set by the Labour Government. The Labour party should be the last to talk about price increases. During the five years of the Labour Government, ordinary consumers in England and Wales saw their electricity bills go up by more than 180 per cent. in cash terms, and industrial electricity prices in England and Wales during that period rose by 160 per cent. The idea that a Labour Government controlling a monopoly industry is an insurance against price increases is a best a sick joke.

The second myth propagated by the hon. Member for Sedgefield is that our proposals involve a new "nuclear tax". The consumer will pay no increased costs beyond those he would have paid under the existing structure. Our proposals will simply identify costs which had previously remained hidden. The fact that these costs will be identified does not mean that there will be an increase. It simply means that they will be identified and subject to scrutiny not rolled up in the bulk supply as at present.

Mr. Allen McKay (Barnsley, West and Penistone): Would the Secretary of State be surprised if Lord Marshall disagrees with him? Nuclear will have to be ring-fenced to make it sustainable and people in the nuclear industry are aware and afraid of that.

Mr. Parkinson: The idea that all of a sudden, on the day after privatisation or as a result of this Bill, the costs of nuclear energy will in some way increase, is wholly bogus. The cost of nuclear is being paid now by electricity customers. They simply are not told how much they are paying for the nuclear industry. We are prepared to expose those figures and to argue the case for diversity.

It may come as a surprise to hon. Members, and clearly it does, that we are paying these costs now. It is a measure of how closely they are in touch with these affairs. We have been paying those costs for nearly 30 years, so it is time that they woke up and found out what was happening.

The clear implication of what the hon. Gentleman says is that his party would not pay these costs in future. I remind him that over 100,000 people work in the nuclear industry, many of them in the north, and not a few in Sedgefield. Cleveland Bridge relies heavily on it and I am sure that the hon. Gentleman's constituents and the country would like to know whether his party, if elected, would close the nuclear programme. I hope that today he will tell us. I am sure that his constituents would be interested to know.

Our proposals represent a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to improve the electricity supply industry. They combine the benefits of security of supply and of increased competition. We believe that, when the industry is in the private sector, it will benefit from its new-found freedom to offer the customer a better deal, both through improved standards of service and the downward pressure on electricity prices from increased competition.

The essence of this privatisation is to make the industry answerable to the customer and responsive to his needs. The customer wants the best buy. The Bill will bring the benefits of competition to every customer. The customer wants the best service. The Bill will bring new rights and safeguards, and real penalties for poor service. The customer wants a clean, safe environment. The industry will continue to be subject to all the environmental controls now in force. The customer wants a reliable supply of electricity. He will benefit from diversity in electricity generation and the security that that brings.

As a country, we enjoy a wealth of fuels for electricity generation: coal, oil, gas and nuclear power. We have a range of technologies for using those fuels. Decisions about the use of those fuels and the choice of those technologies are central to our economy. The Government reject the notion that the customer is best served by leaving those decisions in the hands of a dominant, state-owned, cost-plus, monopoly producer.

The Bill will put power where it belongs: in the hands of the customer and his supplier. I commend the Bill to the House.

5.26 pm

Mr. Tony Blair (Sedgefield): The Secretary of State provided the best comment on his speech when he told us that it had gone down well at the Conservative party conference. Today he has a more demanding audience—an unwilling and sceptical country. He talked about regulation, and the need for diversity of supply and to protect nuclear power, but he never once gave us the reason for privatising the industry. The question that the country asks and that the Secretary of State must answer is why an industry, brought together in the public interest over 100 years to serve the nation, must now in the same public interest be torn apart, broken up, and sold in two years to serve the demands of private profit. What reason did we hear today for privatisation other than privatisation for its own sake?

From the days when only a tiny fraction of the population had access to electricity, to the mushrooming of hundreds of small electricity suppliers and private and municipal generators, when excess capacity was over 80 per cent. and inefficiency was rife, to the establishment of a central electricity board and a national grid in the public sector by a Tory Government, to full public ownership under a Labour government in 1947—throughout all those decades of restructuring, streamlining, innovation and change—there was one driving impulse that has gone today: the creation of an electrical supply industry where the technology of electricity was harnessed to the needs of the nation. Now the Secretary of State says that all that is better left to the market.

It cannot be stressed too strongly that our modern industry was not built on a foundation of success created by market forces. It was created by clearing the rubble of disorganised chaos that they left behind. What is so wrong with the industry today that it is incapable of alteration in public ownership? What are the clear benefits that will flow from it being split and sold?

The right hon. Gentleman cannot answer that question by pointing to some superior experience abroad. There is no simple model of electricity supply anywhere in the world. In some countries it is private; in some it is public, and in some it is mixed; but certain things stand out everywhere. The first is that, whether private as in the United States or Japan, municipal as in West Germany, public as in France or Italy, or mixed as in Belgium, there is no such structure as is proposed here, with generation, transmission and distribution all separately split up and privately owned.

No such structure exists anywhere else in the world. Most electricity supply industries are vertically integrated, which is what the Secretary of State proposes for Scotland. Some have separate generation and transmission, but only where there is a state-owned national grid, and some have separate distribution, but none has what we are contemplating. However, that is not to say that such structures have never existed. They have existed in some form in most countries. Indeed, they have existed in some form here, but they did not work and that is why they were changed. Therefore, what is proposed today is not something radical, evolutionary and new, but something old-fashioned, and failed.

Secondly, even when the industry is privately owned abroad, in most countries major strategic decisions are taken by Governments, not companies. Whether in Switzerland, where the Government have recently ordered the private sector to drop the new nuclear reactor programme, or in Japan where the level of demand and the type and capacity of power stations is fed through the planning process of MITI, the public sector, by the very nature of the energy industry is comprehensively involved.

However, what we learn most of all from abroad is that, until recently, when the Secretary of State forced up prices, our electricity was among the cheapest in the world. It was cheaper than that in Japan, America, West Germany, Italy, and France—it was cheaper than electricity anywhere except for a few countries with access——

Mr. Keith Mans (Wyre) *rose*——

Mr. Blair: I shall give way to the hon. Gentleman in a moment.

Our electricity was cheaper than anywhere except for a few countries with access to large natural resources, cheap labour or both.

Therefore, we start the debate from the position that, for both industrial and domestic customers, our prices are comparatively low in the public sector. Indeed, that is no doubt why just a short time ago, when he was a Minister at the Department of Energy, the hon. and learned Member for Putney (Mr. Mellor), described our industry as "the envy of the world".

Mr. Parkinson: The hon. Gentleman refers to all those countries, but I notice that he carefully avoids any mention of West Germany or Japan. Will he explain why?

Mr. Blair: I have just mentioned them.

Mr. Parkinson: The hon. Gentleman is wrong. Prices in Japan are almost twice ours, and prices in West Germany are about 50 per cent. higher.

Mr. Blair: The right hon. Gentleman does not understand—that is exactly what I am saying. Electricity prices are more expensive everywhere else in the private sector—for example, they are more expensive in Japan—but they are cheaper in the public sector here. What the right hon. Gentleman is forgetting throughout the debate is that he must make the case for the privatisation of the industry. We start from this position——

Mr. Mans *rose*——

Mr. John Maples (Lewisham, West) *rose*——

Mr. Blair: I give way to the hon. Member for Lewisham, West (Mr. Maples).

Mr. Maples: Will the hon. Gentleman help to clear up something about the relative merits of public and private ownership? Will a future Labour Government renationalise the whole industry, and if so, on what terms?

Mr. Blair: We are proud that we took the industry into public ownership. When we come to power it will be reinstated as a public service for the people of this country, and will not be run for private profit.

There is no answer to our question there about what happens abroad——

Mr. Mans: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for giving way. If he is saying that publicly generated electricity in France is more expensive than it is in this country, why do we import electricity from France?

Mr. Blair: We import it because the public sector there subsidises it. If the hon. Gentleman looks at prices in France, he will find that the domestic price for French electricity is higher than that in the United Kingdom.

The Secretary of State cannot point to any model abroad, so he is saying that our low prices—until he started forcing up the rate of return, our electricity prices had fallen 17 per cent. in real terms in the past few years in the public sector—can be driven lower still through the structure that he proposes. However, he is rather coy about exactly when that will happen. The Secretary of State has told us that there will be downward pressure on costs. If he is under pressure, he will even say that there will be downward pressure on prices, which is, of course, something different.

Central to the Secretary of State's case is that he can, as he put it—somewhat disloyally to his colleagues—at a conference organised by *The Economist* a few weeks ago,

"ensure that in contrast to previous privatisations, like British Telecom and Gas, there will be no single monolithic British Electricity, whose customers are effectively left to bear the risks. Real competition will exist from the word go."

That was the Secretary of State's boast. He said that there will not be another British Telecom or British Gas, and that he would not repeat the mistakes of his colleagues.

The Secretary of State says that he is introducing real competition. He kept on mentioning competition during his speech, as if, the more he mentioned it, the more real it became. However, he should analyse what is happening.

Let us take the notion that the right hon. Gentleman is introducing competition and examine it in stages. There are 74 stations at the moment, supplying between 50 and 55 GW of electricity. Those power stations are to be divided between the two big companies, big G and little G. They will continue to be contracted to supply the grid, competing as at present under the merit order system, which calls on the stations in order of greatest efficiency. The Secretary of State's proudest boast about that system is that he can maintain it—not change it or improve it. Therefore, any competition in generation will be addressing future new capacity arising either from old stations that are being shut down or from additional demand.

There is some dispute about demand. The Central Electricity Generating Board puts it fairly high, at between 12 and 15 GW, so I shall accept that for the purposes of the argument. The Secretary of State says that there will be competition to supply the new capacity. But wait—one third of that new capacity will be nuclear, so there will not be any competition there. There is to be ring-fenced, protected status for the nuclear industry. Therefore, in reality, we must subtract that from the competition. Wait again—under the Secretary of State's provisions the area boards can build their own power stations, but they are monopoly area board suppliers, so that too must come off the total competition.

The most extraordinary evidence that was given to the Select Committee came from the Association of Independent Electricity Producers, which, when asked about the prospects of private generation stated, as quoted at paragraph 45 of the Select Committee's report:

"we would view another 4GW over the present situation by the year 2000 as being about the upper end of the range."

The Committee added:

"As one might reasonably expect, that is assuming that everything goes well from the date of the privatisation."

So there we have it; by the year 2000, roughly 4 GW—one fifteenth, just 6 to 7 per cent.—of our generation will be open for real competition. That is the reality of the Secretary of State's proposals. And even then, that assumes that what exists in theory will also exist in practice.

Mr. Peter Rost (Erewash): If the hon. Gentleman knew anything about the industry, he would know, instead of scoring cheap political points, that the estimate given by the independent power producers is only one estimate, and that others are much higher. He would also know that offers of electricity have been made and are now being contracted to the new area boards at lower prices than the CEGB is charging its area boards.

Mr. Blair: I was interested in what the Secretary of State said about that. He said that independent producers now wanted to contract some 20 projects in the electricity industry. The figure has increased by five or six since a few days ago, when the Secretary of State referred to 14 or 15.

Mr. Parkinson *indicated assent.*

Mr. Blair: Yes, the Secretary of State confirms that the number has increased.

We tabled a parliamentary question to find out exactly what the projects were. We were informed that we could not be told that because they were in confidence. Culling through the newspapers, there may well be various assessments of what independent producers can do, but I advise the hon. Member for Erewash (Mr. Rost) that the association that represents independent producers has a slightly better idea than he does of what is likely to happen.

Let us assume that what exists in theory can happen in practice. What then? We know that there is to be a duopoly after privatisation: big G and little G. That duopoly led Professor Robinson and Mr. Sykes of Consolidated Gold Fields plc, whom one would hardly think of as rampant Left wingers, to tell the Select Committee:

"Duopoly is generally an unsatisfactory market structure. There is a strong incentive to collude . . . Even without explicit collusion, it is well known that firms in duopoly tend not to compete on price in the hope of avoiding price wars. Consequently, the mechanism that competition normally provides to pass cost reductions on to the consumer is ineffective".

They concluded:

"we would expect prices to be higher than under continued nationalisation."

However, it is not merely that. It is the independent projects that he says will exist.

The right hon. Gentleman has talked in recent days about there being power stations built in the expectation that they will then be able to supply the electricity industry. I must tell him that I would have thought that it was highly unlikely—virtually impossible—that anyone would build a power station and invest hundreds of millions of pounds, unless they received a guarantee covering the capital cost, the fuel cost and, probably, as in the United States, the operating costs, too. Therefore, the idea that we will have an influx of power stations, all competing on the grid, is nonsense.

Mr. Parkinson: The hon. Gentleman talked about duopoly. He ignored Scotland and the five independent generators that already exist, where there is substantial over-capacity for which English boards are already signing up. He ignored, too, the 2,000 MW French link. I assure him that there are 20 projects, representing 10 GW, which are well on the way to being fully signed up. He will look very foolish in about three years' time when he reads this rubbish.

Mr. Blair: I understand that we shall get an answer to that question in three years' time.

The right hon. Gentleman talked about electricity coming from Scotland or France, but that is electricity coming from public ownership. That has nothing to do with privatisation or the arguments about whether the structure should be changed. Even if we accept that there will be more electrical generation and competition, the critical point will be upon whom this competitive pressure will actually operate. The answer is that it will operate on the generators. However, the customers contract not with the generators, but with the area boards, which are monopolies. If it operates at all, competition must operate through choice.

The choice here is given to the monopoly suppliers. They will be able to award contracts to whomever they wish—even to themselves. The truth is that there is no competitive pressure in this structure at the point of consumption, which is the only competitive pressure that matters. In fact, when we analyse what the right hon. Gentleman has said, we see that there is less competition than between British Telecom and Mercury. At least with British Telecom and Mercury, one can pick up the telephone and change the telephone operator so that one contracts with Mercury in that small part of the market. Here, there will be no choice whatever.

In exchange for having no choice, we have the reality of higher prices. That is not something that is in the future, or some vague promise such as the Secretary of State has made, that prices may come down. Indeed, outside of the Conservative party and the Department of Energy, it is barely in issue that prices will rise because of privatisation. The national utility services said that our prices would become among the highest in the world and last week, the CBI called it an inflationary own goal. The National Consumer Council, Cambridge Econometrics, the Electricity Consumers Council and the London Electricity Consultative Council all said that it would mean higher prices.

The Economist said this about what the right hon. Gentleman called our fantasies:

"Nuclear power is the cause of other headaches. Because it is (for now) the costliest way to generate electricity, and because the industry will be allowed to pass on a chunk of that extra cost, consumers will effectively pay a 'nuclear tax' every time they switch on. On top of that, the taxpayer is to subsidise the cost to National Power of reprocessing and disposing of nuclear fuel, and meet part of its hefty bill for decomissioning nuclear stations. Add all this to a 15 per cent. rise in Britain's electricity bills before the sale and—for consumers—privatisation hardly seems a blessing."

Perhaps the most extraordinary statement came from the present Chancellor of the Exchequer—an expert on rising prices—when he was the Secretary of State for Energy. He was asked by one of his hon. Friends whether the best way of holding down electricity prices was not the private generation of electricity, and he said:

"I would not like to promise that private generation of electricity is the best way of holding down prices."—[*Official Report*, 8 February 1982; Vol. 17, c. 726.]

Against the right hon. Gentleman's promise of downward pressure on cost, years ahead, we have the fact of the 9 per cent. rise last April, the fact of the 6 per cent. rise this April, and the dividend yield, quite apart form the cost of nuclear power.

Worse than that, because of the mechanism that the right hon. Gentleman has introduced, we will lose the obligation to supply that is presently on the generators. He told us that he is placing that obligation of supply on the area boards—the suppliers. They can only supply what is generated. What determines whether they are planning ahead sufficiently, ensuring that there is enough capacity to meet future demand or ensuring that there is not excess capacity that will cost the industry dear? Who will be given responsibility for planning once generators no longer have that critical obligation of supply?

For losing the right of supply from the only people capable of fulfilling it and for competition, if we are lucky,

[Mr. Blair]

in 6 or 7 per cent. of generation by the year 2000—twice removed from the customer—we must endure rising prices, huge cost dislocation, and the risks of this Bill. If that is the bargain that the right hon. Gentleman offers Britain's 22 million consumers, it is no wonder that every opinion poll shows how massively it is opposed.

The truth is that the right hon. Gentleman never asked for a moment whether privatising this industry was in the interests of consumers. The only questions that he was permitted to ask were, how he could privatise and how fast. It is the same with the structure. The right hon. Gentleman never asked what was best for the industry. He was simply haunted by one thing—after the embarrassment over the monopoly sale of gas and Telecom, he feared that he would be accused of privatising this industry as a monopoly. That is not a good thing to have on the right hon. Gentleman's job application form to be Chancellor, which was his only concern.

At the heart of this proposal is a gaping black hole where the interests of the consumers should be. The right hon. Gentleman may have started out with the intention of avoiding the errors of Telecom and gas, but, in the event, he has simply compounded them.

He claims that the privatisation of the electrical supply will be in the interests of the nation. He says, especially, that it will guarantee the continuation of the nuclear programme, and he condemns as a figment of our imagination the notion of a nuclear tax. The twists and turns on this aspect have really been extraordinary. I believe that, in its briefing, the National Council for Voluntary Organisations called it outrageous. There have been a series of stories in the press about the existence of a nuclear tax.

Mr. John Butterfill (Bournemouth, West) Inspired by the hon. Gentleman.

Mr. Blair: The hon. Gentleman says that they are inspired by me. He pays great tribute to my powers of inspiration, as some of those stories appeared before I became shadow Energy Secretary.

There were leaked stories in detail, culminating in a front-page story on Monday 21 November in the *Financial Times*—

"Nuclear Programme Tax to be Imposed on Electricity Consumers"—

which set out in detail exactly how this tax was to be imposed and levied, and saying, of course, that it was to build the new PWRs. I checked today and there has been no denial of the truth of that story from the Department of Energy or from any Minister.

When I asked the right hon. Gentleman a month ago at Question Time "to deny unequivocally" that any such plans for a nuclear tax existed, I received this unequivocal denial:

"We have a declared policy that 15 to 20 per cent. of our electricity will be supplied from nuclear sources because we believe that diversity of supply is essential to security. There will, therefore, be a nuclear component. The question of nuclear economics is extremely hard to settle."—[*Official Report*, 7 November 1988, Vol. 140, c. 4-5.]

That was the ringing denial on 7 November. The truth is that, until this Bill was published, there was never any serious attempt to deny that there would be this tax. Today, we have been given the astonishing explanation that we have been paying it already, and it is just to assist us that it is being made transparent on electricity bills.

I have two questions that I shall ask the right hon. Gentleman about that. First of all, it is curious that we are supposed to be paying it already, because I had understood Ministers to have been telling us for the past 10 years that nuclear power was cheaper, which was why we should be investing in it.

Secondly, if the simple reason is to make it more transparent, why is nuclear made transparent on our bill, and not coal, gas, oil or any of the other sources of energy? In particular, why do clause 31 and the notes to the Bill specifically make mention of a levy to cover the excess cost of nuclear over conventional? Why is all that in the Bill if it is just a figment of our imagination?

The reason is set out in a memorandum from Mr. John Baker, CEGB managing director, shortly to be the director of the new National Power, which will take over nuclear capacity. That memorandum was marked "confidential", which is a sure sign that it was about to be leaked, and was sent to Mr. John Guinness deputy secretary at the Department of Trade and Industry. Mr. Baker said:

"The only contract which Nuclear Power . . . will be able to agree to sign will be one in which both parties can have full confidence in the recovery of costs from their respective customers."

He said that the CEGB view of the nuclear option was now quite different from its position before privatisation proposals because it would need to become substantially more risk-averse. He then went on to say that that was why the successor company

"can no longer make the national case for pressurised water reactors".

The truth of the matter is that the tax will be imposed to meet the costs not of existing stations, but of the four new nuclear-powered reactors. The Government knew that this tax would be necessary, because otherwise the private sector would not build nuclear power stations. They also know that the notion of a special Tory tax to pay for power plants that the country neither wants nor needs, is publicly offensive and politically suicidal. Therefore, their response is not to be honest about the tax, but to suppress admission of its existence. That is the true explanation of what lies behind the nuclear tax.

What about our invention of the likely cost of the nuclear tax? That figure is supplied from evidence given to the Hinkley inquiry by, among others, the London Business School, hardly a left-wing fantasiser, and Dr. Mark Barrett of the earth resources research unit, and the science policy research unit that advises the Select Committee and which has backed up what Labour has said. The CEGB has also said that if the rate of return proposed by the London Business School is accepted, such a nuclear tax will be introduced. It is not us who need to justify our position, but the Secretary of State who should come clean with us.

We could have a debate out diversity of supply. What on earth does that argument have to do with privatising the industry? I do not believe that the Secretary of State understands that the key contradiction that he must resolve about the nuclear industry is why, if that industry is ripe for the private sector, it is to be given special protected status and set apart. If privatisation is the answer, why is it the answer for the rest of the electrical supply industry but not for the nuclear industry? The Secretary of State must answer that question.

The risks that will be borne by the taxpayer will also be borne by the country. The nuclear waste bill now stands at £4·5 billion. The Select Committee has said that the decommissioning of power stations could cost between £250 million and £750 million per station. Schedule 12 makes provision for that to be paid for out of grants and loans.

Mr. Parkinson *indicated dissent.*

Mr. Blair: Yes it does, I am afraid to say.

The Secretary of State tells us that we are already paying such costs, so what are we worried about? We are worried because we shall keep on paying the costs of nuclear power, but we shall be losing the profit from the industry—we shall lose £1·5 billion a year in profits.

What is outrageous about the Bill is that, for the first time that I remember, it enacts public risk and private profit. The Secretary of State's singular achievement has been to bring forward the only privatisation measure where, in exchange for the public underwriting the risks of privatisation, investors will be free to take monopoly profit from the captive consumers providing that subsidy. Such loss is quite apart from the substantial loss on assets that will arise if the industry is sold as an undervalue.

Discount privatisations have happened before with British Telecom, British Gas, the British Airports flotation and Rolls-Royce. The electricity industry is worth almost £40 billion, and if it is sold at £20 billion or less, it will be the first privatisation that is not just cut-price, but half-price. We will lose the benefits of the assets sold.

All those unresolved contradictions underline the stupidity, indeed the impossibility, of an energy policy determined by the interests of the private sector. The very considerations most critical to securing the long-term future electrical supply are the very ones least suited to the inevitable short-term demands of the market. That is why, at the crux of the right hon. Gentleman's proposals, lies a clash of interests that he cannot conceal between ideology that drags him toward market forces and reality that compels him to recognise the need for a strong public sector.

Mr. Robert Hughes (Aberdeen, North): When my hon. Friend asked why we should be worried about this, I do not know whether he overheard the aside from the hon. Member for Birmingham, Northfield (Mr. King), who said that the Opposition should be worried that £20 billion will go into the Government coffers just before the next election.

Mr. Blair: There are occasions when Conservative Members lapse into frankness.

The Secretary of State's proposals are now virtually friendless. Mr. Alex Henney, a former supporter, has turned his back on them. Dr. Dieter Helm of Oxford university, a supporter of the privatisation programme, has said:

"If you take the balance of the degree of competition, the amount of regulation, the disruption caused and the need for lots of investment in this industry, in the future then I find it very hard to believe that the consequences are going to be anything other than price rises. The consumer's going to pick up quite a large bill for this privatisation."

Dr. Yarrow, of Oxford university, is another former supporter of privatisation who has deserted the sinking ship.

In truth, there is no support left anywhere for the proposals, except from the vested interests that the Government now represent, the vested interests in the City. Hoare Govett, in its recent analysis of the Secretary of State's proposals, which it condemns, rather disarmingly said:

"At least all of this will provide much-needed work for merchant banks and brokers in the City".

That is the only occasion when I have heard privatisation justified as part of a City jobs programmes.

Dr. Michael Clark (Rochford): The hon. Gentleman has moved on since he accused some Conservative Members of indulging in frankness. Would he care to indulge in some frankness and tell us how his party, when and if it returns to power, will pay for nationalising the electricity supply industry? Will it be through huge tax increases?

Mr. Blair: We will reinstate it as a proper public service under public control.

It is not merely the City vested interests who support the Government. They also have the support of senior managers within the electricity industry who expect to be enjoying the same 78 per cent. average increase in the salary enjoyed by the top management of other privatised industries in the year after privatisation. Apart from that, however, what support can the right hon. Gentleman claim for the proposals?

Perhaps the most interesting desertion from the ranks of previous privatisers is that of Mr. Andrew Cooper, self-confessed admirer of the Prime Minister and former head of the Institution of Electrical Engineers. In a letter to the *Financial Times* on 12 September, he said:

"I have just returned from a one-week biennial conference of more than 2,000 leading electrical engineers from 79 countries.

Having been a member of this organisation for more than 40 years, and its world president for the maximum term of six years, many people talk to me. What seemed to dominate everyone's thinking was the privatisation of the United Kingdom electrical supply industry.

Their views could be encapsulated in a single phrase: 'You must be mad.'."

That is what is thought elsewhere of the Government's proposals. Yet it is even worse than that. Take the major issue of energy conservation. We are the worst insulated nation in Europe. The Department of Energy's budget has been slashed by more than a half. Schemes to promote energy conservation, which are cost-effective and of huge environmental benefit, have been scrapped. Consider the major problems and environmental difficulties that we face with coal and nuclear power. Consider the exciting developments in research and technology that the public sector has undertaken, but which the private sector will often find incompatible with its short-term profits. Consider the crippling fuel poverty of the poorest in our society who heat their homes most inefficiently and spend four times the average on heating.

When we consider these new issues on the horizon and appreciate what a real agenda for a modern energy policy for Britain will contain, we see that it is not just the cost that the consumer will pay; it is not just the burden that the country will bear; it is the sheer, breathtaking irrelevance of these proposals to modern issues of today.

I shall tell the House why the Bill comes before us. It staggers on, uncertain in its reasons, untested in its consequences and rejected even by those who gave it intellectual birth, because it is still sustained and propped

[Mr. Blair]

up by the two most ancient principles of the Tory party, prejudice and greed—greed for profits which are neither earned nor deserved, greed of a Treasury that has for so long paid the country's bills by selling the country's assets that it now knows no other way; and the simple and sinister prejudice that what is private is always right and what is public is always wrong. It is on that slender stem of dogma that the future of our electricity supply industry now rests.

The Conservative party can speak for the vested interests of City speculators and the irrational crusades of the ideologues. The Opposition will speak for the 22 million electricity consumers. We will speak out for industry that needs access to cheap electricity at reasonable prices. We will speak up for a country that knows the good sense of a public industry in public hands.

6.1 pm

Mr. David Howell (Guildford): I listened during the speech of the hon. Member for Sedgefield (Mr. Blair) to find out whether the new generation of Labour whizz kids was striking a different pose from their elders who can no longer whizz. I must conclude from what I have heard that there is no change. The Labour party is still firmly locked, despite the eloquence of the hon. Member for Sedgefield, in its Albanian mood. It is ignoring the new thinking about electricity supply organisation around the planet, in countries as diverse as Malaysia and the Soviet Union. It is ignoring the private pattern of electricity supply in the United States, Germany, Belgium, Spain and Japan. In all those areas, private enterprise is permitting new technology and innovation without the dead hand of the state upon them. All that is ignored, even by the younger generation of the Labour party. Those who thought that in the Labour party there were sprouts of hope and some vague understanding of the more fragmented, less centralised, state-dominated world, would have been utterly disillusioned.

The dramatic move towards privatisation and the injection of competition into the electricity supply industry is welcome, and no one should underrate the difficulties which have been faced by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State. We are moving towards some competition on the generating side. The new system will include a large generating company, National Power, and a slightly smaller company, Power Gen. Supplies will be available from Scotland and France. The switching station at Sellindge provides 2 GW at full capacity, and I have no doubt that another switching station could be constructed. They are good value. The one which I authorised in 1981 cost £360 million and brought into the British system 2 GW of electricity at competitive prices, which were negotiated by the CEGB. I hope that such ideas will be developed further as the choices of sources of electricity supply open out.

My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State referred to the possibility, which the new area electricity companies will vigorously explore, of developing a range of much smaller gas turbines, supplied by dedicated North sea gas fields. There will also be coastal power stations that depend on coal—I hope that it will be British coal, but it must be the cheapest, which may be imported. There are opportunities for electricity to be brought into the system at highly competitive rates and sold to industrial and domestic consumers.

Over the years, the process of competition and the diversity of sources are bound to lead us away from the hideous pattern of the past, when we depended on a higher cost, coal-dominated electricity system which was not even reliable. The new system will be a vast improvement. Those who cannot see that are still obsessed by views of state ownership and state domination which have been undermined by not only modern economics but modern technology. Economies of scale are being substantially reversed by electronic technology, not least in power generation and distribution.

The remaining monopolies—the area boards which will be turned into 12 new companies—must be regulated. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State has set out the pattern of regulation under which they will operate. It is eminently sensible and is a vast improvement on the so-called regulation that has occurred in nationalised industries, with "breakfast table" directives and instructions behind closed doors. The Opposition extol that as a system, but it never was a system. It was a miserable mixture of politics and pressure whereby one group of people—the customers and consumers—always came last while wheeling and dealing went on in Whitehall as to how those industries should operate and invest.

I freely confess that I speak as an old lag on this subject. I have been involved, and I know that that system is not good for the allocation of resources or for democracy, because the deals are not transparent. Above all, they are not good for the customer and consumer, or for the future strength and innovative capacity of the industry. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State has moved boldly and sensibly. This must be the way forward.

I cannot understand why those in the Labour party who have thought about this subject and come to it with fresh minds still cling to the absurd idea of a huge, state-dominated, nationalised electricity supply industry. That is out of date. I urge the hon. Member for Sedgefield, if he wants to influence his party, to move away from that nonsense. I do not know who insisted that he put in his speech all the talk of renationalisation. If he wants to be given a hearing, he must get away from that kind of rubbish.

The most difficult problem to face my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State is covered by clause 30 onwards—how to deal with nuclear power generation under privatisation. It is not my right hon. Friend's fault that the problem has been made more tricky. The cost of nuclear power has increased a little, because of the cost of capital and of increasingly elaborate safety measures—which I welcome—and is said to be about 2·2p per kilowatt hour, whereas the price of electricity supplied from oil, natural gas and, to some extent, coal has been decreasing. That leaves us with an unavoidable dilemma. Even if there were no Bill before us, we would be facing a dilemma. Nuclear power at present, even before we think of new build and the programme after Sizewell, is probably uncompetitive in terms of oil, gas or coal.

Thanks to my right hon. Friend's proposals for greater transparency about the costs of all these fuels and about generating activities, we are beginning to see the very high costs that we have paid for coal. There is no doubt that, as society becomes more concerned about pollution costs and moves towards insisting that there should be emission

controls and desulphurisation and so on, the cost of coal-fired electricity will rise. That is inevitable, even if the coal is drawn from the cheapest world sources, let alone drawn from some of the higher cost pits in Britain.

On the whole, it is obvious that, even with those extra costs, coal will continue to play an important part in generation. I hope that United Kingdom coal will be highly competitive. I think that it will. British coal producers, who I hope in due course will also be in the private sector, will be entitled to say that, whatever happened in the past and despite the total unreliability of the coal industry and its betrayal by trade union activity, in future it will be worth paying a premium for what should be a reliable national provision of coal from our superb coalfields.

There is a place for coal, but when all is said and done and the costs are put together, we are left with the difficulty that, for the moment, the existing nuclear power programme looks as if it costs more. That is because one must add the costs of fuel reprocessing, waste disposal and decommissioning.

Mr. Parkinson: Does my right hon. Friend agree that, had the industry stayed in the public sector and had Lord Marshall retained the obligation to supply, he has made it quite clear that the four PWRs would have been built and that, whatever they cost, the customer would have paid for them? It is this change in the structure that is opening up the debate.

Mr. Howell: My right hon. Friend is right: the debate is indeed opening up. The decision to put nuclear power in the private sector raises quite separate and crucial issues. First, it still leaves us with one extremely large generating company, one of the largest in the world. I wish that my right hon. Friend could have found a way round that. That company will carry the nuclear programme. Some of us would have liked to see a way to have four or five generating boards, all somewhat smaller, rather than an extremely large one and a very large one. I have said that to my right hon. Friend, so it is nothing new.

As I said earlier, I accept that electricity will come from other sources—from Scotland and France and from gas turbines and so on—but the pattern falls a little short of what one hoped for in a competitive electricity supply industry. My right hon. Friend had to grapple with this problem and it raised two issues. First of all, there is the point that we have now reached in the existing nuclear programme and the cost of that. If it had previously cost more to produce electricity from existing nuclear capacity than from oil, coal and gas, that was all lost in the accounts.

My right hon. Friend has had the courage to make changes to ensure that that cost will now be visible. If it is visible and if there are other electricity sources which my right hon. Friend has taken steps to open up and from which distributors of electricity can buy, to what extent does the 20 per cent. non-fossil obligation mean that lower prices from the other competitive sources will not be allowed to work through? That presents a difficulty and we must look carefully at it as we measure the cost of the existing nuclear programme.

My right hon. Friend has said that the CEGB has made a provision of over £3 billion for the existing programe —I thought that it was a little less than that—with associated special tax reliefs for the accumulated provision to meet all these additional costs. Investors will be glad to have had my right hon. Friend's reassurance that powers will be there for the Government to step in to meet the additional costs, if they arise, for reprocessing, waste disposal, and decommissioning and so on in the existing programme to be inherited by National Power. That is the problem for the existing nuclear programme, and I hope that what my right hon. Friend has said resolves it for people who will invest in the industry.

I now come to the completely different question of the cost of new build. My right hon. Friend has put us on exactly the right path. If we had gone on with new build lost in the public sector, we would also have lost any proper measure of competitive costs or of the right pace at which to build. I shall put aside for the moment the question whether we keep open a nuclear programme. My personal view is that it would be crazy to close it, but if we keep it open it must be at a cost that we know. My right hon. Friend's proposals will identify the cost of new build and, more important, will create pressures to reduce those costs.

Such benefits would have been lacking in the state industry proposed by the hon. Member for Sedgefield, although I do not know whether he has the courage to say that he would close the nuclear programme. If he proposes to keep the nuclear programme, he would have to justify the pattern of losing costs in the endless add-on cost system that we have experienced. That pushes on to the consumers the non-transparent costs of nuclear power. He did not justify that at all, but shirked the issue. The issue has now been brought into the light of day by my right hon. Friend and we shall now be able to see the pressures on the industry to ensure that nuclear new build from Sizewell on is conducted on competitive lines and not just on a subsidised pattern.

I should like my right hon. Friend to reassure us that there will be constant and maximum pressure on National Power to ensure that it proceeds with its new build programme and on terms that are as near as possible to those that are settled by the market. I would go further and say that, when it comes to financing new build, we shall be dealing with a company that will have very little debt. That is an attractive proposition for some investors and means that the company can go into the market and raise money. It will be able to do that provided that it does not intend to pursue uneconomic activities.

Oil costs are low and likely to stay low for a long time. Coal costs are also low and, I hope, likely to remain so. Natural gas prices are low. That means that the pressure is on to follow the market solution, and that should be a requirement. It may be that this is a different scene from the one that we faced almost a decade ago when OPEC was alleged to have a grip on oil supplies and when there was a panic among countries to procure oil and prices were shooting through the roof. We are now in a totally different situation and the world's chief oil supplier, Saudi Arabia, is trying to establish a situation in which there will not be another oil shock. Saudi Arabia wants to re-establish oil as a low-cost reliable fuel producing and selling at about $15 US at 1987 prices indefinitely. The more successful it is with that programme the more challenging it will be to the nuclear power builders to show that they can build nuclear power stations—especially with capital at its current cost—at competitive levels.

There are problems, but I do not think that my right hon. Friend has sought to disguise them. On the contrary,

[Mr. Howell]

he has sought to expose them, whereas the mish-mash of Socialist Whitehall planning would have lost those costs and ensured that in the end they finished up on the backs of customers, taxpayers and society and, worse, on the back of industry, in an intolerable way that undermined our competitive strength. My right hon. Friend has been true to his principles in seeking to identify where resources ae going and where they should go. That will enable us to debate the matter. I applaud his courage in doing that. He has faced many difficulties in bringing forward the scheme and there could well be more to come. I applaud his courage in bringing the whole scheme and the costs into the light of day.

6.19 pm

Mr. Alex Eadie (Midlothian): Now on the Back Benches after 16 years as a Front Bench energy spokesman, I warmly congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Sedgefield (Mr. Blair) on his speech. He gave the Secretary of State for Energy a bit of a roasting and a bit of an examination, and I expect that all objective commentators will report that tomorrow. It is well known that the Secretary of State for Energy does not like to be examined. He is always available for the "Today" radio car or for television, but he does not like either to be challenged or to have his propositions examined. My hon. Friend's excellent contribution examined the Secretary of State's propositions. We shall hear more of my hon. Friend.

To some extent, the speech of the Secretary of State —we may even hear from the Chairman of the Select Committee on Energy—bore out the uncertainty and confusion that are in the Bill. The Government's proposals for privatisation have already been criticised by the Select Committee, which alleged that the Government have not got their Bill right. On the Order Paper is a motion, in the name of the hon. Member for Havant (Sir I. Lloyd), that the Bill should be committed to a Special Standing Committee. That speaks volumes in support of my assertion that the Secretary of State has not got his proposals right, with resulting confusion in the Bill.

Dr. Michael Clark: That motion was signed by about half of the members of the Select Committee. The other half refused to sign it.

Mr. Eadie: I can understand that. There is a certain aspect of what one might call loyalty to one's party.

Mr. Geoffrey Lofthouse (Pontefract and Castleford): Is my hon. Friend aware that the report was agreed to unanimously, by all the members of the Committee, including the hon. Member for Rochford (Dr. Clark)?

Mr. Eadie: The members of the Select Committee can fight this one out themselves. There is tremendous loyalty in the Select Committee, which is Tory-dominated, and this aspect has come to the fore. However, members of the Select Committee can make their own speeches and answer for themselves. If one reads the Bill, one can see that the Select Committee's conclusions are, in general, a criticism of the Bill.

The Secretary of State has never made any secret of his view that electricity prices had to increase to make the industry more attractive to investors. He is on the record as having said that earlier in the year. When he was challenged on that, he said that the industry must be profitable if it is to be privatised. How does he expect private capital to buy the industry unless it is profitable? He cannot deny that, because it is on the record.

Mr. Parkinson: The hon. Gentleman's party has recently made a great thing of the fact that Government assets have been sold off too cheaply. What he is saying, is "Depress the profits—don't get a fair or excessive rate of return." Then he is turning round and, because I am getting a fair return, saying that I am helping the investors. I would help the investors by keeping profits down so that they get a bargain. I want a fair return and a fair price for the taxpayer. The taxpayer receives and the investor pays.

Mr. Eadie: I had better start to claim injury time. The Secretary of State has made another speech. I am sticking to what I said. The right hon. Gentleman said in the House that, if the electricity industry was privatised, electricity prices would go up to make it a favourable buy. He can wriggle as much as he likes, but he has said it and the House must bear that in mind as we debate the Bill.

The Government's aim is profit first, with the lot of the consumer second. Only a Government with such a large majority would have the audacity to tell users of electricity that increased prices are good for them. They say that competition will be introduced and that that will benefit the consumer. However, when they are trapped, as they were during energy questions today, Ministers imply that prices will not increase as much as they would have without privatisation. Here we have some aspects of the inconsistency and doublespeak of the Government and their spokesmen.

There used to be a saying, "If you go first, I'll go afore you." This is what the Government are saying about prices. If ever the consumers were being offered a pig in the poke, this is it. The Government suggest that the Bill will give more choice, but consumers will not have alternative sources of electricity supply. The Secretary of State made the ridiculous suggestion that consumers would have two plugs. The reality of the Bill is that private monopoly will be the supplier and the consumer will have to like it or lump it.

As a result of the Bill, blatant preference will be given to nuclear power, and tagged on to that is the suggestion that there will be opportunities to develop benign sources of power. No one in the power industry believes that. The arguments in favour of blatant preference for, or even compulsion on, the use of nuclear power are the most unconvincing in the Bill. It cannot be argued on price, and the right hon. Member for Guildford (Mr. Howell) conceded that to some extent. Lord Marshall himself has confessed that nuclear power is more expensive than coal. As we have our debate, the Hinkley Point inquiry is getting the same evidence on prices. This is despite the fact that the argument about favourable prices for the consumer was introduced by Government spokesmen.

It is all very well for the Government to argue their case, but I resent their attempts to build up the case for nuclear power by attacking the coal industry. That is the most unconvincing one of all. We had at energy questions again today the suggestion that coal-generated power is much more polluting than nuclear power, and that it is dangerous for men to work in that industry. That has not

stopped British Coal from suggesting, with full Government approval, that miners should now work 10 hours a day underground.

What about the pollution argument? We should all be concerned about the greenhouse effect on our environment, but the coal industry can plead 'not guilty' to being a major pollutant on that. Coal consumption contributes to only a small part of global emissions of greenhouse gases. Other sources of emission include oil, gas, chemical and other industrial processes.

Mr. Rhodri Morgan (Cardiff, West): And farming.

Mr. Eadie: Indeed. Coal, however, has been singled out as the major source of the emission that is thought to cause acid rain, but all fossil fuels contribute to the global emission. It is a bit rich when we are told by the Secretary of State that we must have nuclear power because fossil fuels are wasting assets. Of course they are wasting assets. The word that many use is finite. Coal, however, is a fossil fuel which could last the nation for 300 years. There is nothing very finite about that, especially when a comparison is made between coal and oil and gas. The consequence of the Government's policy on oil is that we are probably seeing now the best years of oil from the North sea.

Mr. Mans: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Eadie: No. I want to continue my speech.

It is generally agreed that carbon dioxide is responsible for nearly half of the greenhouse effect, and research shows that the worldwide burning of coal accounts for 15 per cent. of that effect. The British coal industry can plead not guilty because it is responsible for about 0·5 per cent. of the worldwide emission. The new, clean coal technologies will further reduce emissions from coal-fired plants.

We are to have blatant preference for nuclear power, and that will be based on misinformation about coal. There is to be protection for nuclear power for so-called strategic reasons. Coal is to be a sort of sop to the privatisers. Nuclear power is to be protected while coal power is not. Coal can be purchased in many countries at less than the cost of production. One can purchase in Columbia coal that has been mined by 10 or 11-year-old kids. One can purchase in South Africa coal that has been mined by slave labour. Coal is sold by Poland at a price that is below the cost of production. It is the price that counts, however, for British indigenous coal. We are prepared to give blatant preference to nuclear power, which means that we are prepared to sell the coal industry down the river. There is a strategic reason for maintaining the coal industry, for we have more coal in Britain than any other fossil fuel.

This privatisation measure represents the Government's attempt to bury an energy policy for all time. It is a scandal. If we bury an energy policy, we tamper with the future of our kids. We should be planning the use of our energy resources. It is all very well to say that we have a number of energy resources available to us, but it cannot be said at the same time that they are wasting assets and should be burnt away.

I predict that the Bill will lead to gas-fired power stations. In later years we shall probably say how foolish we were to take that course. Similarly, the Government's attitude to coal has been foolish. If we are serious about an energy policy, we should be pursuing energy conservation. Will energy conservation or efficiency be pursued within the terms of the Bill? I know that the Secretary of State has a dream for the Department of Energy. He wants it stripped of all its powers. If that happens, it will be merely a Government advertising agency. It will not be concerned with policy, the giving of directions or security of supply.

The Bill will have a considerable effect on employment. I received information this morning from the Coalfield Communities Campaign, and I shall run through it quickly. The electricity supply industry employs about 550,000 people, and privatisation will place at risk at least 80,000 of those jobs by 1992. In the longer term, up to 165,000 will be at risk. Coal mining employment will be most severely hit. It is estimated that 51,500 jobs will be the cost of electricity supply industry privatisation. That is the hidden message that the Secretary of State does not want to reveal when he is arguing his case for privatisation.

Two major concerns for the United Kingdom economy are the switch to foreign supplies for a privatised electricity supply industry and the threat to the current investment programme for new capacity. Both will make the balance of payments position even worse. There are 200,000 people who depend on electricity supply industry construction and purchasing. The ending of the current "buy British" policy will benefit foreign suppliers and hit United Kingdom equipment and materials firms. There will be a loss of United Kingdom expertise and capability in power station development and heavy electrical engineering. Large-scale coal imports are planned, which will severely hamper British Coal's rapid progress towards competitiveness and profitability. Premature pit closures will mean that the coal industry of the 1990s will have insufficient capacity to supply national demand.

Although electricity supply industry privatisation will not be the sole cause of colliery closures, the deep-mine sector of British Coal will be hit especially. Over the past 30 years, the electricity supply industry has moved from being an important but not dominant customer for United Kingdom coal to being by far the most important. Other markets for coal have declined to such an extent that, in 1987-88, a total of 79 per cent. of British Coal's United Kingdom sales went to power stations.

The joint understandings between the CEGB and British Coal during the 1980s have ensured reliable supplies of coal at prices which have taken into account depressed world-traded prices. Without long-term contracts for coal, such as the 10-year agreement which British Coal is now advocating, it is likely that many economic pits with good reserves will be closed because of future uncertainty.

The impact on coalfield communities of electricity supply industry privatisation is much more severe than the loss of 51,500 British Coal jobs. Local economic multipliers—decline in local spending—and longer-term base multipliers will lead to at least another 50,000 job losses in service sector firms and local economies. These economies are among the most disadvantaged in the country and have yet to recover from the contraction of the coal industry that took place in the 1980s.

That is the real prospectus. That is what is really being presented to us with the Bill's Second Reading. The Bill will lead to more unemployment and misery in coal communities. The Government intend the Bill to lead to more profit and increased prices for consumers. My view

[Mr. Eadie]

is that when we come to examine the Bill and demonstrate its deficiencies, sanity will prevail. I believe that the House will reject the Bill and all that it stands for.

6.39 pm

Sir Ian Lloyd (Havant): If I were tempted to follow the hon. Member for Midlothian (Mr. Eadie) down many of the interesting cul-de-sacs that he introduced to the House, I would probably not succeed in making my own speech. I shall deal only with one of his arguments, which was advanced also by the hon. Member for Sedgefield (Mr. Blair). Instead of merely saying that he hoped that an energy policy would unfold in future when a Socialist Government were in office, I hoped that the hon. Member for Sedgefield would give us some idea of what it would be. Over the past nine years, I have listened to an immense amount of evidence from every quarter and throughout the spectrum of opinion on energy. I have not yet heard of one cohesive, convincing and practical energy policy that could be applied to the United Kingdom. Tempting though an energy policy might be, that puts it where it belongs. It is very interesting, but it is very dangerous.

Let me now turn to two or three points made by the hon. Member for Sedgefield. It was a pity that in an interesting if controversial speech he was eventually tempted rather too much by hyperbole and zeal. What a pity that he did not demonstrate with logic what he sought to demonstrate, instead of merely stating that this, that or the other was nonsense.

I noticed with interest that the hon. Gentleman was impressed, as many hon. Members are from time to time, by what he described as technology-driven industries or situations. I am not very impressed by them. It could be said that the whole AGR programme in this country was technology-driven, and the same could be said of the steam-generating heavy water reactor. It could indeed be argued that the whole French PWR programme, which has landed Electricité de France with a total bill of £20,000 million, was a technology-driven project. It could be said of Concorde, and it could be said that joint European torus is and remains such a project, although it is a very exciting and probably important project that we should continue. The point is that, for every technology-driven project, which is usually a loss-maker, we require about 100 market-driven projects which make the profit to pay for it. Opposition Members tend to forget that.

The hon. Member for Sedgefield also made a point based on international comparisons of energy costs. He will not be the first hon. Member—or, I suggest, the last—to have an intellectual arm or leg blown off after entering that minefield. It is prodigiously dangerous. An hon. Member can prove virtually anything he likes. The record of Select Committee inquiries over many years shows that this is a sphere that we, with all our advisers and expertise, enter with the greatest care because it is so difficult to draw firm and provable conclusions.

My remarks are based not on the Select Committee report but on the Bill. Nevertheless, the report will doubtless continue to be quoted in the argument that has already started and will continue over the next few months, and for that we are grateful. We hope to raise the level of the debate, if we do not reduce its intensity.

The Committee has contributed on three fronts. The first is in the 919 pages of memoranda and evidence that we have received. The Committee has provided a wide variety of expert and committed opinion to be aired. If the expert opinion is not always committed, it could equally be said that the committed opinion is not always expert, but the whole spectrum of opinion is there. Secondly, we have contributed a considered, if controversial, judgment about the post-privatisation regime, which we formed in a fairly heated crucible of argument. That it was largely unanimous is a tribute to the Committee and to those who advised us. Thirdly, we have managed to stimulate a comprehensive, considered and valuable response from the Government, which has itself broadened the foundations of the debate and contributed valuable information. I am most grateful to all our witnesses, including Ministers, colleagues and staff, who have laboured with such exceptional diligence to produce these documents. If there are gaps in the analysis, it will not be for want of effort on their part.

I should like to comment on a specific recommendation by the Committee. So impressed were we by the wide spectrum of views on the structure, philosophy and operation of various systems employed to regulate public utilities in the private sector throughout the world that we believed it would be immensely rewarding if a Special Standing Committee was established to consider the issue under Standing Order No. 91. I understand that that will be moved formally after Second Reading, but unfortunately there will be no argument then. There is no time for argument now, but I would not wish the House to have the impression that this was a mere afterthought. The procedure has been used five times since 1980, and in our judgment this is another occasion that fully justifies it.

An American friend of mine who is eminent in the field suggested to me recently that all legislation should be followed by a statement setting out clearly and precisely the intended consequences of the policy enshrined in the Bill. It is worth speculating on what such an addendum might have contained had it been prepared for the Electricity Acts 1947 or 1957. I imagine that it would certainly have embraced the following aims, stating perhaps:

"We will achieve greater economics of scale. We will improve the efficiency of production and distribution. We will lower the cost per unit of energy produced in real terms. We will achieve greater security of supply. We will integrate and enhance research and development throughout the industry. We will improve the ability of the nation to formulate and implement an improved national energy policy, particularly where this involves electricity."

It is easy to assert without much fear of contradiction that most of those objectives have to an extent been achieved. What cannot be asserted is that they would not have been better or more quickly achieved by some alternative form of organisation. A strong impression that I formed from all our evidence was that, despite wide-ranging and detailed comparisons with other systems and countries, the proof remains elusive and tentative. If an attempt was made to provide a similar list of intended consequences of this Bill, it might run rather as follows:

"We will inject effective competition throughout the structure of the industry"—

this is the linchpin of the Government's case.

"We will disaggregate the various parts of a monolithic industrial structure that has become cumbersome and sluggish"—

for there is much evidence to support that.

"We will lower the real costs and prices per unit for all classes of consumer, yet again. We will maintain the nuclear option and if possible develop it. We will improve the responsiveness of the whole system to the consumer interest. We will maintain security of supply. We will transfer the citizen's stake in a major national asset from the notional ownership of the taxpayer-citizen to the direct ownership of the shareholder-consumer."

Mr. Allan Rogers (Rhondda): The hon. Gentleman's argument is that there is no proof that certain criteria that need to be met could not be fulfilled under a different organisation. Will he cast his mind back to when the coal industry was in private hands and the Sankey commission —whose chairman, later Lord Justice Sankey, was certainly no raving Left winger—suggested that the coal industry was too important to the nation's security to be left in private hands, and that the profit motive was taking precedence over the country's interests? There is indeed proof that energy in private hands does not work in the way that the hon. Gentleman says that it will.

Sir Ian Lloyd: I am interested in the hon. Gentleman's argument. It could be said that, in view of the development of coal under national ownership since then, such assertions did not necessarily prove Lord Sankey's arguments.

The list of intended consequences might continue thus:

"We will extract the state from the need to consider and promote a national energy policy for electricity supply. We will reduce the Government's public sector borrowing requirement."

I have no doubt that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State will be able in 10 years' time to say that most of those intended consequences have been achieved, but I am not entirely sure that he will have effectively maintained the nuclear option or extracted the state from its wide-ranging involvement in industry, let alone its obligation to think about and respond to the consequences of alternative energy policies.

I say "in 10 years' time" because I think it important to stress that, such is the massive inertia inherent in this industry under any ownership, control or structure, that it will be at least 10 years before significant changes can or will emerge. The lead times are too long, the commitments too great and the energy supply systems too slow to respond for it to be otherwise. There will be many attempts to prove merit, but none in my judgment will be, or deserve to be, convincing.

I count it as one of my greatest privileges that many years ago I sat at the feet of one of the great authorities on welfare economics, Professor A. C. Pigou. If his feet were generally clad in carpet slippers, his mind could only be compared with the Finisterre light, which can be seen for 43 miles on a clear night. Pigou's intellect cast a similar beam over the tormented and confused sea of political judgments. His analysis, which I re-examined only yesterday, remains valid nearly 60 years after it was produced. The House need not fear a long-distance lecture from me or Professor Pigou on welfare economics. I propose to burden the House with only one conclusion, which provides an appropriate preface to my own brief analysis of the Bill.

The problem of the national economy is no longer to effect an instantaneous transformation from one scheme of production to another, but to maintain the best scheme permanently. That is a view that we could have emblazoned on the top of any Bill on energy. My analysis is directed towards an answer to that question. The essence of this measure is not the transfer of ownership or control —important though that may be—but the unique disaggregation or disconnection which it brings about between the major components of the industry. It is significant that, among the 28 organisations on the privatisation list, about 23 have been sold as integrated organisations, one has been brought under private management and only two have been sold off with their component parts or companies. Electricity will be the third and it will completely overshadow all the rest in scale and consequences.

It is clearly the Government's intention, which they have sought to justify by many arguments with and outside the Central Electricity Generating Board, that the replacement of an integrated control and command system by a loosely defined series of contracts between the parts is a worthwhile endeavour. That area caused the greatest disquiet to many witnesses and I share their apprehension that there is a high element of artificiality in the arrangements that no amount of careful legislative drafting can possibly reduce or eliminate. It can work and it might work, given good judgment, great imagination and good will. It is the sort of achievement that we so often seem to pull off rather well against all the odds. However, we would not be wise to underestimate the odds or minimise the unprecedented scale and complexity of the challenge. My verdict is that there will be many unforeseen consequences and I should not like to predict their character or their influence on the outcome.

The Bill provides a well-structured and carefully organised slipway to launch the post-1990 electricity supply industry, but I am not sure that we know much about the shape, speed or efficiency of the ship. I have several fundamental reservations about the Bill. It makes an insufficient distinction between the procedures and consequences of privatisation and the procedures and consequences of liberalisation. I should expect to have the greatest difficulty in judging the contributions made towards any reduction in real costs by reorganisation and by the free access to the whole range of European equipment manufacturers in 1992. I should have even greater difficulty in judging the contribution made by an alteration in the energy production mix and the contribution made by free access to all international sources of fuel supply.

One set of scales has not yet been invented. It is the set of scales in which one attempts to weigh the well-known merits of an integrated, public utility type of organisation —making due allowances for its disadvantages of inertia and manpower—with the merits of a disintegrated system of generators and an independent grid serving a dozen independent distributors. Such a judgment, as Professor Pigou would have advised, were he still alive, would impose an insuperable burden on the apparatus of economic logic and administrative prediction. I remain firmly convinced that only events and experience can indicate the philosophy and judgment that underline the Bill. I say that as a firm believer in the general merits of privatisation and the proven success of much that has gone before in the legislative calendar.

I am also particularly concerned at the extent to which my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State and his successors will remain enmeshed in the affairs of the industry. I made a careful analysis of the Bill at the weekend and discovered that my right hon. Friend will be involved in detailed obligations in no fewer than 67

[Sir Ian Lloyd]

distinct and separate areas of the Bill. Although many may be merely formal, that is a considerable amount. His responsibilities under the clauses concerned with nuclear energy and the innocent-sounding "Miscellaneous" clause 87, seem to negate, if only in theory, one of the principal intended consequences, which I suggested earlier.

I am reminded of the distinguished peer who received a questionnaire from an American sociologist asking whether his family had a suit of armour. He proposed to say no, but his secretary suggested that he should say that he had two—one on and one at the blacksmith's. My right hon. Friend may be shedding one set of responsibilities only to assume another, which is even more arduous. His second suit is at the wordsmith's.

What emerges clearly is that, in numerous and significant areas of the industry, my right hon. Friend, embodying the state, is retaining, and will undoubtedly have to exercise, powers requiring him to formulate and apply what can only be described as a national energy policy for the electricity industry. That is clearly understood and accepted in the area of nuclear energy. I wonder whether the implications are so clearly understood outside that important, if contentious, area. Moreover, I accept the conclusions of Richard Bailey about the regulator. He said that that official

"will be responsible for everything and anything not left to market forces."

It is important, moreover, to emphasise that, for the nation as a whole, there will be no sudden or dramatic escape from the yoke—if that is the right word—that it has created for itself over the past few decades. The real costs, as my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State has emphasised, are whether the industry is nuclear or non-nuclear and they will have to be borne, however they are distributed. Change can only take place on the margin —old systems abandoned and new systems introduced— but by its very nature, it will be slow and almost imperceptible. The costs of new excess capacity and of any new errors of technical judgment may be far more narrowly focused, but those that have already been made —and they are many—will be borne by much the same combination of consumer, taxpayer and shareholder. I refer, of course, to the great mass of shareholders in British industry, for whom energy costs are so significant.

Regrettably, I do not expect the problems that have required Government intervention in the past in this industry to disappear permanently on vesting day. I fear that they will return to plague us in greater or lesser measure and because of the importance of energy, transferring that portfolio to the Department of Trade and Industry, as I understand has been mooted, would not only confer immense burdens on that Department, but would be a grave mistake.

We are left with great hopes but with no proof. We hope that the overall quality of management will be improved and that the productivity of labour will increase more rapidly, as it has in other privatised industries. We hope that the freedom to purchase energy fuels in the world market will reduce net fuel costs per kilowatt generated and we hope that there will be a welcome surge of new initiatives, new methods and new technology, but we have no proof. I hope that those judgments are proved by events to be unduly pessimistic, but I would be failing in my duty if I did not give the House the benefit of the frankest judgment that I could make, having enjoyed, over the best part of the past two years, the great privilege of listening to all the arguments on this subject.

6.58 pm

Mr. Malcolm Bruce (Gordon): The hon. Member for Havant (Sir. I. Lloyd), who is the Chairman of the Select Committee on Energy, has told us that the Committee has hopes, but he also expressed a number of doubts. The Secretary of State made it clear that, essentially, the Bill is an enabling Bill, which gives him a great deal of power. We do not know what he will do with that power. No doubt, we shall learn some of the answers during the passage of the Bill, but we shall not learn many of them until privatisation takes place and is up and—we hope— running.

The hon. Member for Sedgefield (Mr. Blair) made an interesting and eloquent contribution. He was right to concentrate on the implications for charges, but in other ways, he missed an important opportunity to address the Government and the House on the real issue of how we deal with energy when we have grave concern for the environment and when there is a great deal of waste, especially in this country. That should be the central concern of any energy Bill brought before the House. Regrettably, however, the polarisation of ideologies precludes such an issue becoming dominant.

In our view, the top priority should be to promote energy conservation. I have tried to elicit from the Secretary of State what role he might give to energy conservation as part of the contribution to the acquisition of non-fuel sources. In other words, will he accept the assertion that energy conservation constitutes a fuel source and that investment in it can reduce the requirements of a generator to buy in extra capacity from elsewhere? I regret to say that I was given no answer of which I could make any sense.

The Government are cutting the budget of the energy efficiency office. Their declared objective is to reduce energy waste by 20 per cent. by 1990, yet the CEGB is planning for a net reduction through energy efficiency of only 4 per cent. by the end of the century. Clearly the objectives are only pious declarations; they are backed up by no real policy and by no practical ideas or measures.

Our future planning should be based on the least cost principle. It has been clearly identified that where that principle is required, energy conservation ceases to be a side issue—a pious declaration and a few leaflets circulated to the customer—and becomes central to the thinking of the supply industry.

As the Chairman of the Select Committee said, the problem is that the electricity supply industry is so conservative and so entrenched in its attitudes that the only way that it can respond to an actual or predicted rise in demand is to contract to build more generating capacity. It cannot apply its mind to the idea that money might be better invested using more efficiently the electricity that we have.

American experience shows that where public utility commissions have imposed on energy suppliers a requirement to work towards energy conservation, they have done so because they have had no choice. In some cases, they have actually improved their profitability in the process. If the industry is left to its own devices, it says, "Let us build another power station. It cannot possibly be

sensible to discourage people from using energy or to encourage them to use it more efficiently." It has been proved, however, that every pound invested in saving energy and increasing energy efficiency using existing technology can achieve a return several times greater than the same pound invested in building new power stations. It is remarkable that we are not addressing ourselves to that principle.

So far, the debate has been characterised largely by talk about capacity, over-capacity and under-capacity. Those are important issues, but energy conservation represents the best way of dealing wih the pressure in the environment and giving it space to develop a wide variety of options. A simple 10 per cent. reduction in electricity demand over the next 10 years would reduce the output of sulphur dioxide by 125,000 tonnes a year, of nitrogen oxides by 200,000 tonnes a year and carbon dioxide by 160,000 tonnes a year. That is well within the declared objectives and the technically achievable objective, yet we have not done it because we have no coherent framework in which to pursue such a policy.

We could have space to deal directly with some of the other problems such as reducing sulphur emissions and stepping up research into more efficient ways of burning fossil fuels to reduce the amount of noxious fumes that they put out. We could find out the cost of, and the technical capacity for, decommissioning nuclear power stations to give us some idea of what is involved—to replace the guesstimates that are passed back and forth —and we could discover how to deal with the nuclear waste that we continue to produce. So far, the Bill has not addressed itself seriously to any of those things.

Although we would give top priority to conservation and the environment, we accept that the industry needs restructuring. We accept that it has become over-centralised and monolithic. I am not sure that the colleagues of the Secretary of State will give him credit for pointing it out, but we acknowledge that the Government have learnt from the mistakes of previous privatisations —of gas and telecommunications. Having served on the Committee on the Gas Bill and sought to promote amendments that would have prevented the referral to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission I am tempted to say, "We told you so."

It is a pity that the Secretary of State had to inherit a Bill that is not of his making and that he finds that the complaints that we suggested would be forthcoming have emerged and have been substantiated. I understand why the Secretary of State is anxious to avoid mistakes, but I find his proposals unconvincing and they certainly do not amount to a massive injection of real competition. I do not doubt that the proposals represent a major restructuring, but it is a moot point whether they are beneficial and will achieve their objective.

There is no evidence that the Secretary of State's proposals will increase efficiency and in my view they will distort the market in a number of ways. I do not believe that a duopoly is a convincing mechanism for competition. It will create tension between the two generating boards and between the regional boards which have the option of buying in power and perhaps seeking to promote private generating agencies to build smaller power stations or contracting to build their own.

Where does that leave big G and little G if they have inherited a massive overcapacity that they have to offload? The problem arises that the scope for effective competition is limited and the potential for introducing new methods of generation on any significant scale is simply not there. Those who are anxious to achieve the promotion of benign renewable alternatives, which are getting to the point at which they are significant and could be competitive, given a little more investment in research and development, feel that the Bill is not creating a climate in which expansion is likely to be possible. They feel that quite the reverse is happening.

Mr. Parkinson: Does not the hon. Gentleman agree that the existing system allowed a Government to embark without consultation on a AGR programme and to preside over a power station being built 16 years late and at several times the estimated cost? I hope that the hon. Gentleman will concede that, under the system that we propose, such matters will at least have to be opened up to debate, and Parliament will have to be consulted.

Mr. Bruce: That problem has been evident all over the United States where people have invested and subsequently found that, because the regulatory mechanism is effective or because city investors are suspicious, power companies have gone broke and some power stations have not come on stream despite the best endeavours of the private sector. Neither mechanism will produce a guaranteed result.

We could be moving towards dangerous uncertainty, which could lead either to substantial over-provision or to circumstances in which no one is willing to invest even though there is clearly a requirement to replace. We could then knock up against the margins and face a series of blackouts and power cuts. We do not know what direction we are moving in.

The Bill proposes different mechanisms for privatisation—one for Scotland and one for England and Wales. Apparently, vertical integration is desirable for Scotland, but completely unacceptable for England and Wales. It is not for me to argue their relative merits, but it would help if Ministers could tell us how they justify the existence of two different mechanisms. I think that we know that they have chosen the easiest way of working matters out.

The problem in Scotland is that there is such massive over-capacity—particularly in nuclear power stations— that it is impossible to imagine how alternative technologies can develop to any significant extent. That is a pity, because Scotland has great potential for developing wind and wave power and so on. There is also the potential to create employment within Scotland because the technology has been developed there. It is unfortunate that the Bill will reduce rather than increase the possibility of that application and of creating jobs that otherwise could exist.

Mention has already been made of the nuclear tax. It is interesting to note that the Bill's provision for the liquidation, transfer or conversion of borrowings is different for Scotland. For England and Wales, it is £400 million to £600 million, but for Scottish boards it is £3,000 million. One can only assume that that difference has something to do with the substantial component of nuclear power stations built in Scotland and rather confirms the view of those critics, myself included, who argued that they should not all have been built in the first place.

When one adds the £2·5 billion earmarked in the Bill for the nuclear power industry, in excess of £5 billion of taxpayers' money is being earmarked to cushion the risk of

[Mr. Bruce]

the nuclear power industry. The Secretary of State may say, "But the consumers are already paying." The hon. Member for Sedgefield (Mr. Blair) is wrong; there is not one nuclear tax but two.

Madam Deputy Speaker (Miss Betty Boothroyd): Order. I bring to the attention of the hon. Member for Gordon (Mr. Bruce) the fact that he has reached his 10-minute limit.

Mr. James Wallace (Orkney and Shetland): On a point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. Standing Order No. 45A states that Mr. Speaker

"will call Members either between six o'clock and ten minutes before eight o'clock or between seven o'clock and ten minutes before nine o'clock on Monday to Thursday sittings . . . to speak for not more than ten minutes."

My hon. Friend was called at two minutes before 7 o'clock and therefore I submit that Standing Order No. 45A does not apply in this instance.

Madam Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member for Gordon began his speech at two minutes before 7 o'clock. Therefore, he was on his feet at 7 o'clock, when the Standing Order came into effect.

Mr. Wallace: With respect, Madam Deputy Speaker, it is a question of when my hon. Friend was called. He was called before 7 o'clock, and my understanding of Standing Order No. 45A is that the rule should not apply to him.

Madam Deputy Speaker: The rule does apply to right hon. or hon. Members speaking before 7 o'clock, and that is the ruling I shall now apply. I have looked again at Standing Order No. 45A, and I have it on good authority that it applies to right hon. or hon. Members called shortly before 7 o'clock.

Mr. A. J. Beith (Berwick-upon-Tweed): Further to that point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. When the 10-minute speech rule was the subject of widespread discussion in the House after we received the recommendation of the Select Committee on Procedure, assurances were sought that the rule would not be used in such a way as to prevent, as the Procedure Committee described it, representatives of minority parties having substantial support from deploying a case when a major case is deployed by the two main parties.

The fact that it would be possible to call a right hon. or hon. Member before the 10-minute speech rule came into effect, and for him then to be permitted to speak for a reasonable length of time, was one of the ways in which we assumed——

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. I take the hon. Gentleman's point, but it is not the responsibility of the Chair but that of right hon. or hon. Members who make long speeches before the rule comes into effect.

Mr. Wallace: Further to that point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. I refer to the debate on short speeches on 13 July 1988, when the Leader of the House addressed that particular matter. Referring to an amendment that had been moved by the hon. Member for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks) to restrict all speeches after those made from the Government and Opposition Front Benches to 10 minutes, the right hon. Gentleman said of the rule:

"If it were to extend to all Back-Bench speeches, along the lines of the amendment . . . I would not be proposing it. I consider it essential that Back Benchers should continue to be able to speak for longer than 10 minutes, if they wish to do so, perhaps because they are spokesmen of other parties."—[*Official Report*, 13 July 1988; Vol. 137, c. 505.]

That was what was indicated by the Leader of the House as being the intention. It was indicated also by the Chairman of the Procedure Committee—and Mr. Speaker, who was in the Chair, heard those remarks.

Madam Deputy Speaker: I understand the points that have been made by members of minority parties. Mr. Speaker and anyone else in the Chair is keen to safeguard the rights of minority parties. Nevertheless, I refer the hon. Gentleman to pages 423-424 of "Erskine May":

"Speeches which began shortly before 7 pm must not continue for more than ten minutes after 7 pm."

I have applied the rule. To err is human, but "Erskine May" is divine.

Mr. Beith: Further to that point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker.

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. I have made the point that I am attempting to safeguard the speeches of Back Benchers and the rights of minority parties. Time has already been taken up, but, as the hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed (Mr. Beith) is a long-standing Member of the House, I shall take his further point of order.

Mr. Beith: I suspect that the edition of "Erskine May" from which you, Madam Deputy Speaker, quoted was written, edited, printed and published before Standing Order No. 45A appeared in its present form in July of this year. When in doubt, a Standing Order should surely prevail over "Erskine May", and Standing Order No. 54A states:

"he will call Members either between six o'clock and ten minutes before eight o'clock or between seven o'clock and ten minutes before nine o'clock . . . to speak for not more than ten minutes."

You, Madam Deputy Speaker, did not call my hon. Friend between 7 o'clock and 10 o'clock. You called him before 7 o'clock, without any such limitation being placed upon him.

Madam Deputy Speaker: The hon. Gentleman is right, in that the permanent Standing Order to which he refers came into operation after that appeared in "Erskine May". I believe that this is the first occasion on which that point has been raised since the Standing Order came in, and I shall take it up with Mr. Speaker. I give the hon. Gentleman my assurance that I shall do so at the earliest opportunity.

Mr. Wallace: Further to that point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. I accept your ruling, but raising the matter with Mr. Speaker does not alter the fact that my hon. Friend the Member for Gordon (Mr. Bruce) has been interrupted in mid-flow, and it does not guarantee that our official spokesman will have an opportunity properly to deploy the case——

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. There will be two days of debate on this Bill. I shall do my utmost, as will Mr. Speaker, to safeguard the rights of minority parties. That is the role of the Chair. I shall discuss the point in question with Mr. Speaker at the earliest opportunity, to ensure

that minority parties are provided with proper opportunities to contribute to the debate. We must now continue.

7.16 pm

Sir Trevor Skeet (Bedfordshire, North): I assume, Madam Deputy Speaker, that I am allowed 10 minutes in which to speak from this moment.

Madam Deputy Speaker: Yes, from this moment.

Sir Trevor Skeet: I am much obliged to you, Madam Deputy Speaker.

One lesson to be learned from the speech of the hon. Member for Sedgefield (Mr. Blair) was that if the Labour party were to resume power at a later date, they would renationalise the power industry by the time-honoured method of paying compensation, simply by adding to the national debt as they did in 1948—when the present Government are doing their best, through the Cabinet, to pay off part of the national debt, to the tune of £10 billion last year.

As to charges, one can be very wrong. Today's domestic electricity prices are in real terms 8 per cent. lower than five years ago, and charges to industrial customers are 10 per cent. less. Householders in England and Wales pay 6·81p per kilowatt hour, which is less than in any other state in the Community, with the exception of Netherlands and Greece. In Italy, the charge is 9·94p. I am correcting a point made by the hon. Member for Sedgefield, when he argued that electricity prices will rise drastically. Thanks to a Conservative Government, prices have tended to go the other way.

Mr. Morgan: Will the hon. Gentleman allow me to intervene?

Sir Trevor Skeet: I cannot give way in a 10-minute speech.

The allocation of payments under clause 88 and schedule 12 totalling £2·5 billion are purely supplementary, if required for additional costs, and are not part of those items that are already added to the Bill. I thought that I should make that perfectly clear. On the other hand, if one carefully examines the coal industry, it will be seen that coal subsidies, grants, subsidies, social payments, capital write-offs and finance deficit payments total, in my estimation, about £9 billion cumulatively over the years. That is a very large sum. If one is to play one industry off against another, the real costs involved should first be clearly understood.

The Government have incorporated nuclear generation into National Power. One suspects that there may be a more satisfactory method of coping with the problem, with less distortion of the market and less injury to the industry concerned.

Nuclear generation should remain within a Crown company and be closely associated with, and even incorporate, British Nuclear Fuels plc, the United Kingdom Atomic Energy Authority and British Electricity International Ltd. In answer to several parliamentary questions that I put, the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State said that the Government have no intention of taking those out of public ownership. An additional precedent for that has been provided by the National Rivers Authority which, in the Water Bill, remains a state function.

The reasons for that are, first, that the fuel cycle, from power generation and reprocessing to the recycling of plutonium and uranium and waste disposal, would be contained in one company. The obligations contained in clause 88 and schedule 12—which comprise subsidies from the Revenue for nuclear storage, reprocessing, waste disposal and decommissioning—should be monitored and closely scrutinished within the state system. Secondly, civil liability for serious accidents will remain the responsibility of the Government since it is unassignable to the private sector.

Thirdly, the economics of BNFL requires orders from the generator to underpin funding for expensive plant and equipment and that a sympathetic approach be maintained towards the potential of fast reactors for recycling reprocessed products and depleted uranium.

Fourthly, with the eventual rundown of fossil fuels, either fusion or fission will be inevitable, which the Government should be able to direct as a long-term project, undisturbed by short-term considerations and the caprice of the market.

Those reasons show that there are alternatives that the Government could adopt to get themselves off the limb where they are now placed, and where they find it embarrassing to have to go against market trends. An additional reason is that the broader basis of competition would be provided at once, with the emergence of at least three competing companies, plus the two in Scotland. This development would not have to await the fruits of a decade of growth in the private sector. A British nuclear company could become the "swing producer" to help to determine the amounts of surplus capacity needed to be retained to operate effectively a privatised system of electricity.

I hope that the Secretary of State will bear in mind the fact that he could remedy at one stroke the major flaw in the Bill. Of course I support the Bill—it is the right way forward—but it could be improved. There is nothing in the Bill about reserve capacity. Which of the 12 supply companies are responsible for the national interest and assessment of current reserve capacity, since the obligation to supply has been moved away from the generators to the distributors? Will they be able to devise attractive incentives for the generators to build more plant without making industry, commerce and domestic consumers shoulder the risk? In an integrated system such as that in the United Kingdom, the present capacity is about 23 per cent. Privatisation requires a much broader margin of capacity to operate the system. The United States' capacity is 33 per cent., West Germany's is 50 per cent. and Japan's is 49 per cent.

The trouble with contractual arrangements is that, although they may be litigated, they cannot guarantee instant response, especially if the lights are going out and industry's appetite for power remains unsated. New stations take about eight years to build. Although gas turbines are relatively cheaper to build, their running costs are high, and they may have have difficulty operating under the merit order system.

While the price of oil is depressed by a world surplus and the price of coal is forced down by world prices at about £24 per tonne, it is doubtful whether it will be possible in the next two or three years to have any positive modifications, although the economy is expanding at a rate of between 3 and 4 per cent. a year. I stress that point. Perhaps the Government will link into the European grid with the establishment of a second line to the continent

[Sir Trevor Skeet]

and thus provide an essential reserve capacity, not in the United Kingdom but directly through further links with nuclear electricity in France. The Government should make their position prefectly clear during this debate.

My time is rapidly coming to an end, so I conclude by saying that I support the Bill. Details of the grid and of research and development will have to be considered carefully in Committee, and I hope that the Secretary of State will agree to modify the Bill where grave weaknesses appear.

7.25 pm

Mr. Robert Hughes (Aberdeen, North): The Secretary of State began with the astonishing assertion that the publicly owned electricity industry had failed to satisfy the ideals of its founders, but he produced not a shred of evidence in support of that. The contrary is the case. The publicly owned electricity industry has been an outstanding success. It has brought benefits to millions of people who, had they depended on private industry, would not have had an electricity supply. The problem with electricity, as with other nationalised industries, is that when the price was held down to protect the customer it was branded as inefficient. Equally, when prices were increased to generate capital, that was branded as inefficient.

The Secretary of State's speech was one of the most unconvincing that I have heard in the introduction of such a major Bill. His only justification for the Bill was that private enterprise is good but public enterprise is bad. All that he wants to do is to sell the industry to his friends in the City. As Prince Philip might have said, there is little difference between a pimp and the Secretary of State. Each is interested only in selling a service, irrespective of the morality of the position or the effect on the individual.

At least during this debate the Secretary of State has said little about the need to spread share ownership. He genuflected gently in that direction when he said that he hoped that some employees would buy shares. He is modest about the aims of share ownership because he knows what happened with other privatisations, including British Aerospace and Jaguar.

Shortly after British Aerospace was floated in 1981, only one shareholder owned more than 1 million shares. By January 1982, a total of 13 shareholders had more than 1 million shares. The latest company accounts, to 31 December 1987, show that 40, or 0·04 per cent. of, shareholders own 41·78 per cent. of the shares. For the next bracket down, which is between 100,000 and 999,999 shares, 334, or 0·32 per cent. of, shareholders own 37·02 per cent. of the shares. Therefore, 374 people, or 0·36 per cent. of shareholders, own 78·8 per cent. of British Aerospace. How is that for concentration of ownership?

When Jaguar was privatised, very few people had large shareholdings. Astonishingly, within six months of flotation the number of shareholders had halved. In May 1985, a total of 207 shareholders owned 76 per cent. of the shares. What is the position now? The number of shareholders has decreased to one third of the original number, with 187, or 0·44 per cent. of, shareholders owning 78·18 per cent. of the shares. Eighteen shareholders own 51·42 per cent. of the shares, which is a controlling interest. How is that for a concentration of ownership?

As for employee share ownership in Jaguar, although the employee share scheme has more than 3 million shares, that represents only 1·8 per cent. of all shares. Only 320 employees own 164,493 shares, which is 0·09 per cent. of the shareholding. How is that for concentration of share ownership? What price the employees in that industry having an influence on their destiny?

The Secretary of State is anxious only to get rid of the shares. The problem is that there is no device in the Bill to stop big G taking over little G or little G taking over big G. There will be a predatory monopoly supplier that the Secretary of State believes will provide competition, but which I believe will be a paper-thin charade.

I want to spend a couple of minutes talking about the problems of Dounreay atomic energy research establishment. The fast breeder research programme has been an outstanding success. The decision to cease that research was both precipitate and wrong in principle; it should be continued. Many other countries are continuing their research, notably Japan, and I suspect that, with its increasing potential and expenditure, within a decade we will be buying Japanese technology. The decision to cease funding research was first taken by Lord Marshall out of pique because he did not get his way on the future structure of the industry, and the Secretary of State then reacted out of equal pique because he did not want Lord Marshall to get away with that. Therefore, funds for research are not being made available.

There is a severe unemployment problem in the area. I have never said that any industry must continue, despite the risk, but we will live to regret the rundown of Dounreay. The decision is disastrous for Caithness, whose people certainly cannot look to this Government for relief. Since the Government have been in office, there has been an end to regional policy, the disappearance of the pulp mill at Corpach and the disappearance of the aluminium smelter at Invergordon. The smelter might well have been saved if the electricity industry had given it a cheaper electricity price. The great fear is that, because future technological research in the fast breeder programme is being stripped away without proper consultation or discussion, Caithness will become the dumping ground for nuclear waste. That could be much more dangerous than the fast breeder technology research.

I intervened in the Secretary of State's speech to ask about standing charges, and he said that they would continue. Standing charges are extremely regressive and bear much more heavily on the poor and the pensioners than on the well off. The Secretary of State dissembled when he spoke of second homes. He said, "Do we want to remove standing charges for people who have second homes?" To use the Prime Minister's expression, he was talking about the tiny, tiny little minority of people who own second homes. It would have been more equitable had the current standing charges been put into the general account and paid for by the customer, per unit of electricity consumed. That is by far the best way to deal with that.

The Secretary of State is abandoning house insulation and conservation of energy. He said nothing about the costs to industries, especially those with large energy needs. I wish that I had time to go into detail about the

complaints of the paper industry, which is a heavy user of electricity. It believes that it has been unfairly penalised because a cheaper electricity price is not available.

The Secretary of State did not justify his privatisation plans. Indeed, the game was given away by the hon. Member for Birmingham, Northfield (Mr. King), who said in an intervention that we should be worried about the privatisation of electricity. We are, because it means £20 billion going into the Conservative party kitty for the next general election. That is what privatisation is about. It will raise money to finance future tax cuts. It has nothing to do with rationale, sense or objectivity—it is purely a means to finance future tax cuts. How could we expect objectivity from this Government? The Prime Minister and the Secretary of State have a curious relationship—headmistress and teacher's pet—which does not lead to objectivity. The tragedy is that the public will suffer.

7.34 pm

Mr. Michael Alison (Selby): I wish briefly to refer to a unique feature in my constituency that is relevant to this debate on the Electricity Bill. In my constituency is the largest and most productive single coalfield in western Europe, and sitting on top of that coalfield are two of the largest and most significant power stations in Britain, at Drax and at Eggborough.

I warmly welcome the Bill because it will be advantageous both to consumers and to producers of electricity in my constituency. It stands to reason that the proposed new structure, with its injection of the ingredients of competition, will, to quote the White Paper "create downward pressure on generating costs, which last year accounted for some three-quarters of total operating costs."

I cannot follow the argument of the hon. Member for Sedgefield (Mr. Blair), who suggested that there was no prospect of competition under the Bill. The four separate new avenues of competition outlined in paragraph 41 of the White Paper speak for themselves. They all relate to the new distribution companies and it is significant that their predecessor companies, the area boards, warmly welcome the proposed changeover. They know that they will be let off the CEGB's leash and will enjoy a great deal more freedom. If that is the position while the industry is still nationalised, how much more will it be true under the new arrangements—and I am leaving out the prospects of competition resulting from the fact that larger users can also buy electricity direct from generators. There will be more competition.

It is nonsense for the hon. Member for Sedgefield to suggest that because there is a natural monopoly in the provision of electricity to the household consumer, the household consumer will not benefit from real competition in the generating sector. There is an analogy with the gas industry. Although there is a natural monopoly in the piping of gas into homes, the domestic consumer has benefited immeasurably from changes in the productive end of the gas industry. I believe that the same will happen in the electricity industry.

I wish to cite a constituency example of how competition will help industrial users. I know of one substantial manufacturing company in Selby that cannot wait for Royal Assent because it has been denied a fair deal under the existing arrangements. It introduced a combined heat and power scheme, but before doing so took the trouble to contact its local electricity board to discover the basis upon which the board would supply the input electricity for the scheme and then buy back the regenerated electricity. The company was told that the electricity board would pay for regenerated electricity at the rate of 80 per cent. of what it charged for supplying electricity to the combined heat and power scheme.

Within two years of installation, the local electricity board moved the goal posts and, without warning or discussion, implemented what amounted to a 17 per cent. drop in the price that it was prepared to pay for the regenerated electricity from the scheme, but with no change in the charge for the input of electricity. That completely upended the computations and reasonable calculations made by the industrial company in exploring the scheme. That is one scenario that will not be repeated in the new competitive environment, when there will be the opportunity for companies to shop around and to buy electricity from different sources.

Those who work on the supply side of the industry—especially the work force in the Selby coalfields—will not be disadvantaged. British Coal's productivity improvements have been quite staggering. There has been a 75 per cent. increase in productivity in the three and a half years since March 1985. It is difficult to imagine any supplier in the world being able to get coal to the Drax or Eggborough power stations more cheaply than the coal which is now being supplied on a merry-go-round basis in trains from Selby, a run of just a few miles. The daily run delivers 38,000 tonnes of coal to Drax alone.

It was encouraging to hear Lord Marshall speak at the opening ceremony for the Drax B power station in May of this year. He referred to the local coal and electricity industries in Selby as "inextricably linked", and he prophesied a bright future for British Coal. If there is a continuation of the amazing productivity improvements that British Coal has been able to make, no foreign buyer or supplier will be able to challenge British Coal in supplying products to Drax and Eggborough.

Will my hon. Friend the Minister of State, Scottish Office confirm that the Bill effectively provides for the facility referred to in the White Paper—I referred to paragraph 42—under which large electricity users would be able to purchase electricity directly from generators and to move power to their sites via the national transmission network, under a system of common tariffs? In its briefing, the Chemical Industries Association Ltd. states that the Bill makes no reference to that matter. I would be glad to have some assurance that that facility is provided for in the Bill.

Will my hon. Friend say something further about the cost implications of fitting FGD—the so-called fluid gas desulphurisation equipment—in power stations? Drax has recently started the costly procedure of installing FGD. It is a little difficult to see how, in future, it will be properly protected in terms of cost. The Department's briefing document stated that FGD costs will be taken into account in future and some sort of compensation made available, as it is likely to be obligatory for existing and new coal-fired power stations to install FGD equipment. There is an analogy with the cost implications of the non-fossil fuel requirement. I hope that my hon. Friend will be able to give us some assurance about FGD costs.

On the basis of the underlying realities and facts in the industry and what is provided in the Bill, I warmly welcome the legislation on behalf of producers and consumers of electricity in my constituency.

[Mr. Michael Alison]

7.42 pm

Mr. Geoffrey Lofthouse (Pontefract and Castleford): I shall base my remarks purely and simply on the findings of the Energy Committee. It has been referred to several times in the debate. The Energy Committee reported in July of this year—much to the embarrassment of the Secretary of State. He did not want the Committee to take evidence and to report. Pressure was placed on Committee members not to do so. Unfortunately, Conservative Members on the Committee did not get their act together. One or two of them failed to turn up. It was decided to investigate and to take evidence. If that had not happened, we would not have had a Committee report to assist and guide us throughout the passage of the legislation on the privatisation of the electricity industry.

It is always a pleasure to follow the right hon. Member for Selby (Mr. Alison). I shall refer to some of his remarks about Selby later.

In general, the Committee's criticisms remain valid and largely unanswered. The Secretary of State's response to the report avoided most issues. The Committee's unanimous conclusion was that the privatisation timetable is much too tight. It stated:

"If the Government is intent on introducing a Bill—or Bills—in November 1988, it is faced by a frightfully tight timetable. If at the same time it is discovering new problems, it runs the risk of producing ill-considered, spatchcock legislation. Electricity is too important an industry for the country to gamble that everything will come out right."

That seems to be the Secretary of State's wish and intention. The Committee said:

"There is still time for a fuller process of consultation, even if the result is to defer the privatisation legislation."

The main criticism in the report is that sufficient time has not been allowed and that the White Paper and the Bill were ill-conceived. That opinion is shared by the electricity supply trade unions. Their evidence strongly supported the Committee's strictures on the proposed time scale. A longer time schedule for legislation would have had three clear advantages. First, it would have allowed the Department to consult widely with all interested parties on the details of the legislation, licences and regulatory regime. Secondly, it would have provided an opportunity for the establishment of the regulatory arrangements well before privatisation, as recommended by the Committee. Thirdly, it would have enabled the management of the proposed shadow companies and the new regulator to gain experience before privatisation.

The Committee was privileged to listen to expert evidence from witnesses and to be guided by expertise. At no time was any hon. Member reluctant to support the contents of the report. The Committee stated:

"The privatised structure is likely to remain for at least a generation . . . It must be right from the start. Nothing is served by the secrecy or haste in which the process of consultation has been conducted."

The Committee was particularly critical of the proposed structure for generation, which it believes has been devised to accommodate the Government's preoccupation with sustaining nuclear generation. The trade unions share that view. The Committee formed no firm opinion on the effect on prices, and called on the Government to make a detailed assessment. It stated:

"We have no evidence on which to reach any firm conclusion on one central issue: whether or not a privatised ESI is likely in aggregate to have lower costs, and hence be able to offer its consumers lower prices, than would be the case if the industry remained in public ownership."

The Committee clearly said that there is no evidence that the consumer would benefit from privatisation.

The Committee was critical of the Government for promising lower prices but providing no evidence that that will be the case. It called on the Government to publish a detailed assessment of the factors that they believe will lead to lower prices. Several hon. Members have referred to that matter. I doubt whether any assurances will be forthcoming.

Several hon. Members have referred to the problems of regulation, which the Select Committee examined in detail. It said:

"The way the industry is regulated will affect competition, efficiency, prices and the validity of service for many years into the future. We believe that the regulator will need to be in place well in advance of privatisation to ensure that he is able to have some influence on the regulatory framework which he will be operating."

I hope that the Secretary of State will at least give serious consideration to that recommendation which, once again, was supported by the electrical trade unions and other witnesses.

The Committee quotes with approval the statement of John Lyons, general secretary of the Engineers and Managers Association and the Electrical Power Engineers Association, that the sort of detailed regulation which would offer the maximum direct protection to the customer is incompa-tible with the management freedom necessary for an efficient industry. The Committee generally comes down in favour of a much heavier style of regulation. The Committee expressed concern and failed to understand what was meant by light regulation compared with heavy regulation. We would have been in a much better position to make a judgment if what that meant had been spelt out.

The Committee is strongly critical of the Government's proposed nuclear quota:

"We also find it difficult to reconcile the 20 per cent. non-fossil fuel requirement—effectively a bunkering of the nuclear industry—with the best interests of consumers."

The Committee is worried about the cost of nuclear power and believes that at commercial discount rates and realistic coal prices, private companies will be unlikely to invest in nuclear power. Power from that source will be more expensive than that from fossil-fuelled stations. That has been expressed repeatedly in the debate.

I can well understand the right hon. Member for Selby being so enthusiastic about coal mining as the jewel of the coal mining industry is Selby coalfield, but I wonder whether he would have the same enthusiasm if he represented an area where mining has been wiped out. Some 11,000 jobs have been lost in my constituency and we are facing a great threat. No Conservative Member has ever denied that there will be job losses in the mining industry as a result of this privatisation. The average age in the industry is 35, so young men will lose jobs without the prospects of the attractive and generous redundancy terms which were previously enjoyed. Since 1984 no jobs have been replaced. Therefore, would the right hon. Gentleman be so enthusiastic if he represented such an area?

7.53 pm

Mr. John Hannam (Exeter): For those of us who have been involved in energy matters over the years, today's debate represents a major step in the Government's progress towards the restoration of a truly free enterprise society. As a strong believer in private ownership, as distinct from state control, I apply the simple principle that it is a question of justifying not why an industry should be privatised, but why it should remain in state ownership. If strong reasons can be given for an industry having to be owned by Government, so be it, but on the record of the nationalised industries, with their higher than average job losses and price increases, especially under Labour Governments, I see no doctinaire ideology in our wanting to put them back into the more competitive and efficient private sector.

Mr. Jimmy Hood (Clydesdale): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Hannam: I cannot, because of the time factor.

For those reasons I welcome my right hon. Friend's determination to take our electricity supply industry into private ownership, albeit with an extensive regulatory regime for the obvious reasons of safety, consumer protection and security of supply of a vital commodity.

The electricity supply industry operated without real competition for 30 years and that resulted in huge distortions of supply capacity, as we swung from cut-offs in the 1950s and 1960s to vast over-capacity in the 1970s and 1980s. From being a pioneer in nuclear technology, we have swapped and changed our reactor systems so often that overseas markets have been lost and our generating costs have suffered. All that time, the accent was on size with bigger and bigger generating stations, operating at less and less energy efficiency and running counter to all the environmental and conservation requirements of today's world.

The radical restructuring of electricity will lead our energy industries down a new path towards greater diversity of supply, better consumer involvement and, most important, a downward pressure on prices. This is where the Labour party is getting it all wrong. With the changeover on the Front Bench from the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, East (Mr. Prescott) to the hon. Member for Sedgefield (Mr. Blair), pessimism has been replaced by innumeracy. The hon. Gentleman's forecast of a 25 per cent. rise in electricity prices is wholly irresponsible and based on misconceptions.

First, the hon. Gentleman's assumption that the non-fossil fuel levy represents a new charge on the consumer to cover future nuclear power costs is wrong. Present prices include charges for nuclear power and future decommissioning, and with current cost accounting in the nationalised industries, that is precisely what the consumer is paying for.

In his desire to scare the public, the hon. Gentleman also ignored the basic realities of competition which drives down costs. He fell into the old ideological Socialist trap of assuming that any increase in profits must come from increased prices. If he looks at British Telecom, he will see that it is making record profits, despite a decrease in telephone charges of 12 per cent. in real terms since privatisation. In any event, no Labour Member can talk about price increases when, between 1974 and 1979, electricity prices rose by 180 per cent., or 30 per cent. above inflation.

The factor that will reduce future costs is diversity of supply. For several years, there have been repeated complaints from area boards, industrial companies, independent electricity producers, energy efficiency and combined heat and power organisations that the huge monolithic supply industry was preventing more efficient electricity production. My hon. Friend the Member for Erewash (Mr. Rost) and I have repeatedly brought these frustrations to the attention of the House, especially my hon. Friend, through his work on the Select Committee.

The first official recognition of the energy efficiency case came with the Drax coal-fired power station which harnesses the waste heat for local tomato growing. That was the first occasion when a major power station has tried to use that excessive heat.

Mr. Peter Rost (Erewash): One per cent. of it.

Mr. Hannam: One per cent. of it, as my hon. Friend says.

Then the 1983 Act appeared to offer more scope for individual generation, but in reality the monopoly supplier has been more interested in large-scale stations, so smaller generators have not been allowed in on the act. Combined heat and power was completely neglected until recent years, but the new community heating schemes in Sheffield, Leicester, Birmingham, Newcastle and south London are a hopeful sign for the future. Nevertheless, we must remember that the original Government study on combined heat and power identified a further 34 urban areas where combined heat and power and community heating could be developed.

It is not only in the context of getting 60 per cent. rather than 30 per cent. energy efficiency that we should develop these schemes. My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister in her "green" speech in September recognised the urgent need to reduce harmful emissions into the atmosphere and referred specifically to "energy production" and "fuel efficiency".

The main ingredient in global warming is carbon dioxide and in a reply to a parliamentary question recently we were told that our present annual coal burn produces some 235 million tonnes of CO_2. The use of new combined heat and power combined cycle coal plant would reduce that CO_2 output by about 150,000 tonnes a year from a single installation, so that must be desirable. In the context of this Bill and my right hon. Friend's "least cost" basis for future investment, combined heat and power combined cycle schemes satisfy our requirements.

I am more confident than ever before that these small 150 to 300 MW plants will flourish in the new era. However, it is in the context of the controversial 20 per cent. non-fossil option that CHP could have a role. I shall come to the nuclear aspects in a moment, but should like to ask for specific attention to be given to the use of coal and gas CHP schemes within that option.

The Government have made it clear that not only nuclear electricity is included in the non-fossil category, and that they are including the various renewable and "energy from waste" technologies that displace fossil fuels. The Government's energy paper No. 53 identified inner-city CHP as able to displace a fossil fuel burn of 12 million tonnes of coal equivalent. I welcome the inclusion

[Mr. Hannam]

of waste-tip electricity generation schemes in the Bill, but ask my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State to consider whether other CHP fossil fuel replacement schemes could be encouraged within the 20 per cent. option.

From my discussions with the area boards and representatives of the independent electricity producers, I am confident that a wide range of new generation will now come on to the market. If all goes well, those smaller, more efficient stations will contribute to a cleaner lower-cost system, but still fit into our balanced energy supply structure, using coal, gas and nuclear.

We are debating the general principles of this privatisation Bill. There is no doubt that it is essentially an enabling Bill, with a great deal of detail yet to come in the regulatory and licence systems.

The controversial element is obviously the nuclear non-fossil requirement, and there will be a continuing debate about whether, given a need to maintain our nuclear industry, the Bill contains the best method of doing so. I believe strongly that in the next century nuclear power will provide the bulk of the world's electricity. At present, 16 per cent. is provided by nuclear power, but, as the International Atomic Energy Agency pointed out in a recent survey of 100 nations ranging from Argentina to Zambia, the overall picture is of increasing electricity demand, shortage of fuels and worries about the environmental damage caused by fossil fuels.

Belgium has reported that sulphur dioxide emissions were reduced by 60 per cent. per kilowatt hour between 1973 and 1983 because of nuclear power. Finland also reported a reduction in harmful emissions by using nuclear power. Kenya, Malaysia, Morocco, Pakistan, India, Poland and Spain—and most of the other 100 countries —are all planning peaceful nuclear power development.

Here in the United Kingdom, due to the juxtaposition of falling coal prices and a comparatively high cost nuclear station programme—the advanced gas-cooled reactors—we are temporarily at a point where there is no clear cost advantage in nuclear power. However, on environmental and safety grounds, I believe that nuclear power is still well ahead. The Government are right to maintain the nuclear option for all the different reasons given. In my view, it will not be long before the so-called levy becomes a refund as the crossover occurs again when oil, gas and coal prices rise higher than nuclear prices.

My right hon. Friend has shown great determination and bravery in his approach to this privatisation. There is still a lot of detail to come, but I congratulate him on his vision and support the Second Reading.

8.2 pm

Mr. Jack Thompson (Wansbeck): Listening carefully to the Secretary of State's presentation of the Bill on its Second Reading today, I felt that he lacked conviction and commitment. It will be interesting tomorrow to see in cold print in *Hansard* the detail of his comments because I am sure that the public outside will see only the comments in the newspapers, and not the Secretary of State's full presentation.

Up to this point the input from Conservative Members has not touched on one point. There has been severe criticism by the Secretary of State and other Conservative Members of the Central Electricity Generating Board, the grid system, the distribution boards, and the industry's lack of efficiency and lethargic attitude. However, what has not been mentioned is that the Secretary of State and his predecessors for the past nine years could have influenced anything that happened in the electricity industry because it was state-owned and the direct responsibility of the Secretary of State for Energy.

To understand fully the changes advocated in the Bill, which are designed to dismantle an efficient and integrated service, it is necessary to examine the reasons for the industry being taken into public ownership in the first place some 40 years ago and to relate those reasons to the position now. The policy of public ownership, which was pursued by all political parties at that time, is still valid in the 1980s and will be even more valid in the future.

It cannot be claimed that the propositions enshrined in the Bill will take us back to Victorian times, although much of the legislation introduced by this Government has taken us back to Victorian times. However, electricity is somewhat different, because in Victorian times it was in its infancy. The Secretary of State's proposals lead me to believe that the industry will suffer from some of the problems that it faced in the mid-1920s when the Weir report set the pattern for our present complex integrated system.

Faraday announced his discovery of electro-magnetic induction in 1831; after his subsequent development of more efficient generating sets and the invention of the incandescent lamp, the House passed the Electric Lighting Act 1882 which, incidentally, was framed in such a way that it protected the public against private monopoly—exactly the opposite of what is suggested now. The Bill also limited maximum prices and allowed for the purchase by local authorities of private companies established under the Act. That arrangement was to allow for a write-down value after 21 years. In the context of its time, that was a sensible suggestion. Hon. Members may not be aware that the sponsor of that Bill was Joseph Chamberlain, who was a more sensible and more enlightened Tory than those sponsoring this Bill, the proposals of which will create a new private monopoly and put profit before people.

From the turn of this century, the industry flourished and expanded, mainly organised and funded by municipalities, the objective of which was to provide a public utility, geared to the benefit of their communities. It became more and more evident that large-scale integrated distribution systems were vital to the future of the industry. In the north-east of England, much pioneering work was done both on improving generating techniques, aided by Charles Parson and his turbines, and on the distribution of electricity on a standardised system. The north-east network was the biggest integrated power system in Europe at the time. It was the forerunner of what was to expand into the present grid system.

That brings me to one of my main criticisms of the Bill. Responsibility for regulating and balancing distribution via the grid is to be taken from the generating side of the industry. I am sure that the House would be interested to learn the source of the advice given to the Secretary of State which encouraged him to include this preposterous proposition in his plans. I would hazard a guess that it was not engineers with any intimate knowledge of the grid. The grid has a crucial role in balancing load factors throughout the country, as well as in ensuring the most economic

regulation between production and consumption. It can perform its functions effectively only by being linked directly to the generating side of the industry.

On 26 October, *New Scientist* announced:

"The CEGB are already considering breaking up its research and development team into three parts, one to be allocated to big G, one to little G and the other to the grid system."

That is a retrograde step. In such an industry, research and development must be integrated, just as the service itself must be integrated.

I have experience as an electricial engineer. I also have the benefit of being a fellow of the Parliamentary Trust and visiting the North Western electricity board two or three years ago. It was an invaluable experience because I saw the industry from all sides. The people there were very helpful to me while I gained that experience, which reinforced my belief that breaking up the generating industry and taking control of the grid from the generators is absolute folly.

The industry will suffer from a conglomeration of private companies controlling the grid; each demanding satisfaction for its regional monopoly and seeking improvements and expansion of the grid facility in its own area. That is a recipe for chaos and confusion. I am sure that the Bill will have a rough passage through Committee on the technical aspects of this proposal.

There is another point that is not explained in the Bill, but was raised by the hon. Member for Exeter (Mr. Hannam), and that concerns the large consumer. If the large consumer has the opportunity to receive its supply directly from the generator, it must be fed through the grid system, which is owned by the distribution companies, and, somewhere along the line, that will be an added complication. If I was involved in the distribution companies, I would seek compensation for the use of the grid.

Another criticism of the proposals is the lack of regulation and coal imports. In fact, there is positive encouragement to expand imports, which will not only cause economic problems for our coal industry, but, without regulation, will seriously damage the balance of payments which, on recent evidence, is in a difficult enough position.

The rundown of the coal industry—significantly accelerating in the past two years—will continue. Social and economic effects of further closures will increase the hidden burden of job losses, redundancy payments and the social deprivation that follows, and the abandoning of huge coal reserves some of which will never be recoverable. For example, in my area the coal is under the North Sea. If those coal reserves are abandoned, there will be little chance of getting back to them again. There will be an increased dependency on foreign coal, which will increase in price as the power stations in Britain become more dependent on imports, so removing the short-term advantage of subsidised supplies. We are too dependent on coal produced by low-paid workers in near-slave conditions. The consumption of electricity produced, for instance, by burning South African coal, should weigh heavily on the conscience of the British consumer.

Clause 88 and schedule 12 are diametrically opposed to Tory policies of a free market and is a distortion of fair and even competition. There is already considerable public discontent at the expansion of nuclear plant; the public perception of the conduct of the Sizewell inquiry did not enhance the case for further nuclear expansion. That is evidenced, too, in the strong opposition at the Hinkley Point inquiry.

There is a campaign in the north-east opposing the building of a PWR in the constituency of the hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed (Mr. Beith)—my parliamentary neighbour. Although he and I are from different political parties, we have campaigned during the past 10 years on the platform that a reasoned alternative to a nuclear power station or PWR would be a coal-fired station which could be run economically. However, that alternative will be distorted by the propositions in the Bill.

Of course, at that time the opposition to the nuclear power station at Druridge bay was supported by the Tory candidates in the 1983 election. They stood there on the sand dunes and said, "We do not want a nuclear power station here." That may have been because they were candidates in the election, and they may have changed their views by now. I shall watch carefully to see whether one of them who is now a Member of the House makes a contribution to the debate. Many hon. Members, although they were supporters of the nuclear industry, see no justice in clause 88.

The Secretary of State and the Government are so obsessed with nuclear power and attempts to destroy the mining industry that the clause distorts the future of power generation. It is nothing more than a subsidy for nuclear power. It is a facility which is not offered on the same scale to the coal mining industry. I shall be interested to see whether the Secretary of State, when discussing the proposals for the privatisation of the coal industry, will talk of a coal tax in the same way as he has talked of a nuclear tax.

The industry would have been in a far healthier shape than it has been in the past few years, and the best thing to do with the industry is to leave it alone——

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Sir Paul Dean): Order. I am sorry to interrupt the hon. Gentleman, but, to be fair to other hon. Members, it must now be his last sentence.

Mr. Thompson: I shall take note of that.

I shall just make a little recommendation to the Secretary of State. I recommend that over Christmas he reads two books, both by the same author, Lesley Hannah, "Electricity before Nationalisation", a study up to 1948 and "Engineers, Managers and Politicians", a study of the electrical industry up until 1979. He will find them both enlightening and useful.

8.14 pm

Mr. Peter Rost (Erewash): The hon. Member for Sedgefield (Mr. Blair), who opened on behalf of the Opposition with an elegant but badly researched speech, challenged the Government to say what benefits would come from privatisation. I have some news for the House —certainly not for my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State, because I am sure he will know it already. We have evidence that there is already pressure for downward prices from the new independent producers and from industry proposing to generate its own.

I have some difficulty in spelling out the details of that, because I must declare an interest as a consultant to the Major Energy Users Council, many of whose members are large industrial firms, which are fed up with uncompetitive electricity prices and the monopoly abuse, and are only too

[Mr. Peter Rost]

anxious to generate more of their own electricity. After all, we are bottom of the European league in industry producing its own processed heat and electricity, because of the abuse of the CEGB monopoly. I have difficulty, too, because I must declare an interest as an adviser to independent electricity producers interested in proving what they have not been allowed to prove before, which is that there are cheaper ways of generating electricity from which the consumer can benefit.

All I may tell the House, without disclosing what is obviously still sensitive commercial information on contracts which are in the process of being negotiated, is about a number of projects which have already been referred to in the debate, especially schemes of district heating and combined heat and power at Leicester, the gas turbine project at Corby, the district heating scheme that is going ahead in Sheffield, the Thameside scheme and many others. The price at which they are offering their electricity to area boards is between 2·5p and 2·9p per kilowat hour. That compares with more than 3p per kilowatt hour, which the CEGB presently charges area boards. Therefore, there is evidence that the new producers can make a profit and offer electricity to area boards at lower prices than the area boards must now buy it from their monopoly producer, the CEGB.

The estimates of how much of that electricity can come forward in time for privatisation vary, of course. However, they will be fairly limited, because privatisation is only two years away. Only those schemes already under production will be able to sign up for contracts on vesting day. It is estimated that the potential during the next five years is probably nearly 10,000 MW of capacity. A lot of that will come from industry wishing to put up its own plant, from city consortia developing combined heat and power district heating, and from new dependent producers putting up power stations, using the new technology which the CEGB has preferred to ignore.

Of course, some of that technology will be combined cycle gas turbine and some of it will be the new generation of smaller coal-fired power stations, using the fluidised bed technology which, incidentally, is going ahead in the east midlands in partnership with British Coal to produce cheaper electricity than the large, conventional, traditional coal-fired power stations, as well as producing far less pollution.

The other technology, which the CEGB has again preferred to ignore, is the use of municipal refuse as a fuel. That is the cheapest fuel and it is a clean burn technology. If the Swedes can do it in the centres of their cities, we can certainly do it with our pollution. It produces cheaper electricity, of course, where the heat is also marketed. The private sector is going ahead with such technology.

The evidence already exists. I can prove it and I have it on paper, but, unfortunately, it is difficult for me to show it because it is still commercially sensitive. Area boards are shopping around and at the moment they are negotiating contracts for cheaper electricity than that which they presently must buy from the CEGB. One cannot have more proof than that. Competition will put pressure on prices.

Unfortunately, things cannot happen overnight because most of the existing capacity is still with the CEGB. Area boards also have an obligation to supply, so they must sign the contracts. If my right hon. Friend wants competition to develop further, I urge him to allow area boards to sign short-term contracts. They are anxious to do so, but, of course, the successor CEGB companies want to sign long-term contracts.

Area boards are aware that, within four or five years, much more privately produced electricity will be offered to them at a cheaper price than that at which they will have to buy from the successor companies of the CEGB. If the new capacity are cheaper electricity and not to be squeezed out and pre-empted by the successor CEGB companies, it is most important that short-term contracts are encouraged.

If my right hon. Friend genuinely wants to encourage competition, he must ensure that the redundant power station sites that the CEGB has been hoarding for years and has tried to develop rather than allow private enterprise to refurbish them for lower cost electricity production, are sold to the private sector if the successor CEGB companies are not prepared to develop them. There will be a problem about obtaining planning permission for new power stations even if they are the small type that are likely to be built. Therefore, the available sites that are presently held by the CEGB must be redeveloped by private enterprise if the CEGB successor companies are not prepared to refurbish them to enable more efficient electricity production. Those sites must be auctioned in some way so that the new independent producers who are anxious to get going will at least have some sites on which to do so.

I wholeheartedly support the excellent comments of my hon. Friend the Member for Exeter (Mr. Hannam). We could have cheaper electricity, combined with heat production which would also provide cheaper heat for our communities, if the CEGB monopoly had not rejected that offer. The arguments in favour of the city district heating and industrial co-generation have been recognised and developed within the rest of Europe, where some 3,000 towns and cities have cheap heat and cheaper electricity as a result of the two processes working together. The environmental advantages are, of course, enormous because it saves fossil-fuel burning if one can obtain 80 per cent. efficiency out of the fuel burn rather than the present level of 35 per cent. derived from our coal-fired power stations. They generate electricity only and throw out the other two thirds of the fuel in the form of cooling water.

If the arguments in favour of combined heat and power production was environmental alone, I might have second thoughts, but such production is also competitive. The estimated cost of electricity produced in co-generation or combined with heat production is lower than that of electricity produced from coal-fired power stations. Therefore, on the grounds of energy efficiency and the environment, I would strongly urge my right hon. Friend to consider seriously allowing the combined heat and power option to be included in the non-fossil fuel category with nuclear and renewable sources of energy even if it does burn fossil fuels. That can be done because combined heat and power displaces fossil-fuel burn because of its increased efficiency. Therefore, it is justifiably a non-fossil fuel source because it displaces other fossil fuel that would otherwise have to be burnt.

I welcome this long overdue restructuring of our industry leading to privatisation. I congratulate my right hon. Friend on a courageous proposal and on a radical policy.

8.24 pm

Mr. Alan W. Williams (Carmarthen): One of the reasons why the Labour party opposes privatisation of electricity is that it will lead to higher prices, and that is what most consumers fear.

Comment has already been made about prices. It should be noted that, between 1982 and 1987, electricity prices fell by 19 per cent. in real terms. Since the privatisation of the industry has been mooted, we have already had an increase of between 8 and 9 per cent. and a further 6 per cent. increase is on the way. Once the industry is privatised, shareholders will want their dividend, and in the future we will also be faced with indeterminate nuclear bills to pay. It strikes me that a minimum estimate of the cost of privatisation to the consumer in terms of price increases is 20 per cent.

The Labour party is also opposed to the privatisation because there will be no competition and therefore no help to the consumer. I also doubt whether there will be much competition within the generating end of the industry. The Bill has nothing to do with competition.

My main argument against the privatisation is the double standards that the Government have adopted in their treatment of coal as opposed to nuclear power. The coal industry is being exposed to the harsh realities of the international market, but the nuclear industry is essentially protected from them.

In the past four years in south Wales, 18 of the 29 coal mines have disappeared—now there are just 11. Two weeks ago it was announced that Cynheidre colliery, just outside my constituency, would be closed. I am delighted that the miners have decided to fight that closure and to take that case to review. The size of the losses that have been incurred by that colliery and by Marine colliery in south Wales are small in comparison to the subsidies given to the coal industries of France, Germany and Belgium.

It is a terrible contradiction that, as we approach 1992 and the single European market, which should create fair competition for energy resources, our coal industry is treated in a completely different way from that in France, Germany and mainland Europe. If Cynheidre was situated anywhere on mainland Europe there would have been no question of its closure because it would be judged a highly successful coal mine. The Government, however, believe in closing anything that is slightly uneconomic in the coal industry, even if loss has been incurred over a short time.

Privatisation of electricity will also allow increased imports of coal. It is obvious that the world price of coal moves up and down as does the value of the pound. If interest rates are to be at 13 per cent., it is clear that we will have an over-valued pound, which will make imported coal temporarily cheaper. We all know, however, that just around the corner, the value of the pound will drop. When that happens, cheap coal imports will disappear. If we were substantially dependent on the world market for the supply of our coal, prices would soon escalate because that market is so small. The importation of coal is the wrong way to plan for our long-term energy supply.

British Coal can offer long-term supply contracts. Over the next 10 years, it will hold its price to the retail prices index. What other industry in Britain could offer such a contract? British Coal offers us security of supply, at an economic price, within a long-term deal. It is now conceded that, compared with coal-produced electricity, nuclear electricity is uneconomic.

My first concern is with safety. Even before Chernobyl, the public realised that nuclear power stations could go out of control. The nuclear industry used to say that that happened once every million years. There are about 300 reactors worldwide, most of which have been in operation for only 10 or 20 years, yet there have been two major incidents, at Three Mile Island and Chernobyl. That weighs heavily in the public's mind.

There is a fear that, in privatising the nuclear industry, safety standards will be compromised. The Magnox reactors are reaching the end of their lives. In my part of the world, there is anxiety about the safety of the Trawsfynydd nuclear power station, which is 25 years old. Bits of metal dropped into the reactors's coolant circuits, but a test was postponed. When we hear such news, it leads to worries about these power stations remaining in the public sector, but with privatisation those worries will be greatly increased.

If there is an accident at one of our nuclear power stations, the owners—the new private utilities—will be liable for only £20 million. Chernobyl has cost £20 billion so far. The Government will be left picking up the tab should anything go wrong here. The nuclear industry is a lame duck. The AGR programme is a disaster financially. Dungeness provided only a 1 per cent. load factor last year, 22 years after construction. Hinkley Point is the only reactor acting properly—the performance of the other three is questionable. We are abandoning the AGR technology. The Government have decided to have the world's largest pressurised water reactor, yet generally countries are moving away from the nuclear industry. In privatising electricity, a £6 billion bill will be passed on because of the Government's dogma about nuclear power.

We have no idea of decommissioning costs. Unfortunately, when the nuclear reactors were designed, the authorities did not plan how to take them apart. The amount of £300 million for Berkeley is no better than a guesstimate. It is not an accurate calculation. Many experts think that the cost will be many times that and may even be up to £2 billion per power station. The Government intend underwriting such costs, but the nuclear waste problem is unquantifiable. A recent report said that it would cost about £4 billion to get rid of high-level waste. When we do not know what the technologies will be, we cannot accurately estimate the costs.

The Government have virtually surrendered the case on nuclear economics. Over the past 40 years, nuclear electricity has never been economic. It amounts to a nuclear tax. If the Government legislate for a minimum of 20 per cent. of non-fossil fuel components, they will leave big bills for the public. Nuclear power should be phased out.

I oppose the Bill, first, on the ground of higher prices. Secondly, there is no question but that this is an anti-coal Bill. It will saddle the public with a nuclear industry that they do not want.

8.34 pm

Dr. Michael Clark (Rochford): It is interesting that the hon. Member for Carmarthen (Mr. Williams) thinks that this is an anti-coal Bill. In some respects, the nuclear industry does not come out of it too well either. I welcome the Bill in principle and agree with many of its details. I wish it a speedy and safe passage to Royal Assent.

[Dr. Michael Clark]

The nuclear industry is important because fossil fuels are premium fuels and finite. The nuclear industry is the generating industry for the future. Our great-grandchildren will rely upon it. As my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State said, we need the nuclear industry for diversification. It is a stepping stone to the technology of the future—the fast breeder and fusion. The faster breeder at Dounreay is to close in five years. I deplore that, because some of that plant's technology will die with it. It is a shame that we shall lose that facility.

I hope that the Government will agree to give wholehearted and fulsome support to the European project that follows JET, so that fusion becomes the "great white hope" for electricity generation in the future. The nuclear content of generation is important for those many excellent British engineering contractors that provide so many jobs and have project teams with great expertise. It would be a shame if they were disbanded.

Recently, the nuclear industry has been challenged on prices and costs. In most economic assessments carried out by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, the cost benefit of the nuclear industry has been shown to be doubtful—generally, it is agreed, because of rising costs in the industry associated with commissioning delays, retrospective fitting of safety equipment and poor performance of several nuclear power stations.

There is cheap domestic coal, cheap world coal and cheap oil and gas, although I do not expect that any of the three will stay cheap for long. If the subsidy were taken from coal, the price would increase immediately. The CEGB has confirmed that, with higher interest rates, and particulary with higher rates of return on investment, the coal industry is favoured for generation over the nuclear industry. That is probably because a nuclear power station is more expensive to build than a coal power station. The nuclear power station gets its benefit from cheaper fuel costs. If a greater rate of return is demanded, there will be a disadvantage to the nuclear industry, and we should tend to build more coal than nuclear power stations.

Independent witnesses who gave evidence to the Select Committee on Energy—on which I have the honour and pleasure to serve—said that, because of "commercial discount rates"—they meant rates of return—and the low price of coal, it was unlikely that unsupported companies would build nuclear power stations.

The Bill states that each distribution company in England and Wales should purchase a specified amount of electricity from non-fossil fuel sources. What will happen if that non-fossil fuel quota is substantially filled from Scotland and France, or there is a dramatic increase in the amount of hydro-electricity or geothermal electricity, or a major tidal scheme is brought into operation? When those forms of benign electricity generation are expanded, will there be a decline in nuclear capacity? If so, that will be a great shame and a great disadvantage.

What will happen if there is substantial investment in building private nuclear power stations, despite my earlier comment about rate of return? If private nuclear power stations are built, does that mean that big G, National Power, can shut down some of its existing power stations without having to build more? Does it mean that it will be divested of its monopoly of nuclear power and will thus tend to dispose of its centre of excellence for the nuclear matters that it presently has? If that happens, it will be a great shame.

It is suggested that the regulator might allow distribution companies that are obliged to purchase electricity from nuclear sources to pass on the costs of these obligatory purchases. It should not be allowed to do that. The regulator should be there to prevent the passing on of prices. The nuclear industry must be aware of the cost of generating electricity by nuclear means and must not be shielded by the passing on of costs to the consumer. If that happens, the present nuclear power stations will be cossetted, as is much of the coal industry. If we are not careful, it will mean that privately built nuclear power stations may earn excessive profits by operating a cost-plus policy. We must not allow such a policy.

I shall now return to the closure of Magnox stations. When nuclear stations close, how can we be sure that they will be replaced? We know that all the distribution companies will be obliged to buy electricity generated by nuclear power stations. Will there be an obligation to build a power station to match every one that is shut down? I hope that there is, because otherwise we shall see a decline in the nuclear generating industry. The Secretary of State dealt with decommissioning costs. Either the cost falls on big G, National Power, in which case it will depress the selling price when that company comes to the market, or the Government will pick up the bill. The Secretary of State said that all costs will be borne by the private sector unless there is exceptional or retrospective legislation, in which case the Government will consider whether to help with the cost of decommissioning.

Finally, I should like to go through a quick checklist of items that point to the existence of a case for all nuclear power stations being in one separate company. Whether that company is Government-controlled or private, with the Government having a golden share, can be debated. There is a case for one separate company for the following reasons.

The first is in order to ensure that a percentage of nuclear electricity is purchased by the distribution companies. Secondly, it would guarantee that nuclear-generated electricity is available for purchase. Thirdly, it would undertake the decommissioning and assume its cost and make sure that it is done safely and properly. Fourthly, it would prevent nuclear issues from eroding the selling price of National Power when it comes to the market and prevent the erosion of investors' dividends.

Fifthly, we need to retain a centre of nuclear excellence that is undiluted by the company that owns the nuclear power stations being involved in other forms of generation. That would also enhance the safety aspects of nuclear power. Sixthly, we need to concentrate research and development for the benefit of the nuclear industry, for the scientific training of staff and to ensure Britain's future in the forefront of physics, engineering and chemistry. Seventhly, we need to prevent the true cost of the nuclear industry being concealed. Finally, we need to ensure that public confidence in nuclear electricity continues to develop in the way that it is developing.

Nuclear generation is extremely important for the future of Britain. It is also important that the legislation gets it right, and I hope that the points that I have raised in the short time available to me will be taken carefully into account by the Secretary of State and his Ministers.

8.43 pm

Mr. Thomas McAvoy (Glasgow, Rutherglen): Since the war, the Conservative party has peddled the line that the Labour party is rigid and dogmatic and unable to comprehend the complex nature of modern society in terms other than simply nationalising everything in sight. It has portrayed us as pursuing nationalisation pure and simple because we regard nationalisation as the only model by which we can manage industry and services in modern Britain. These accusations are nothing but dogmatic assertions and reflect nothing of the developing nature of our approach to the issues of how to run giant enterprises for the benefit of the public without allowing them to become remote.

As a Co-operative Member, I have been particularly pleased at the continuing interest of the Labour party in developing an approach to industry and commerce based on the co-operative model. The principles of co-operation are an important part of the wide-ranging and flexible approach to how Labour is prepared to run the economy.

In his speech, the Secretary of State directed a sneering remark at the Co-operative Movement. Apart from the fact that the right hon. Gentleman should be the last person to sneer at anyone, he obviously needs reminding of the dramatic recovery in the trading position of the Co-operative Movement. The Bill contains nothing less than the dogma that says that putting industries and services into the private sector will automatically result in a better-run industry that will provide a better service for the public. I have never taken the view that one type of nationalisation or public ownership is the ultimate answer, but what we are now hearing is the parrot cry of the Conservative party, that private is best.

The Opposition maintain that unfettered private enterprise without public accountability has been responsible for untold misery. The pursuit of profit alone results in industry being run to the detriment of the overwhelming majority of our people. Of course, if privatisation were indeed a successful model, we would need to look at it. Let us look at it and see how the public are being ripped off by the throwaway terms of privatisation. A successful flotation is likely to require either a significant writing down of debts or an increase in charges to consumers.

The first course of action would imply that private investors would gain control of public assets at less than their book cost. Moreover, in the South of Scotland electricity board case, £17 million of these assets have been directly paid for by consumers through their electricity bills. The balance has been funded through borrowing, which again has been serviced by charges to consumers. Since, therefore, there is a direct relationship between the board's existing capital structure and its present charges, the corollary of any debt write-off to asist privatisation is that, if the industry were retained in public ownership, such a write-off would permit a significant reduction in charges to consumers.

The second course of action, increasing charges simply in order to increase the financial rate of return to facilitate privatisation, would clearly be against the interests of consumers. Both the process of privatisation itself and the structure proposed for the privatised industry appear to carry the risk of increased charges for consumers in Scotland. Experience of the gas and telecommunications industries also suggest that there might be changes in the relative weight of charges borne by different categories of consumers following privatisation.

The Government lay great stress on the opportunities created by privatisation for consumers and staff to obtain a stake in the electricity industry. However, the Government have not said what steps they propose to take to ensure that ownership of this key strategic industry remains in domestic hands, and doubts must remain about the attainability of this objective.

Future ownership of the industry is also of relevance in assessing the electricity industry's role in wider energy policy. The Government justify the requirement for the English distribution companies to take a proportion of their power from non-fossil-fuelled generating capacity in terms of the need to ensure diversity of supply and to meet strategic objectives. However, the same tension between short-run considerations and long-term security of fuel supplies is also present in the fossil fuel sector, and is likely to be exacerbated if the electricity generating companies pass into the hands of shareholders and managements who are more concerned with maximising profits in the short run by purchasing fuel from the cheapest sources than with balancing immediate price advantage against wider economic interests and the safeguarding of the long-term availability of supplies.

The recent dispute between the South of Scotland electricity board and British Coal is not an encouraging precedent, since it clearly shows how short-term pressures can conflict with other considerations and how a free market solution to sectoral interests may lead to inefficiencies and external diseconomies. Purchases of foreign coal may offer advantages in the short term to the electricity industry, but apart from the transitional costs resulting from the loss of domestic employment in the mining industry, such a policy could well impose immediate costs on others. For example, increased road haulage of coal from ports in the Strathclyde region to power stations in the east of Scotland would have a quantifiable effect in terms of the costs of extra road damage as well as consequences for other road users and for communities on the routes affected.

In the longer term, by affecting the viability of the indigenous coal industry, such action may also leave final consumers unnecessarily exposed to fluctuations in exchange rates and in world energy markets, where there is a strong link between the prices at which coal and oil are traded internationally, and endanger the balance of fuel sourcing that the Government maintain they are seeking to preserve. The dogma from Government Members of "public bad, private good" is but a parrot cry. I have not heard a good case for privatisation tonight, and I doubt whether anybody else has heard one. I am opposed to the Bill.

8.51 pm

Mr. Michael Stern (Bristol, North-West): The Bill addresses iself to the basic organisation of the electricity supply industry and the challenges that will face the industry for perhaps the next 100 years. Therefore, in looking at the Bill as a whole, it is important that we define the challenges against which we should measure it. We have heard a lot tonight about the challenges to the industry purely within the United Kingdom. There is the challenge of providing cheap electricity. I do not think that

[Mr. Michael Stern]

any of my hon. Friends needs any more convincing that to build in any element of competition must, in the long run, provide cheaper electricity. The history of the past 100 years shows us that our civilisation is based largely on the provision of cheap power.

However, we also have to look at the Bill to see whether it will encourage the provision of electricity by environmentally benign methods, and this point has become increasingly important recently. We can point straight away to the non-fossil fuel requirement in the Bill as a sign of the extent to which the Conservative party regards it as important that we should try to pump less poison gas into the atmosphere.

When we measure the Bill against the challenges outside this place, its importance is increased—*[Interruption.]* If I can be heard over the continuous muttering and yowling from those seated on the Opposition Front Bench, I should point out that we must measure the Bill against the extent to which it will allow us to prevent the production of acid rain and permit us to slow down the warming effect of pumping ever-increasing amounts of hot and non-benign gases into the atmosphere.

In addition—something that dwarfs every other consideration—we have to look at the extent to which the Bill provides an opportunity for the country to play its part in meeting not just our energy needs—those of a developed country with a high standard of living—but those of the developing world. *[Interruption.]* I am aware that those on the Opposition Front Bench are not interested in this, but I believe that the rest of the House is.

In the free market economies of the world, the average per capita consumption of fuel is 4,452 kg of oil equivalent a year. In the command economies such as the USSR, the figure is almost identical—4,472 kg. However, fuel consumption, which determines the standard of living, is very different in the developing world. In Africa, the per capita consumption is 297 kg oil equivalent, which is less than one fifteenth of the power needs that we regard as normal. In Asia, the average is 387 kg—again, a minute percentage of what we regard as essential.

We have to judge the Bill in terms of whether it will aid or hinder us in helping the developed world to meet this huge energy gap which has opened up between our civilised societies and the fuel-poor societies that occupy most of the rest of the world. The Opposition have come up with some nostrums on energy conservation, but energy conservation in the context of the problem that I have just described is like offering a diet sheet to a starving man.

If we are to meet the energy needs of the developing world and to do so without poisoning the atmosphere, we have to make sure that, in organising our electricity industry, we provide the maximum opportunity for the development of benign, non-poisonous technologies, and get those on board as quickly as possible, so that we can make sure that the rest of the world does not have to go through the same process as we did. We went from wood burning, which is their principal source of energy, through the fossil fuel cycle, to arrive at nuclear and renewable technologies. If we force them to go through that same cycle, we shall end up with a poisoned globe. We cannot afford to see the limited supply of fossil fuels left in the world used in this way.

Will the Bill enable our industry to meet the challenges that I have outlined? The Bill will promote competition, and cheapness flows directly from competition. Perhaps more importantly, the Bill will free the industry from the dead hand that it has on it because the Government always have to have a say. The Bill will allow our power engineers and fuel and environmental scientists the opportunity to sell the known expertise of our industry to the rest of the world. *[Laughter.]*

I am sure that the laughter from the Opposition Benches stems from the fact that Opposition Members do not represent constituencies which contain the more developed sections of the industry. In other words, they have no concept of what the industry is capable of achieving. My right hon. and hon. Friends know that the industry has been conspicuously unsuccessful, with its present organisation, in selling British technology to the rest of the world. It has not succeeded in selling the developments of that technology that have taken place here. The Bill will free our industry by providing an incentive to go out and sell. That is a profit motive, which is the best available incentive for the industry.

The Bill will provide and demand new challenges for and of the industry, rather than allow it to relax within the same old mould in which we have allowed things to run for the past 40 years. As such, it deserves the support of the House.

8.59 pm

Mr. Eric Illsley (Barnsley, Central): The proposals in the Bill are another example of the Government's obsession with selling industries into private hands. Once again, public interests will become secondary to the interests of the City and investors. We shall witness again a cheap-rate sell-off. The assets of the electricity supply industry will be sold at well below their value, at about £20 billion.

The supply of electricity is vital to the nation. There are 22 million consumers, both private and within industry, including hospitals and schools. It should not be floated around the stock exchange to speculators and profiteers. Instead, it should be protected. Plans should be made for the future, and the industry should be kept in public ownership so that the United Kingdom can retain a safe and economic supply of electricity.

The Bill will not increase competition. Instead, it will threaten security of supply. It will increase cost to the consumer through the nuclear tax and the nuclear levy. It seems that the taxpayer will have to bail out the nuclear industry, bearing in mind the proposed grants for decommissioning costs.

The idea that the Bill will increase competition is misguided. The CEGB recently told the public inquiry into the Hinkley power station that a minimum of 6 GW of generation will be required over the next 10 years, but we have heard during the debate that that figure could be as high as 15 GW. If there is such a shortage of capacity, or shortfall, there can be no competition. Any new generator will merely be included within the existing capacity. Even if there is sufficient capacity to ensure competition, the Government will ensure that the nuclear industry is not exposed to it. The nuclear tax and nuclear levy will lead to funding for nuclear power stations, and that is unlikely to come from private investment.

The Government will give grants to generators to cover the cost of decommissioning. This will cosset the nuclear industry against its unpopularity and the likelihood that it will be shunned by investors who will not take on the inherent risks.

We have heard this evening that there can be no competition at the point of consumption. Area boards cannot be duplicated. As members of the Select Committee on Energy heard, there cannot be two switches in every home. Where is the alleged competition going to come from? There will be only limited competition in generation. There will merely be a duopoly. We have heard of the mysterious 20 companies that are ready and willing to set up within the industry, but they have not yet been identified. We are told, however, that they are there. Even if that is so, there will still be only the duopoly at the outset. There will be the French link, but as we have seen in the past, that is likely to be cut off at any time by the French when their power requirements demand.

The main benefit from competition should be choice for the consumer, but there is no choice in the Bill for the United Kingdom consumer. We have heard that there cannot be competition or choice at the point of consumption. The only benefit that could come from privatisation is lower prices. The Secretary of State has only recently increased prices, and we are likely to see further price increases as a result of the nuclear levy. As I have said, competition cannot be introduced, and it is unlikely that we shall enjoy lower prices.

Sir Eldon Griffiths (Bury St. Edmunds): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Illsley: No, I shall not give way.

It is apparent that the cost of nuclear power is far in excess of the cost of coal generation. In evidence to the Hinkley inquiry, the CEGB has admitted that nuclear power could be up to one and a half times as expensive as coal generation. With public sector rates of return of about 5 per cent., coal and nuclear power are neck and neck. Given a private sector rate of return of more than 8 per cent., or perhaps as much as 15 per cent., the balance swings dramatically in favour of coal.

The argument for nuclear power is based on the need for diversity of fuels and security of supply. Both fuels can be achieved without privatisation. The cost of diversity in the form of the pressurised water reactor programme, according to the Council for the Protection of Rural England, would be £432 million a year, and that cost would be passed on to the consumer. The same study showed that simply increasing coal stocks by 2 million tonnes would give the same security of supply as investing in PWRs. The costs of nuclear energy are far in excess of those of coal generation, as the Government have more or less admitted by their support for private Bills to increase coal importing facilities, yet they will still not expose the nuclear industry to even limited competition.

Many other costs will become apparent. For instance, large industrial customers will be able to contract directly with generators: some large industries, indeed, may themselves become generators. The successors to the area boards could lose out on large industrial contracts. Industrial customers account for some 52 per cent. of the total consumption on my area board, the Yorkshire electricity board. If it were to lose those customers, the adverse effect on the board would be huge. Twelve area boards will become public energy suppliers. What of the risk of takeovers, reductions or foreign involvement? Again, the costs will be passed on to ordinary consumers.

A major consideration will be the effect on the British coal industry. It is apparent that one of the Bill's sidelines is to kick the industry again. The Government have never lost an opportunity to try to restrict the industry as far as possible; now there will be further pressure on British Coal, further colliery closures and job losses, although British Coal has increased its productivity by some 70 per cent. over the past three years—a massive contribution.

Only recently, British Coal's half-yearly account announced an operating profit of £119 million, yet at the same time its chairman announced further redundancies. Profits would have been higher had British Coal not been obliged to pay £700 million to the CEGB in price reductions based on the international coal price. Those reductions were forced on British Coal because world prices were artificially low and could not be sustained. Prices would have been increased had the CEGB delved into the international market.

At present, the country cannot import enough coal to satisfy its total energy needs. The £700 million was a subsidy to the CEGB to ensure its profitability in the run-up to the Bill. The Government have taken every opportunity to attack and dismantle the British coal industry over the past 10 years, and they have not lost the opportunity provided by the Bill.

The Select Committee on Energy recommended in its report, which has been referred to several times, that long-term coal contracts be placed before privatisation to ensure the stability of the British coal industry and to give some stability to the industry before privatisation. Those contracts should be for British coal, not for South African, Colombian, Australian or Korean coal. The coal-fired power stations that were proposed for Kingsnorth, West Burton and Fawley have been postponed because of the uncertainty that hangs over their future. The CEGB believes that there would be difficulty in selling output from those stations. The costs of nuclear power are ever increasing, because of decommissioning and construction costs, so there will be a long-term future for coal and it would be short-sighted of the Government to allow the British coal industry to be overtaken and run down in favour of foreign suppliers.

On the Order Paper is a motion in the names of myself and four other hon. Members who were members of the Select Committee on Energy. Members of that Committee recommended in the report that the Bill should be referred to a Special Standing Committee. We have heard this evening that certain members of the Committee declined to put their names to that motion on the basis, perhaps, that they were already aware that the Department of Energy had expressed an opinion that it did not want the Bill to go before a Special Standing Committee. Those hon. Members did not presumably, want to be associated with a motion that went against the opinions of the Department. I ask hon. Members to support the motion when it comes before the House, thereby supporting the idea that this important Bill should go to a Special Standing Committee.

9.12 pm

Mr. Roger King (Birmingham, Northfield): Twice during the course of the debate, the hon. Member for Aberdeen, North (Mr. Hughes)—who is not in his place at the moment, which I fully understand—has referred to an aside that I might have made about the fact that, in effect, I thought that the proceeds from the privatisation of an industry such as the electricity industry would be put to very good use by the Government. The Opposition have again illustrated their Luddite attitude towards the new economic regime that most of the world is entering and of which we, as a country, are one of the leaders. We cannot go back to 1947 when we had a war-ravaged economy, in which there was no personal wealth to be distributed in the community and no pension funds or bank balances with which people could invest choice in industry and commerce.

Times have changed since then. We have a substantial amount of economic growth and we have large amounts of investment, which have been accrued by pension funds. We have the opportunity, therefore, for the state to divest itself of many of the undertakings that it has taken upon itself over the past 40 years. It is right and proper to consider electricity as a basis for further implementation of the programme.

I am not surprised that the Opposition are concerned about the future because, with the announcement of further privatisation—in water and electricity—in the Gracious Speech, we are now well on the way to fulfilling our objective of handing back to the people and to the community the operation of all those industries that the state has decided that it could do better than anybody else, at some stage over the past 50 years or so.

I welcome the Bill. It is innovative and imaginative and I am sure that it will prove to be effective. Those people who say that there are problems are the self-same people who said that we could not privatise the airports. They said that we could not make public companies out of municipal airports and that they would not work, they would go out of business and would be of no use to the community. We have seen what a success the British Airports Authority has been and what a success Manchester, Birmingham and Newcastle airports have been under the new regime. It is nonsense to suggest that privatisation and a more rigid discipline in running some of our ex-municipal assets cannot prove effective.

My hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State played a leading part in presenting to Parliament the Bill that deregulated buses. Opposition Members argued, "No one else in the Western world has privatised their buses. It cannot and will not work for the community. No one will want to buy the services; there will be no investment and no competition." [HON. MEMBERS: "Claptrap."] It was the same old claptrap, as my hon. Friends so clearly say. Two years later, we know what nonsense that argument was, as bus deregulation has proved a substantial success. It has brought with it competition and new services at far less cost to the user. Yet according to the Opposition it could not be done.

There is clearly an analogy between buses and electricity. Take the west midlands, for example. The deregulation of bus services has resulted in one prime operator—West Midlands Travel—retaining about 96 per cent. of the service. The new operators have not proved very successful in wresting routes away from the original operator. Why is that? It is not because anyone has regulated the system or prohibited new operators from coming in but because the prime operator fears the possibility of competition. The law says that competition is allowed but competition has not shown itself because the original operator has become so efficient and effective in providing what the community wants that it has scared off new operators. I believe that the self-same policy will work for electricity.

Mr. Salmond: Is not there a difference in entry costs between running a bus and building a power station?

Mr. King: The hon. Gentleman will soon realise that costs will come down dramatically as a result of the opening up of the market for power station generation. As a result of privatisation, the industry, which has already committed itself to substantial power creation, will be able to sell its electricity on to the area boards, which it has not been able to do easily until now.

The regime that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State proposes is eminently workable. Naturally, I should have preferred more of a break-up of some of the operating companies. For example, I should have liked Birmingham to have bought its power from Trent Valley Power and Light, providing an opportunity for the coal stations in the Trent valley to operate as one unit and to sell electricity to anyone who wanted it. I understand the principle of creating the little and big generators as two organisations, which will attract investment from private sector and trade union funds and, inevitably, from elsewhere in Europe. The system that my right hon. Friend proposes will work, and it will work well.

Perhaps one question mark hangs over the proposals, in the form of the nuclear element. One way forward might have been for nuclear energy to be taken on one side, allowing the big and little generators to come to the market free from the nuclear legacy that they are to inherit. That is not to say that nuclear energy could not at some stage have come back into the market place under a reconstituted regime, and once its problems had been solved. From the investors' point of view, however, the little or big generator may not prove so exciting with the nuclear industry attached to it as it would without. Time will tell. Great strides are being made in the nuclear industry and it will account for a substantial part of energy creation in the future.

The White Paper states that the object of privatisation is to eliminate a large amount of interference in day-to-day management over the running of the industry. I am a little unhappy that there appears to be more regulation than, ideally, I personally would like. However, I feel sure that, in Committee, my right hon. and hon. Friends in the Department will spell out in detail just how little is that regulation. To succeed, we must encourage as much freedom of development as we can.

My right hon. Friend said that the obligation to supply will remain. However, although clause 15(1) states:

"a public electricity supplier shall, upon being required to do so by the owner or occupier of any premises",

clause 16(2)(c) says that an exception is when

"it is not reasonable in all the circumstances for him to be required to do so."

We would welcome clarification of that point. It should be a right to be supplied with electricity in as many cases as possible, although I am sure that there are circumstances, even today, that make that impossible.

The hon. Member for Barnsley, Central (Mr. Illsey) mentioned direct contracts between generators and customers. There are opportunities for large car plants, blast furnace industries, smelting, aluminium and other foundry industries to do a deal with generators, which will be welcome. I applaud that proposal, but we must ensure that in taking such sales out of the area boards, arrangements for compensation are made so that the boards' remaining users will not be penalised too heavily by the removal of a substantial element of business.

However, I suspect that taking certain users out of the board and allowing them to make direct deals will concern only a small percentage—those depending to an enormous extent on electricity for their processes, such as aluminium smelting, where electricity can be their highest single cost factor. I am sure that opting out will be widely welcomed by many industries in the west midlands and elsewhere.

With those few small reservations, I congratulate my right hon. Friend and look forward to the Bill reaching the statute book as soon as possible.

9.21 pm

Mr. Jimmy Hood (Clydesdale): In my usual polite way, I have given thought to the best way of describing the Bill. The most polite expression I can think of is that it is a treacherous Bill. My view has been reinforced by comments made by the hon. Member for Rochford (Dr. Clark) who, in referring to the mining industry, spoke of it as cossetted and protected. That comment is insulting to an industry that has improved its productivity by 50 per cent. in the last four years, and says more about the Government's dogma against the mining industry. The Electricity Bill is very much an anti-mining industry Bill.

This is the Government who preach against monopolies, but their Bill proposes creating a most dangerous private cartel. While preaching the gospel according to the consumer, the Government are creating a situation in which the consumer will have to foot the Bill for the fat cats of the City. The Bill is not about the best way to supply energy or the efficiency of power supplies: it is more of the same poison from the politics of dogma. The Government's whole approach to the public sector is one of hostility. Regardless of the service provided, the Government say, "If it is provided by the State, we shall sell it off to our fat cats in the City."

Right hon. and hon. Members will recall the late Viscount Stockton, a former Conservative Prime Minister, condemning the present Government for selling off the family silver. The present Government are the "spiv brokers of the century". There are three balls hanging outside 10 Downing street, the home of the supreme pawnbroker. Bad as that is, even more offensive is the effect this Bill will have on the consumer, the electricity industry and the workers within the energy industry. Its effects will devastate the mining industry. As a Member representing a Scottish constituency, I say that it will be especially devastating to the Scottish mining industry.

The Bill spells the death of the Scottish mining industry. In 1964, I joined the mining industry in Scotland as an apprentice engineer and I was promised a long future. Within four years, I had to get on the proverbial "Tebbit bike" to go down to continue my career in the Nottinghamshire coalfield. Again, I was told that there was a safe and secure future for coal there.

Then cheap oil flooded the oil markets. When miners' leaders warned Governments of the dangers of closing pits and giving the energy monopoly to the oil sheikhs, they were laughed at. In the early 1970s, the Arabs cornered the market and quadrupled oil prices. The effect on Western economies was devastating, and we are still feeling the pinch of selling our energy industry to the oil sheikhs.

Sadly, we are going down the same road again. We are closing our mines and allowing the foreign producers of coal to corner our markets. At the same time, we are expanding the nuclear power industry, with its high costs and shady safety record. Nuclear power is the great "That Was" for the Government.

The one thing that we know about the Government is that they will buy coal from anywhere—South Africa, Colombia or China. They will buy coal from anywhere, but they will not support the British mining industry.

Perhaps the Minister of State, Scottish Office will tell us who will foot the bill for the £2·5 billion owed by the SSEB and the Hydro Board. We are interested to know that.

Much has been said in the debate about efficiency and costs. When British Airways was privatised, we were told that writing off debts was an incentive to the private sector. It would be good if the Government had the same faith in the public sector. If they wrote off the debts of the mining industry, which are more than £4 per tonne, that would create incentives for public industry. But the Government are not interested in public industry. They do not consider the public good; they are interested only in private good, monopolies and fat cats in the City.

It is ironic that we are having the Second Reading of the Bill in the same week as the miners in the Nottingham coalfields have finally rumbled the stiletto gang, the leaders of the Union of Democratic Mineworkers in Nottingham. We are told today that 56 per cent. of them voted against the latest pay offer. Last week, there were allegations of ballot rigging, and the word in the Nottingham coalfields today is that the vote would have been 80 per cent. were it not for that. Even in Nottingham, the miners have woken up to this Government. It gives me no joy to say to the Nottingham miners, "I told you so," but we certainly did. The hon. Member for Sherwood (Mr. Stewart) is not in his place. I remember him sneaking through picket lines during the miners' strike, going to hotels, buying dinner for UDM leaders and saying, "We are the party that supports you."

As a result of the Bill, pits will close in the Nottinghamshire coalfields, as well as the Scottish, Welsh and peripheral coalfields. Pits in and around the Gentleman's constituency, including Bilsthorpe, Sherwood, Annesley, Ollerton and Bevercotes, are threatened by the Bill. We are not talking now about economic pits; we are talking about power stations that can be fed from ports that are supported by the high priestess herself, the Prime Minister. She voted for the closure motion in respect of the North Killingholme Cargo Terminal Bill to build a coal terminal on Humberside.

The message to the hon. Member for Sherwood is that he was promised West Burton as a gimmick, but nobody believes that it will be built. Coal and coal miners' jobs will go sailing down the Humber, at the same time as Tory Members in the midlands are selling the miners down the river. The Bill will cost the hon. Member for Sherwood his seat, and when the electorate realise what the Government have done, the Bill will cost them their office.

9.30 pm

Mr. John Maxton (Glasgow, Cathcart): During his opening speech, the Secretary of State suggested that tomorrow would be Scottish day—presumably implying that today was English day. He was wrong, because four Scottish Members have already spoken, I am replying on behalf of the Opposition and a Scottish Minister is replying on behalf of the Government.

Nevertheless, I hope that tomorrow will indeed prove to be a Scottish day because that will mean very few contributions from the Conservative Benches. During today's discussion on the privatisation of the Scottish electricity supply industry, not a single Scottish Tory Back Bencher has been in the Chamber. The Minister has been here most of the time, but the Secretary of State for Scotland has not bothered to be here for most of the debate. Of course, there are few Scottish Tory Members. Indeed, following a walk-out, neither has any Scottish Democrat been here to listen to the debate.

There should have been a separate Scottish Bill dealing with privatisation in Scotland because the Scottish industry is different and separate. It is organised differently, it will be privatised differently and different problems will arise for Scotland. In response to my hon. Friend the Member for Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley (Mr. Foulkes), the Secretary of State said that, because the various areas of the industry were nationalised under one Bill, they should be privatised under one Bill. In fact, they were nationalised under the control of the then Minister for Fuel and Power; they were only separated and the Scottish boards put under the responsibility of the Secretary of State for Scotland by a Tory Government in 1955. The Secretary of State should have got that little fact right—[HON. MEMBERS: "He did."] He did not; he was wrong.

The Secretary of State is, as usual, dodging his responsibilities and refusing to be accountable to the Scottish Members of Parliament. He is allowing his junior Minister to take the Bill through Parliament because he knows that he cannot man a Standing Committee to deal with a separate Scottish Bill. He simply does not have enough Back Benchers. It is insulting to the House and to Scottish Members that our business should be conducted in that way. It has nothing to do with nationalism or devolution; it has everything to do with how this House treats its Scottish Members and Scottish business. If there is to be separate Scottish legislation and separate Scottish administration, the House must learn to deal with that properly.

The Secretary of State for Scotland said that the reason for having just one Bill was that its regulatory powers would be common to England, Scotland and Wales. However, as soon as the Scottish press suggested that the regulatory powers would come under the Secretary of State for Energy, the Secretary of State for Scotland quickly denied that and said that the regulatory powers for Scotland would come under his Department. I hope that the Minister will clarify that.

As I understand it, the Bill provides for a director for the regulatory board. Presumably, there will be a deputy director seated in Edinburgh looking after Scottish matters. It will be an odd set-up if the deputy of the board is responsible not to his boss, but to a different Secretary of State. I hope that the Minister will take the opportunity to explain it, but that is the way it appears at present. We shall have the odd separation of regulation between Scotland and England as a result of what the Secretary of State is doing.

Why should we privatise the Scottish boards? What arguments can there possibly be for privatising? The Secretary of State for Energy tries to suggest that the reason for privatising the English boards was to introduce an element of competition and to put into the boards the idea at least that local companies could compete where they get their generation supplies. In an eloquent and logical speech, my hon. Friend the Member for Sedgefield (Mr. Blair) successfully demolished that argument. Even if the arguments of the Secretary of State for Energy stand up in England and Wales—in my view, they do not—they certainly do not stand up in Scotland, where two vertically integrated companies, both generating and distributing companies, are to be established.

There is to be no competition for the consumer. There will not even be competition for generation. Each company will have its own defined areas and its own defined generators. There is to be a split-up between the two companies about which is to get which piece of generating capacity and which is not. The Cruachan power station is to be given to the South of Scotland electricity board. Half the capacity of the Peterhead station is to be given to the South of Scotland electricity board. The Hydro Board is to get so much from the SSEB in return. It is all to be carved up before privatisation even takes place. There is to be no competition.

The hon. Member for Birmingham, Northfield (Mr. King) gave the game away. He said that one area in which there could just possibly be competition in England, Wales and Scotland is among the big industrial users of electricity, and that they might compete and try to get a better deal from another generating board. He said that, if that happens, we must ensure that the company that was supplying before remains viable. He wants regulation and control and some way in which competition is stopped. He does not regard competition as beneficial in the longer term to the companies that are operating.

What on earth is the argument in Scotland? What argument can the Minister of State, Scottish Office provide to show what competitive element will be introduced in Scotland to justify privatising an industry that the people of Scotland have clearly said that they do not wish to be privatised?

I refer not just to the average consumer but to political parties in Scotland, with the sole exception of the Tory party, which, according to the last opinion poll, had 19 per cent. support in Scotland. Even the CBI in Scotland, major industries and the Hydro Board do not want the industry to be privatised. Perhaps the only people who want it to be privatised are members of the SSEB board, presumably because they see themselves getting much larger salaries as a result of privatisation. There is no logical argument for this privatisation taking place.

In his evidence to the Committee, the Secretary of State —I have also heard the Minister speaking on television, certainly within the past fortnight and several times before that—said that the reason for the privatisation of Scottish boards was to transfer control of the Scottish electricity industry from the Treasury in London to Scotland.

It is a remarkable indictment of the Secretary of State and the Minister if they are now saying that they do not control the Scottish electricity industry, have no power over it at present, and do not wish to control it. That is

what they have been saying over the past week. They say that ownership of the Scottish electricity supply will be transferred back to Scotland. The Minister tonight and the Secretary of State tomorrow had better tell the House and the Scottish people exactly how they will ensure that the ownership of the Scottish electricity industry will be in the hands of Scots immediately after privatisation and will remain there.

It is interesting that the Secretary of State for Energy did not mention a golden share. The phrase did not cross his lips. Over the past few days we have heard many rumours and much speculation from the Scottish Office about golden shares. Golden shares can only be about ensuring that the companies do not fall into foreign hands, but the Government do not consider England to be foreign. [HON. MEMBERS: "Do you?"] No, I do not. As the Secretary of State and the Scottish people own and run the Scottish electricity supply industry, the Secretary of State for Scotland must give guarantees that the industry will remain in Scottish hands, but he cannot do that.

The chairman of the SSEB, Donald Miller, has said that there are not sufficient funds among Scottish investors to purchase the Scottish companies. How on earth will the Government ensure that the Scottish electricity supply industry, at present controlled by the Secretary of State, will remain in Scotland? I do not think that they can. They have no means of ensuring that, whether through a golden share or whatever. Therefore, we are likely to see the Scottish electricity supply industry, which the Scottish people want to see in the hands of Scots, passed from Scottish hands into the control of others. We do not want that.

If the Scottish companies must be privatised, the Secretary of State must ensure that they are and will remain viable and that prices do not rise. The Secretary of State for Energy and Conservative Members keep saying that competition will force down prices, but Donald Miller is on record as saying that as a result of privatisation prices in Scotland will rise. The Government must tell us how the Scottish industry will remain viable.

Unlike England and Wales, Scotland generates more electricity than it needs and at present it sells electricity to the English boards. If it is not to make a loss, and we do not want to see Scottish power stations, particularly coal burn stations, closing, it will have to sell much more of its over-capacity. We must sell much more if we are not to see dramatic price increases and many people being made redundant. As we shall have to sell much more, the interconnector between Scotland and England will have to be improved to ensure the passage of supply. Who will pay for that? Who will raise the cash to ensure that that interconnector will be put in place quickly? It is a searing indictment of the CEGB and the Government that the interconnector has not been upgraded in the past few years. In the first few years, Scottish boards may well be in serious difficulties because of that, and they will not be able to sell sufficient power to England.

The question that we must ask is, who will be paying for the interconnector? If the Scottish boards are left to pay for it, the price of electricity to Scottish consumers will increase because they will have to find the money to pay for that. If the CEGB or the new local companies in England are to pay for it, they will have to increase prices. Or are the Government to pay for it? Can we have a clear statement from the Government as to whether they will pay?

Finally, because this is much more of a problem in Scotland than in England and Wales, we must know who will bear the costs of decommissioning. Donald Miller has made it clear that if the Scottish boards are left to carry the full cost of decommissioning the nuclear power stations, they will be "unsellable". Those were Donald Miller's words, not mine. Again, the Government must make it clear exactly how they will make the companies sellable.

Opposition Members believe that there is no need for privatisation. The electricity supply industry is efficient. It serves a social and economic purpose. Competition will not be introduced as a result of the legislation. The Bill is wrong in principle and will be wrong in practice. I ask my hon. Friends to vote against it.

9.45 pm

The Minister of State, Scottish Office (Mr. Ian Lang): My hon. Friend the Member for Worcestershire, South (Mr. Spicer), the Under-Secretary of State for Energy, will reply to tomorrow's debate, so perhaps it will help the House if I now reply to some of the points that have been raised. I shall deal first with the points raised by the hon. Member for Glasgow, Cathcart (Mr. Maxton), who repeated the complaint of Opposition Members, that we have heard much of in Scotland in recent weeks—that there should be a separate Scottish Bill.

It is an interesting doctrine that, because the Labour party is opposed to a piece of legislation, it wants two Bills on that subject so that it can oppose the legislation twice. Perhaps that is to conceal the differences that may exist between Scottish and English Opposition Members on this issue; but, on reflection, that is unlikely, as no differences on this matter could exceed the differences that already exist within the Scottish Labour party on almost every issue facing us today.

There are differences between some of the provisions in the Bill relating to Scotland and those relating to England. However, they reflect the distinctive characteristics of the electricity industry in those countries, sensitively recognised, which presumably is what Opposition Members would wish. They do not reflect any difference in the underlying philosophy. The Scottish industry has much in common with that south of the border. Therefore, it is entirely right and logical, in provisions on issues such as safety, security of supply or regulation, where there is much that is the same in the two countries, that there should be one Bill to avoid duplication.

We should put the Bill in its proper perspective. It privatises 15 undertakings in one piece of legislation. In 1947, the then Labour Government nationalised not 15 but 561 different undertakings throughout Scotland, England and Wales—in one Bill. Fifty-three Scottish undertakings—53 centres of Scottish enterprise and decision-making—were wiped out. The control of their activities was taken south to the Central Electricity Authority, which was established in England by that Labour Government, along with 500 more from England and Wales. So let us hear no more humbug from the Labour party about wanting more than one Bill, when we are bringing the Scottish industry back to Scotland.

The hon. Member for Cathcart complained that five Conservative Back Benchers from Scotland have not been present. I should point out that 40 of his Back Benchers from Scotland are not here either, including, for much of

[Mr. Ian Lang]

the debate, his hon. Friend the Member for Glasgow, Garscadden (Mr. Dewar) who will open the debate for the Opposition tomorrow.

My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Energy made it clear that the Electricity Bill will enable the guiding principles and aims set out in our White Papers early this year to become reality.

The Bill marks a turning point in the history of the electricity industry. No longer will there be cosy arrangements between public sector bodies, which mask the real costs of running the industry and provide no incentives for customers and employees to invest in the industry's future. We shall be shaking free the shackles of State control, providing new opportunities for competition and making the electricity industry subject to the rigours of the private sector.

My right hon. Friend the Member for Selby (Mr. Alison) rightly pointed to the extent of competition that is to be introduced by the Bill. One of his examples was the access of major industrial users in England and Wales direct to the generators——

Mr. Maxton *rose——*

Mr. Lang: No, I shall not give way, because I am replying to a point raised by my right hon. Friend the Member for Selby.

I am happy to reassure my right hon. Friend, who asked whether the Bill provides cover for that purpose, that it does and that that will be achieved through the licence arrangements for which clause 7(2) provides the powers.

My right hon. Friend also asked about Drax being protected in terms of the costs for fitting the fluid gas desulphurisation plant. I must say that, while the details are still under consideration, I assure my hon. Friend that our aim is to ensure that stations fitted with fluid gas desulphurisation equipment will not be disadvantaged in the running of the merit order. My right hon. Friend referred to the dramatic improvement of 75 per cent. in productivity at Selby and pointed to the coal to Drax being delivered at the rate of 38,000 tonnes a day, to which Lord Marshall said that the power station was inextricably linked, when he prophesied a bright future for it.

Coal can have a bright future in the electricity generating industry, provided that it is competitive. The hon. Member for Midlothian (Mr. Eadie) suggested that coal was in fact cheaper than nuclear power. That is not the case in Scotland. The SSEB's recent all-in cost figures showed nuclear at 1·9p per unit compared with fossil fuel at 2·4p per unit.

Mr. Eadie: What about the billions of pounds of capital debt that the SSEB has built up? The fact is that the Government are now considering writing that off to assist privatisation.

Mr. Lang: The position of the debt in the SSEB and the North of Scotland Hydro-Electric Board will be dealt with when it comes to flotation, and the Government will consider to what extent that debt should be converted into equity or debentures in order to maximise the return to the taxpayer. Therefore, the hon. Member for Midlothian does not have a strong point there.

To those who said that coal was not guilty as a pollutant, I say that that may be true in Scotland, where to a large extent low-sulphur content coal is used, but I hope that they welcome the desulphurising equipment now being installed in power stations at a cost of £1·6 billion. As my hon. Friend the Member for Bristol, North-West (Mr. Stern) said, nuclear energy in this context will be environmentally preferable.

Coal can be competitive. Indeed, it is precisely that fear of competition presented by the Bill that causes hon. Gentlemen who represent coal mining constituencies to express their anxieties so readily.

Mr. Hardy *rose——*

Mr. Lang: I shall not give way, because the hon. Gentleman has not been present during the debate, and I have many points to which to refer.

The hon. Member for Aberdeen, North (Mr. Hughes) raised the question of wider share ownership. I must say to him that, far from discouraging wider share ownership, the Bill will be one more opportunity to increase share ownership in Scotland and throughout the United Kingdom.

Mr. Robert Hughes: It has failed in the past.

Mr. Lang: It has not failed in the past. In Scotland since 1979 the number of individual shareholders has doubled. This is an opportunity for consumers and for employees in the Scottish industry to gain access to ownership of part of their industry.

It was my hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Northfield (Mr. King) who drew the analogy with buses and told us of the success which had been achieved by deregulation and privatisation. When we announced our plans to privatise buses in Scotland, the hon. Member for Garscadden said that the measure was not wanted. Yet the next day the newspapers were full of pictures of employers seeking anxiously to establish themselves as candidates for employee buy-outs. That is the enthusiasm that exists in Scotland for ownership of the private bus sector.

The Bill will bring about effective change and improved performance in one of our most important and dynamic industries. The cost-plus era for the electricity consumer will come to an end, and I am happy to reassure my hon. Friend the Member for Rochford (Dr. Clark) of that. Decisions about the supply of electricity will be driven by customer needs. The director general will promote competition—the best guarantee of customers' interests. He will oversee prices and protect customers' interests where natural monopolies remain. Security and safety of supply will be maintained. Customers will get new rights and not just safeguards; and all who work in the industry will be able to have a direct stake in their future, with new career opportunities and freedom to manage their affairs without Government interference.

Opposition Members are aware of the benefits which will flow from our proposals, even though they dare not admit as much. Instead, they resort to idle and misplaced speculation about higher electricity prices, which have absolutely no foundation in the facts.

My hon. Friend the Member for Erewash (Mr. Rost) was right to say that the competition of new entrants to the generating industry was beginning to introduce downward pressure on prices.

Many of my hon. Friends have drawn attention to the benefits that the Government's proposals will bring to electricity consumers, to the industry and its employees.

The hon. Member for Sedgefield (Mr. Blair) predicted price rises—predictions made, of course, before the Bill was published—although that did not make much difference, given his contribution today. In his predictions he included price increases that had already taken place. He then added a dividend figure for investors, overlooking the fact that the industry already makes a return on its assets, which will form the basis of that dividend, even though that return is below the rate of return proposed by the Labour Government in 1978.

The hon. Gentleman also added a wholly speculative figure, unfounded in fact, for the fossil fuel levy. He ignored the fact that we are already paying for nuclear generation and that the purpose of the levy is to maintain that level of generation and to make the costs transparent.

Perhaps the hon. Gentleman was at his most sickening when he referred to the heating costs of the poor. Apart from all the extra heating allowances that the Government have introduced in the past nine years, the hon. Gentleman seems to have forgotten that, between 1974 and 1979, prices under the Labour Government rose by 180 per cent., a real terms increase of 20 per cent. In the past five years, under the Government, prices have fallen by 9 per cent. in real terms in Scotland and by 8 per cent. in England and Wales.

Mr. Robert Hughes *rose*——

Mr. Lang: No, I shall not give way.

The hon. Member for Sedgefield was notably silent on whether or not his party is still committed to phasing out nuclear energy, given the increased costs of some 30 per cent. that would result. He asked us why we should privatise; the debate has been permeated by contributions from the Labour party asking why we bother. That is typical of the inert, negative and complacent attitude that the Labour party adopts to such important economic issues. Why bother? If we had not bothered to fight inflation it would still be averaging more than 15·5 per cent., as it did under the Labour Government. If we had not bothered to turn our attention to the state of the economy, unemployment would still be rising, following its doubling under the Labour Government. Industrial relations would still be at their worst ever and probably the IMF would still be running the country.

It is precisely because we have bothered that public expenditure is now under control and falling. It is because we have bothered that taxation is now down, unemployment is falling and, in terms of manufacturing productivity, we have moved from the bottom to the top of the league. It is because we have bothered that we have had seven years of sustained growth and rising prosperity. It is because we have bothered that so many of the nationalised industries are now viable, successful and revenue-generating in private hands.

Mr. Maxton *rose*——

Mr. Lang: No, I am sorry: I shall not give way.

Before we bothered, those nationalised industries were a drain on the taxpayer. They were inefficient, uncompetitive and lacking in investment. With electricity, as with the other industries, there are more benefits to come, following even on the efficiency that has led to the fall in prices in real terms in the past few years.

We have bothered because we care. It is because we have bothered that the failures of the Labour Government are our successes as well as the promised successes of the future.

Our proposals will push electricity costs downwards by ensuring that a competitive environment is created within a Great Britain market for electricity. We shall improve the quality and timing of major investment decisions. The hon. Member for Sedgefield complained about 80 per cent. over-capacity at the time of nationalisation. In Scotland, present over-capacity is not 80 per cent., but 100 per cent. That has been caused by nationalisation and public ownership.

Our proposals will enable larger electricity customers to contract directly with suppliers of their own choice. I do not accept the problem that the hon. Member for Wandsbeck (Mr. Thompson) identified regarding the use of the grid. We shall create new opportunities for private generators to contract with public electricity suppliers or direct with large customers. We shall require public electricity suppliers and transmission licence holders to offer fair terms for carrying electricity generated.

As well as promoting competition, the Government's proposals combine the benefits of security of supply with enhanced consumer rights. The proposals will ensure that, in England and Wales, the electricity consumer continues to benefit from diversity of supply by requiring each public electricity supplier to purchase a specified minimum amount of non-fossil fuel generating capacity. In Scotland, the substantive investment already made in non-fossil fuel generating capacity makes such a requirement unnecessary for the foreseeable future.

We have made clear our intention to create a modern, competitive industry throughout Great Britain in which the public will have a major stake and which will be responsive to the needs of customers.

Privatisation of electricity will offer real benefits and new prospects for the customer, the employee and the economy as a whole. We believe that privatisation of the electricity industry will provide new and exciting opportunities. The Bill represents a major step forward in the Government's privatisation programme. Privatisation of the electricity industry will be good for the consumer, the taxpayer, the industry and its employees and the economy as a whole.

Our proposals will secure even greater efficiency in the provision of a service that is vital to the future economic prosperity of this country. They will provide new opportunities for ownership by consumers, employees and financial institutions, so that they can acquire a stake in one of our most modern and important industries——

It being Ten o'clock, the debate stood adjourned.

Debate to be resumed tomorrow.

SITTINGS OF THE HOUSE

Ordered,

That—

(1) this House do meet on Thursday 22nd December at half-past Nine o'clock;

(2) notwithstanding the provisions of paragraph (2) of Standing Order No. 17 (Questions to Members), no Questions shall be taken, provided that at eleven o'clock Mr. Speaker may interrupt the proceedings in order to permit questions to be asked which are in his opinion of an urgent character and

relate either to matters of public importance or to the arrangement of business, statements to be made by Ministers, or personal explanations to be made by Members; and

(3) at half-past Three o'clock Mr. Speaker do adjourn the House without putting any Question, provided that this House shall not adjourn until Mr. Speaker shall have reported the Royal Assent to any Acts agreed upon by both Houses. —*[Mr. John M. Taylor]*

PETITION No. 2

10 pm

Mr. Simon Hughes (Southwark and Bermondsey): I wish to present a petition on behalf of more than 4,000 people who are worried about the South East Thames regional health authority's plans to close the physiotherapy schools at Guy's hospital in my constituency and at St. Thomas's hospital in the constituency of the hon. Member for Vauxhall (Mr. Holland), who supports the petitioners, as I do.

The two schools of physiotherapy are rightly renowned for their excellence. The number of signatories to the petition and the amount of correspondence received not only by me and the hon. Member for Vauxhall but by many hon. Members pay tribute to the reputations of those schools in the eyes of their present and former students. Quite apart from the wisdom of closing two schools with a proven record to set up a new and untried department on the south coast, the petitioners are worried that this relocation can do nothing but increase the acute shortage of physiotherapists in London, where already 12·8 per cent. of posts are unfilled.

The petition concludes:

we wish to express our extreme concern at the proposals adopted by South East Thames Regional Health Authority, to close the schools of physiotherapy at Guy's and St. Thomas's Hospitals. We believe this will result in a deterioration of the standard of patient care currently available in the region, and further exacerbate the existing shortage of staff in the capital.

Wherefore your petitioners pray that your honourable House will note our concern and seek to oppose these proposals.

That is my wish and that of the petitioners and the hon. Member for Vauxhall.

To lie upon the Table.

Hormone Products (EC Ban)

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Maclean.]*

10.2 pm

Mr. Ken Hargreaves (Hyndburn): The EC Council of Agricultural Ministers agreed in December 1985 to pass directive 85/649, which banned the use of hormone products for fattening cattle throughout the EC from 1 January 1988. The decision provoked a storm of protest, not least from the British Government, and I am grateful that our Government have been the strongest and most consistent opponent of the ban in the Community. Unfortunately, the British Government's attempt to challenge the ban in the European Court of Justice was not successful.

The immediate consequences of this total ban are very serious for international trade. It will prohibit the sale to EC markets of meat from animals which have been treated with hormones, whether for therapeutic reasons or for growth promotion. This will include all imports of meat and offal from third countries such as the United States of America. The meat processing industry in the EC is dependent on imported offal since the EC does not produce sufficient to meet its requirements, and consequently the ban will put at risk not only 45 jobs at Wirral Foods in Great Harwood, in my constituency, but over 300 jobs in the tongue canning industry in other parts of the country, if it is imposed after 31 December.

My constituents at Wirral Foods are grateful for all that is being done by their energetic production director, Mr. Brian Quinn, by Mr. Richard Burdekin, managing director of Rea Valley Canned Meat Ltd. and by the Government in pressing the Commission to try to resolve the trade problems created by the hormone ban in the general agreement on tariffs and trade and through bilateral discussions with the United States. It is always sad when jobs are lost and hard-working people are thrown out of work. However, it is nonsense when jobs are lost because of an unnecessary ban which, far from safeguarding the health of the consumer—which is supposed to be the justification for the ban—may put health at risk.

Meat from steers properly treated with hormones is often found to have lower hormone levels than meat from bulls and cows that are not treated at all. It is also leaner and thus considered safer. There is no scientific or medical evidence to suggest that the banned hormones are harmful in any way. The United States and the Common Market have used licensed growth-promoting hormones without any problems for over 20 years. All scientific and medical evidence proves that the licensed hormones oestradiol 17 beta, progesterone, testosterone, trenbolone and zeranol used in the correct manner are entirely harmless, and most third countries including the United States are still using them.

The five hormones that I have mentioned have been declared safe by a committee of the international food and health organisation Codex Alimentarius, which is made up of representatives of 134 countries, and funded jointly by the United Nations Food and Agricultural Organisation and the World Health Organisation. At the time of the ban, a committee of independent scientific experts set up

by the European Community was about to report that there was no danger whatever in the controlled use of hormones. The European Parliament passed the resolution without waiting for the report, and the Council of Ministers abruptly dismissed the committee of scientists before the report could be published, thus effectively supressing it.

That was a splendid example of the "I've made up my mind, don't confuse me with the facts" syndrome. This confirmed that the ban was introduced for political reasons, to reduce the beef mountain, to protect certain continental farmers from British and Irish competition, and to pander to a vociferous and ill-informed minority.

The scientists were so outraged by the action of the Council of Ministers that they came together at their own expense at Warwick 12 months ago and stated openly and unanimously that there was no risk at all to human health in eating meat treated with approved hormones.

Perhaps I could put the matter in a more understandable context. One litre of beer has the same hormone content as 100 kg of meat from an implanted steer; one tablespoon of soya bean oil has the same hormone content as 1,650 kg of meat from an implanted steer; and 1 kg of cabbage has the same hormone content as 2,000 kg of meat from an implanted steer.

Every day, a pregnant woman produces as much oestrogen hormone as is found in 1,350 tonnes of meat from an implanted steer. If she ate half a kilogram of meat from a steer implanted with an approved hormone, should would increase the hormone content of her body by three millionths of 1 per cent. It has been calculated on the basis of figures from the World Health Organisation that a child weighing 30 kg could eat more than 112 tonnes of meat per day without any risk from hormones, natural or implanted. However, such a child might be at grave risk from indigestion.

It can well be argued that the real risk to health comes not from the use of these natural hormones, but from the danger that the banning of licensed hormones will lead to a black market in illegal unlicensed products. Unlike the licensed products, these illicit substances pose a serious health risk to the consumer, since their constituents, the method of application and the dosage are totally uncontrolled, and the presence of these illicit products in meat is almost impossible to detect by existing testing methods. The only way to control the situation is to allow supervised use of those growth promoting hormones known to be safe, thereby extinguishing the need for a black market.

Since the announcement of this debate, I have received a letter from the National Farmers Union that confirms that the hormone growth promoters used by British beef producers before the national ban on their use, implemented on 6 December 1986, were the five substances I referred to earlier. The letter goes on:

"The NFU does not want the hormone ban lifted, rather it wants it amended so as to include a positive list of products that have been proven safe. These could be then made permissible for EC beef producers to use. We consider this position to be entirely consistent with the need to safeguard public and animal health, whilst at the same time ensuring legislation is based upon scientific evidence. We envisage that such a list would probably include the five products oestradiol 17 beta, testosterone, progesterone, trenbolone, and zeranol, once they undergo testing to satsify the European and national authorities that they pose no threat to health."

That seems to be a positive way forward.

I hope that, even at this late stage, the efforts of my right hon. Friend the Minister of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Office to have the one-year exemption extended will succeed. That would give a little extra time to find a way out of our crisis and perhaps allow common sense to prevail.

It is depressing that the dispute should have reached this stage, but we cannot sit back and wait for United States retaliation, which will surely come if the ban goes ahead, and with it the loss of even more jobs in this country. I hope, not least for my constituents at Wirral Foods, that the Government will continue to do all in their power to persuade the European Commission to be reasonable, and act now to ensure that a ban which is unnecessary, will lose jobs, and increase the risks to health, is not imposed.

I hope that, at the very least, as a result of this debate, someone from the European Parliament who supported the ban will respond to the invitation from Brian Quinn of Wirral Foods to explain it and justify it to his employees, who are to be deprived of their livelihood, because up to now, European Members of Parliament have failed to do so.

10.12 pm

The Parliamentary Secretary to the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (Mr. Donald Thompson): The Government have a great deal of sympathy for the views expressed by my hon. Friend, the Member for Hyndburn (Mr. Hargreaves). Successive Ministers of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food have argued most forcefully in Brussels against a hormones ban. We believed, as we still do, that a ban is quite unjustifiable on any scientific grounds. Moreover, it would interfere unreasonably with supplies of meat and offals from countries outside the EC boundaries, many of which continued to authorise the use of hormone growth promoters. I shall not here rehearse the full history of the hormones ban, since my hon. Friend has covered much of this ground, but I should perhaps recount the main events since they demonstrate the strength of our opposition to the ban.

In 1981, the European Council initially adopted a directive which, among other things, instructed the EC Commission to undertake a scientific study of the five substances commonly used as hormone growth promoters. That was done in a working party chaired by Professor Eric Lamming of Nottingham university. The working party was able to report favourably quite quickly on three of the five hormones. It needed further information on the other two and so a report on these two substances was somewhat delayed.

In the interim, however, the European Parliament reported in favour of a ban on all five. As my hon. Friend has explained, the EC Commission did not wait for the final report of the Lamming working party, but proposed to the Council that a ban on all five substances be adopted. The Government protested most strongly to the Commission about this proposal and about its treatment of Professor Lamming and his working party. However, the matter was considered by the Council of Ministers in December 1985 and the proposal for a ban was adopted by a vote conducted by written procedure.

The Government contested this directive on a number of grounds in the European Court of Justice. In its

[Mr. Donald Thompson]

judgment, delivered earlier this year, the court did not address itself to the issues of scientific justification or the impact on supplies of meat and offal from third countries. It did rule in the United Kingdom's favour, however, on a purely technical irregularity in procedure. The directive was annulled as a result but the Council of Ministers proceeded at once to re-adopt the initial directive. The United Kingdom Government again voted against the directive and once more forcefully rehearsed their objections to it.

It will be clear to hon. Members, as my hon. Friend has said, that the Government have been a strong and consistent opponent of the ban. My hon. Friend also referred to the real risks of a black market in hormones developing in the wake of the ban. The Government have always recognised that, if products acknowledged to be safe are banned, there is a real risk that producers denied access to them would be tempted to turn to dangerous options. We have consistently warned our Community partners of this risk.

I know that the ban on trade and on the availability of supplies of beef and beef offals to United Kingdom manufacturers, especially ox tongues for canning, is of the greatest concern to my right hon. Friend the Minister. My hon. Friend will know that I have met many of those who are concerned, especially those who run Rea Valley Canned Meat Ltd, which has taken in hand the task of bringing all the serious and difficult matters to our attention. They are especially serious for those whose jobs and livelihoods will be affected by any such ban.

As I am sure the House is aware, the United States made it clear at the outset that it regarded the hormones ban as an unjustified barrier to trade and that it was not prepared to attempt to comply with the Community's requirements. This has had two most serious consequences. First, Community manufacturers are to be denied access to United States supplies of beef and beef offals. My hon. Friend has already made clear the damaging impact that this would have for some of our meat manufacturers and particularly for those specialist producers of canned tongues who rely so heavily on United States supplies.

In the second place, the United States has threatened to take retaliatory action against some $110 million-worth of EC exports from 1 January 1989. There is therefore a real risk that we shall find ourselves drawn into an escalating dispute at the very time when we and others are pressing for the liberalisation of international agricultural trade.

Over the past two years, we have consistently urged the European Commission to find a solution to the dispute with the United States either within the framework of the GATT arrangements or through bilateral discussions. I am sorry to say, however, that neither of these avenues has yet produced a solution. The Commission has shown little flexibility in the GATT and has consistently resisted any procedural move to allow an assessment of the scientific basis of the ban. The Americans continue to insist on such a scientific assessment.

Unless some last-minute progress can be made, which of course we continue to urge, it now seems inevitable that there will be a disruption of United States supplies next year and that United States trade retaliation will follow. An escalating trade war could spill from this narrow, but wide enough, issue. I can reassure my hon. Friend, however, that we shall not cease to press for a compromise in the dispute, and particularly one that allows access for United States supplies. We shall continue also to press the argument that EC policy should be firmly based on scientific evidence.

I should say a further word about the availability of supplies for United Kingdom manufacturers. Although it now seems inevitable that imports from the United States will be disrupted from the end of the year, contrary to what my hon. Friend has feared, imports from all other traditional suppliers to the Community, with the exception of Canada, will continue. At its meeting last week, with our support, the standing veterinary committee approved the guarantees offered by some 25 countries and voted to continue to accept their exports.

There are still difficulties to be overcome; some countries have been approved on a provisional basis only. I am hopeful that the technical problems can be resolved, and that more widespread conflict and trade disruption can be avoided. I know that there are severe difficulties in turning from United States supplies to other sources, but I believe that the decision to continue access for Australian and New Zealand supplies in particular will prove of some comfort to United Kingdom manufacturers.

Finally, let me sum up the Government's position on the hormones ban, which closely accords with the views expressed by the National Farmers Union to which my hon. Friend referred. We have consistently opposed the ban, and continue to believe that the prohibition on the five substances in common use worldwide is unjustified. We have consistently argued that the policy on hormones should be based on science and not on expediency. We have consistently worked to find a solution to the dispute with the United States, and to the problem of disruption of supplies for United Kingdom manufacturers.

My hon. Friend has done a great deal for his constituents, and for those of his colleagues on both sides of the House. I can reassure him that we too shall continue our efforts on all those fronts.

Question put and agreed to.

Adjourned accordingly at twenty-two minutes past Ten o'clock.

House of Commons

Tuesday 13 December 1988

The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

PRIVATE BUSINESS

NEWCASTLE UPON TYNE TOWN MOOR BILL *[Lords]*
Read the Third time, and passed, with amendments.

HARWICH HARBOUR BILL *[Lords]*
Bill considered.
Amendment agreed to.
To be read the Third time.

Oral Answers to Questions

HEALTH

Bypass Operations

1. **Mr. David Shaw:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many coronary bypass operations have been performed each year for the last 10 available years.

The Minister of State, Department of Health (Mr. David Mellor): Figures on the number of cardiac surgery operations are collected annually by the Society of Cardiothoracic Surgeons. According to its returns, the number of coronary artery bypass grafts carried out in the United Kingdom in 1977 was 2,881, and in 1985, the latest year for which figures are available, it was 11,800. That is a rise of 310 per cent. over the period.

Mr. Shaw: Is my hon. and learned Friend in a position to confirm that part of the increase has come about because money is available from the waiting-list fund? Is he aware that in one hospital in America—Houston medical centre—more than 3,000 operations are done each year by Dr. Denton Cooley who achieves greater utilisation of the operating theatres by having no trade unionists working in them?

Mr. Mellor: We have been giving priority to coronary bypass grafts for some years, and it is because of that that the numbers have increased so much. It is correct to say —I am grateful to my hon. Friend for drawing attention to this—that about 500 additional such operations have been made possible by the waiting-list fund.

As for the utilisation of operating theatres, we can certainly learn from the experience of others; there is a pertinent Public Accounts Committee report on that point.

Mrs. Mahon: Before the Minister gets carried away with self-congratulations, will he join me in congratulating Councillor Eddie Scott of Calderdale, who has taken a principled stand by not going private in spite of a waiting list of 18 months for a bypass operation? Will the Minister give Councillor Scott and people like him some hope of relief from pain—and, in some cases, some hope of life —by increasing still further the money spent on this vital operation, which, the House realises, was nothing like as advanced in 1977 as it was in 1987?

Mr. Mellor: I am sorry that the hon. Lady thought that I was congratulating myself. I was asked for the figures and gave them. I accept what she said in two respects. First, we need to carry out more of these procedures and are pressing regions to do that. Secondly, I am sad to say that there are districts in this country in which too many patients are made to wait more than a year for treatment. That is not acceptable, and I assure the hon. Lady that we are applying pressure especially to those districts to ensure that waiting lists are brought down. With major procedures such as this people should have to wait the shortest possible time; we shall work to that effect.

I do not know about the particular case that the hon. Lady mentioned, but if she writes to me about it I shall be happy to consider it.

Royal Devon and Exeter Hospital (Radiation)

2. **Mr. Speller:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what arrangements he has made for further medical checks and treatment of patients from North Devon who received excessive radiation during 1988 from the radiography department at the Royal Devon and Exeter hospital; when they may expect the first payment of any financial provision; when he expects to receive and reach a conclusion on the reports by independent specialists; what steps he has taken to ensure that treatment now being given is of the highest standard; and if he will make a statement.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Health (Mrs. Edwina Currie): These are matters for the Exeter health authority. The report of the independent inquiry by Sir Bryan Thwaites and the conclusions of the medical assessments by Professor Joslin were published by the Exeter health authority on 6 December. All the recommendations have been accepted and are being implemented. I am satisfied that the care and treatment of cancer patients in the Royal Devon and Exeter hospital is being restored to the highest standards.

Mr. Speller: Does the Minister recall saying in June that there would be no whitewash? May I congratulate her on the fact that both reports indicate no whitewash and are a complete and honest statement of the sad facts.

Perhaps we should be thinking of insurance within health authorities. It is ludicrous that anyone should suggest that a local health authority can bear the vast costs that are certain to be incurred in this instance.

Finally, may I ask for my hon. Friend's assurance that she and her Department approve of and are satisfied with the procedure carried out by that health authority at present.

Mrs. Currie: First, I thank my hon. Friend for those remarks which I am sure will be appreciated by all concerned.

Secondly, in answer to my hon. Friend's last question, as I have said, we are sure that provided that all the details

and recommendations are implemented the standards at Exeter will speedily be restored to what they should have been in the first place.

Thirdly, with regard to insurance, it has long been Government policy—both of this Government and previous Governments—that the public authorities do not take out insurance. It certainly works out cheaper in the long run if they are self-insuring. I understand that the health authority has not yet worked out the details of offers in individual cases of compensation, but has already made payments to meet reasonable expenses of the patients concerned.

Sir Peter Emery: Does my hon. Friend accept that the Devon health authority has been very caring since the accident in trying to look after the patients affected? Does she approve the concept that I put to her that a panel of three, preferably composed of a retired High Court judge, an expert in cancer and an expert in medical compensation, should assess the claims of those people, not to take away their legal rights, but to try and ensure that compensation is paid quickly? That would ensure that those affected are not put to exorbitant costs by solicitors who must be mindful of the fees available when dealing with protracted cases of legal compensation.

Mrs. Currie: I am grateful for the suggestions that have been made by my hon. Friend and other hon. Members about the possibility of using independent assessors. May I refer my hon. Friend to the statement made by the chairman of Exeter health authority on 6 December in which he said that

"the Authority intends to deal with those claims as expeditiously as possible in a way which will cause as little distress to patients and their families as the circumstances will allow. The Authority has instructed its solicitors to reflect this desire".

Mr. Campbell-Savours: The Minister should be sacked.

Mrs. Currie: The hon. Gentleman may not be interested in cancer patients in Exeter, but Conservative Members are.

On that basis, I hope that my hon. Friend will accept that, although it does not appear that we shall need independent assessors at this time, we appreciate the constructive approach of patients' legal advisers.

Mr. Galbraith: These are tragic events that we all have a duty to ensure do not occur again. Does the Minister agree that such cases highlight the importance of clinical physicists and others in the Health Service involved in the provision of health care? Does she also agree that, over the years, the salaries of such groups have deteriorated in comparison with those of people in comparable professions outside? Will she therefore reconsider her Department's position and once again consider including in the pay review body's consideration clinical physicists and biochemists? If she does not, I fear that the position will continue to deteriorate and we may yet have other cases such as those in Exeter.

Mrs. Currie: We regard our hospital physicists and other hospital scientists as very important. The reports make that view plain, but they do not blame low pay for the mistakes. In our view, the mistakes were more the result of carelessness and incompetence than anything else. An offer has been made through the Whitley councils to the physicists. They have not accepted it and discussions are continuing.

RAWP

4. **Mrs. Maureen Hicks:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will make a statement on future funding of regional health authorities under the resources allocation working party.

19. **Mr. Colin Shepherd:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what plans he has to make changes to the resource allocation working party formula.

The Secretary of State for Health (Mr. Kenneth Clarke): I hope to be able to announce the 1989-90 resource allocations to regional health authorities shortly. When the National Health Service management board's report on the review of the resource allocation working party formula was published, the then Secretary of State for Social Services said that the Government would consider the report within the context of the wider review of the NHS. That remains the position.

Mrs Hicks: Does my right hon. and learned Friend agree that a mockery is made of the assessment formula for regional health authorities when Brighton and Wolverhampton are placed in the same league of social deprivation? May I have his much-needed assurance that if the RAWP is genuinely to fulfil its aim of reflecting the relative needs of the population, as I know that he would wish, he will consider most carefully the method of assessment, and especially its implications for the west midlands? Under current figures the west midlands stands to lose £23 million, which would be a disaster.

Mr. Clarke: My hon. Friend has raised this matter with me on a previous occasion. I know that she and other west midland Members are concerned. We are considering the review body's recommendation of a package of changes. It is true that the west midlands sees itself losing some of its proposed share of resources under the RAWP formula. We thought it best to examine the re-allocation of resources within the context of the review of the service, which is now taking place. We shall present our conclusions when we are able to announce the results of the review.

Mr. Shepherd: Does my right hon. and learned Friend agree with the concept that morbidity is a better measure of the needs for the elderly than the standard mortality rate, especially in Herefordshire where there is a much greater than average number of elderly and very elderly among the population? Is he aware that there is substantial concern that a national expenditure rate as a means of measurement does not accurately reflect the different economic health of the elderly, for example, of Eastbourne, Hereford and Sandwell? Will my right hon. and learned Friend give careful consideration to these matters and engage in more work on them before he accepts the review?

Mr. Clarke: With allocations that are based on complex formulae, it is always possible to have serious argument on precisely what criteria should be used. My hon. Friend makes two valid points, especially from the point of view of the Hereford health authority, which comes within the

West Midlands regional health authority. In the past, the RAWP allocation has helped to remove some of the wide variations in allocations between different parts of the country. We must be sure that future allocations proceed on a fair basis and accurately reflect, as far as possible, varying needs across the country.

Mr. Ashley: Is the Minister aware that Stoke-on-Trent hospitals are already operating a red alert, before the onset of winter? They desperately need assistance from the resource allocation working party. Any changes in the formula that help better-off areas are bound to damage Stoke-on-Trent and other poorer areas. Surely that is unacceptable.

Mr. Clarke: Stoke-on-Trent and many other areas were historically under-provided compared with more prosperous parts of the country. Since the Government have been in office, they have done extremely well. That is because we have applied the RAWP formula to the distribution of resources. We have brought all regions much closer together financially than they were before we took office. Most of the disparities between districts have been narrowed to a large extent. We must now examine the recommendations and ensure that we arrive at the fairest system possible for the allocation of resources.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: Can the moneys that are made available under the RAWP formula be re-examined in the light of the recent public hysteria over salmonella, and can additional resources be expended in particular areas? Bearing in mind the statement by the Secretary of State's junior Minister, is it not about time that the hon. Lady was sacked? She has frightened the British people.

Mr. Clarke: The future of the RAWP formula is of serious concern to those who live in the Northern regional health authority areas and in areas within the hon. Gentleman's constituency. He does no service to his patients or constituents by taking the opportunity to ask a frivolous supplementary question on a serious topic.

Mr. Andrew Mitchell: In any review of the RAWP procedure, will my right hon. and learned Friend bear in mind that the Nottingham health authority, which covers the areas which he and I represent, is still about 5 per cent. short of the RAWP target? Will he bear in mind that if it is able to make up that percentage, it will be able to do much more in furtherance of the excellent progress that has been made over the past seven years to secure an even better health service in Nottinghamshire?

Mr. Clarke: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for reminding me that Trent will do even worse than the west midlands under the proposals that have been made by the RAWP review procedure. Reactions vary according to which part of the country people come from and the impact that the review procedure proposals will have on their region. We have done a great deal in the past, and this has helped Nottingham to open a new teaching hospital. That has been possible with the extra moneys that it has received. We must now hold the balance and arrive at the fairest method of distribution for the future. That will not be a method that reverses all that we have done over recent years to remove the old inequalities.

Mr. Robin Cook: Does the Secretary of State appreciate that it is rather a weird definition of deprivation that has the net effect of taking cash away from the north-east and the north-west and redistributing it to the south coast and East Anglia on the ground that those areas are more deprived than Merseyside and Tyneside? Does he not also appreciate that he will bring the whole RAWP process into disrepute if that formula is now to be fixed in exactly the same way as the rate support grant formula is now rigged?

Mr. Clarke: The Health Service management board comprised a wide range of people including the regional chairmen of regions the length and breadth of England. Its report is an attempt to revise the criteria of the original RAWP allocation to reflect objective scientific study. It proves that it is almost impossible for anyone to get it right. There are losers and gainers in the north and the south and we have to ensure that whatever method we finally arrive at is fair and broadly acceptable to the bulk of the population.

Pay and Conditions (Appeals)

5. **Mr. McCrindle:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is the average time taken for an appeal concerning pay and conditions, including grading, in the National Health Service to be heard; and if he will seek to reduce the time taken.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: We do not collect information centrally on the average time taken to process appeals. However, on 5 December I wrote to regional health authority chairmen asking health authorities to adopt a range of measures aimed at ensuring that the appeals process works quickly and effectively.

Mr. McCrindle: Is it not becoming clear that the Royal College of Nursing was absolutely right to resist industrial action and to pursue claims through the appeals procedure? Is my right hon. and learned Friend satisfied that all health authorities are moving to hear those appeals at the same speed? Has any consideration been given to hearing a number of those appeals together to expedite a solution to the problem?

Mr. Clarke: The Royal College of Nursing always pressed for the regrading arrangement and the new grading structure. Since we introduced it, the college has tried to help with difficulties and has discussed with me means by which we speed up the appeals process. I am sure that all the authorities will try to proceed as quickly as possible. The difficulty is that a few are flooded out by many speculative appeals which people have been encouraged to put in when there is no real basis for claims. We believe that the appeal process, properly implemented, can deal with legitimate grievances and, I hope, sort them all out by the spring of next year.

Mr. Fearn: Can the Minister confirm that the Royal College of Nursing and the Royal College of Midwives and the unions have received the guidelines? When will he talk to the unions?

Mr. Clarke: I have made it clear that I will not talk to representatives of the Confederation of Health Service Employees and the National Union of Public Employees while they are still trying to organise industrial action. I know that not much industrial action is still taking place, but they have not yet withdrawn their attempts to stir it up. I cannot have discussions with anyone in which I seek to substitute myself as Secretary of State for the

management side of the Whitley council. The regrading exercise was worked out through negotiations between the management side and the staff side and includes all the trade unions of the appropriate Whitley council. The money was set by the review body, that was accepted by the Government and we provided the cash to fund it. In due course I have no doubt that I will have talks on relevant matters with union leaders, but I will not re-open the Whitley council negotiations with people who are trying to cause strikes at the expense of patients.

Mr. Favell: Does my right hon. and learned Friend agree that in future, questions of pay should be dealt with on a local basis? To resolve local difficulties such as the shortage of intensive care nurses in Birmingham by imposing a national solution is clearly incorrect. The private sector will not resolve Birmingham's problems by imposing a solution suitable to Bristol or Burnley.

Mr. Clarke: I have strong sympathy with my hon. Friend's views and his point applies to the way in which the pay and terms and conditions of a wide range of staff are settled in the National Health Service, which is too centralised and too monolithic at the moment. We have put proposals to the review body on nurses' pay for a small experimental fund next year which can be used to try to devise methods for more local discretion in settling pay to meet particular improvement needs. I wait to see what response that receives from the trade unions and I wait to hear the recommendations by the review body.

Mr. Crowther: Does the Secretary of State appreciate that in the case of Rotherham health authority, any successful appeals, of which there should be a great number because of the many anomalies that have been created, will inevitably result in a reduction in patient services on the present allocation of resources? Does he believe that it is proper to refuse to fund successful appeals knowing that patients will suffer? Is it not better to ensure that both staff and patients are treated fairly?

Mr. Clarke: No, we provided full funding for the nurses' award after the grading exercise was completed and we used the health authorities' own figures to arrive at the figure for full and final funding. I have no reason to believe that Rotherham district health authority has made huge numbers of mistakes in applying the grading structure to its particular staff, although it will no doubt find individual mistakes and correct them. I am quite satisfied that the deal can be implemented without any threat to patient care.

Health Promotion (Women)

6. **Mr. Rowe:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health how he is encouraging health promotion schemes for women.

Mrs. Currie: We are very proud of the action that we have taken to promote women's health. We have implemented screening programmes for breast and cervical cancer to reduce the number of women who die each year from these diseases. The maternal death rate continues to fall. The Health Education Authority is planning to give more prominence to women's health. In June, we sponsored both a debate in this House and a national conference, and this year we are supporting a large number of national voluntary organisations concerned with women's health.

Mr. Rowe: I thank my hon. Friend for that reply. Although it is true that deaths from cervical cancer have fallen by about 14 per cent. in the past 10 years, the number of deaths is still higher than it should be. Can we hope for improvements in that figure over the next few years?

Mrs. Currie: Yes, it is our hope that the new national call and recall system, which is implemented throughout the country, will bring about a reduction in the toll from this particular preventable cancer.

Mr. Lofthouse: As the Minister still holds the view that most of the eggs in this country are contaminated by salmonella, why has she not included the advice not to eat eggs in her advice for women, under the health promotion scheme?

Mrs. Currie *rose*——

Hon. Members: Come on.

Mrs. Currie: The hon. Gentleman asked a question and he will get the answer. The Government's view is as follows. Although the risk of harm to any healthy individual from consuming a single raw or partially cooked egg is small, it is advisable for vulnerable people such as the elderly, the sick, babies and pregnant women to consume only eggs that have been cooked until the white and yolk are solid—in other words, hard boiled.

Dame Jill Knight: May I ask my hon. Friend to assure the House that she is as concerned about the health of men at risk as about the health of women at risk?

Mrs. Currie: Yes, very much so. As my hon. Friend will be aware, the main thrust of the heart disease programme —the "Look After Your Heart" campaign—is directed at middle-aged men. I was concerned that we were not doing enough for the health of women and I hope that we have put that right.

Nurses (Grading)

7. **Mr. Cox:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is the number of hospitals where staff are in dispute over the 1988 pay award regarding nurses' grading.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: I understand that some appeals against individual gradings have been registered in most, if not all districts. That is hardly surprising in the regrading of some half a million nursing and midwifery staff.

Mr. Cox: That reply does not reflect the grave dissatisfaction and sense of injustice that nurses throughout the country feel over their grading in the recent pay award. Does the Secretary of State accept that if dedicated people, such as midwives and nurses working in intensive care units, take such action, that is a real expression of their sense of injustice? Does he accept that, if the matter is to be resolved, nurses must be heard and must not be subject to the abuse and attacks that he and other Ministers in his Department have heaped on them in recent weeks? When will the Secretary of State listen to what the nurses are saying and act on that?

Mr. Clarke: It must come as a considerable disappointment to the hon. Gentleman that comparatively few nurses have taken industrial action anywhere, and that action is undoubtedly on the wane. That is not surprising when one considers that the pay increase for the profession as a whole is 17·9 per cent. and in London, the hon. Gentleman's own part of the world, there have been supplements of 5 per cent. to 9 per cent. on top of that. The nursing profession has received its biggest pay award in the history of the National Health Service.

Mr. Redwood: Does my right hon. and learned Friend agree that one of the lessons of the regrading exercise is that matters could be much better managed if the districts had all the necessary powers to recruit, retain and motivate staff and were not second-guessed by the regions?

Mr. Clarke: We have a system of national pay bargaining, from which the regrading exercise emanated in the first place. The exercise started with a national agreement between six trade unions—including the two now organising strikes—and management. I am very much in favour of having much more discretion at district level. However, in a large organisation such as the Health Service, there has to be a national structure in which sensible local discretion can be set. I shall be very glad if we make progress in that direction this year, but we shall have to wait for the response of the review body to our modest suggestions.

Rev. Martin Smyth: Does the Secretary of State acknowledge that we are not only talking about the problem of applying the decisions at national level, and that at district level, too, there seem to be anomalies in the grading structure? Does he realise that, although there may not be much industrial action, there is deep unrest throughout the nursing services, which is spreading in particular to health visitors and school nurses?

Mr. Clarke: I do not accept that there are anomalies. I accept that difficulties arise when people who have all previously been paid the same rate find themselves paid at three different rates according to the grade of the post that they originally held. For midwifery sisters, that can mean the difference between an increase of £500 and an increase of £4,500 a year, and people naturally feel strongly about the grading of their posts. The regrading exercise has been conducted in line with a UK—wide agreement and we have a perfectly satisfactory appeals process to ensure that individual cases are sorted out and that nurses and midwives are put where they belong in the new structure.

Mr. Conway: Is my right hon. and learned Friend aware that during my hospitalisation last month at the eye, ear and throat hospital in Shrewsbury, a number of members of staff commented about the grading system—one of them starting to do so as early as ten past six in the morning? Although they had genuine grievances, which, after a few days, I could understand in some detail, they continued to give the benefit of their expertise and compassion to the patients, and that is the significant factor. They were not led astray by union agitators or persuaded to demonstrate. My right hon. and learned Friend is absolutely right not to be drawn down the path proposed by COHSE and NUPE, which would be a betrayal of the nurses, sisters and midwives who have stuck by their patients rather than deserted to the picket lines.

Mr. Clarke: I agree with my hon. Friend. For the reasons that I have just given, many nurses were inevitably disappointed by the outcome of this year's grading review, although they have all received substantial pay increases. Even so, most of the nurses who were disappointed would treat with contempt attempts to persuade them to take strike action against their patients to get themselves put on to a higher grade. That is why the action taken by COHSE and NUPE has been so unsuccessful throughout the country.

Mr. Robin Cook: Is not the Secretary of State worried by the fact that, by 28 December, 40 of the 50 midwives at north Middlesex hospital will have resigned? Does he really believe that he can provide a maternity service with those who remain? Does he not realise that the departure of those midwives and of many disillusioned nurses and midwives could be averted if he accepted the unions' offer to go to binding arbitration? If he is so confident of his case, why is he so afraid of arbitration?

Mr. Clarke: I am pleased to hear that talks with the midwives at north Middlesex hospital have resumed. They are plainly dedicated people, and I hope that they will reconsider their present declared intention and continue to work at the hospital. Meanwhile, they are arguing that they should all be put on the higher grade, which would mean an increase of almost £2,000 a year over and above the £2,000 a year increase that they have already received. That would simply not be consistent with the agreement reached with all the unions, including the Royal College of Midwives earlier this year. We followed the review body's recommendations and I see no reason at this stage to go to arbitration. The regrading deal was carried out in line with the agreement that we had with the unions and has been accepted by the review body. It has been finished and implemented. We should be looking to next year rather than trying to arbitrate on a settled matter.

Oxford Regional Health Authority

8. **Mr. Baldry:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health when he next expects to visit the Oxford regional health authority to discuss its future plans.

Mr. Mellor: My hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State will be conducting the annual review of the Oxford regional health authority on 15 February 1989 when she will discuss the region's performance in 1988-89 and its plans for next year.

Mr. Baldry: Is it not true that the Oxford regional health authority is taking a number of new initiatives, including community-oriented mental health facilities, better health promotion and better information for the disabled throughout the region? Are not those just a few examples of the initiatives that the region is taking, not only on its own, but in conjunction with the voluntary and private sectors, and are not those, in turn, indicative of the increasing number of initiatives that regions throughout Britain are taking to promote better health care?

Mr. Mellor: I thank my hon. Friend for his constructive interest in the health services in his area, which extends, among other things, to chairing meetings about income-generation schemes which are greatly valued. The Oxford regional health authority has the largest increase in population of any region and it is extremely impressive

that it has managed to cope with that and bring forward those fresh initiatives. Among the many that my hon. Friend mentioned, all of which we commend, I particularly commend the authority's impressive record of keeping all its districts up to or over the 90 per cent. target rate for vaccinations, so much so that it is now aiming for 95 per cent.—something which other regions could usefully emulate.

Mr. Andrew Smith: Is the Minister aware that earlier in the summer I raised with the Government the impending crisis in the Oxford region resulting from the chronic understaffing, high vacancy rates and high staff turnover at the regional blood transfusion centre? Is he further aware that this week in the Oxford region a circular is being distributed which warns of the partial suspension of some of the services of that critical centre? That will have a disastrous effect on the blood service and some other services such as tissue typing. Will the Minister convene an urgent meeting with me, the regional health authority and other interested Members in the region so that we can get that critical service back on the footing on which it should be for all the region's population?

Mr. Mellor: The blood transfusion service is important in any region. Without notice, I cannot comment on the hon. Gentleman's precise points, but I am available to any hon. Member to discuss such important services and I shall be happy to see him.

Mr. Page: When my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State visits Oxford regional health authority to discuss its future plans, will she canvass its views on the need for compulsory clinical assessment of the work of consultants within that region? The British Medical Association has been established for over 130 years and the royal colleges for centuries more and there is still no compulsory clinical judgment on consultants' work. When my hon. Friend visits Oxford will he see whether it is prepared to become a trial area to assess the work of consultants?

Mr. Mellor: My hon. Friend refers to medical audit, in which there is growing interest in Britain. We have recently announced the expenditure of a further £250,000 on research into medical audit, the techniques of which are helpful to the development of a good Health Service. Everyone stands to gain from that, not just people in Oxford.

Pensioners (Health)

9. **Mr. Darling:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he plans to add to the advice given by his Under-Secretary of State, the hon. Member for Derbyshire, South (Mrs. Currie) at Reading, to pensioners on keeping healthy during the winter months.

16. **Mr. Hardy:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he has received any representations from pensioners or pensioners' organisations about the advice given by the Under-Secretary of State, the hon. Member for Derbyshire, South (Mrs. Currie) at Reading on the subject of keeping healthy during the winter.

Mrs. Currie: On pensioners' health day in Reading the Government drew attention to simple advice on self-help which can make a difference to winter mortality. For the second year running we have a "Keep Warm, Keep Well" campaign, involving the five Government Departments and voluntary organisations, which is proving to be very effective. We have received around 400 letters on the topic. The telephone helpline, run by Help the Aged, is now receiving over 700 calls per week. We are very pleased with the success of the campaign.

Mr. Darling: On reflection, does the hon. Lady consider that her remarks were ill-judged and stupid? For how much longer will she be allowed to act as court jester, deflecting attention from the fact that for many pensioners this Christmas the choice will be between heating their houses and eating? Is she aware that the best Christmas present that she could give most pensioners, and, indeed, many Conservative Members, would be a month's silence.

Mrs. Currie: The hon. Gentleman seems to have forgotten that the worst winter in recent years for excess winter mortality and hypothermia was 1979. If the Opposition had their way, there would be no such campaign. There was no campaign in the 1970s when winter mortality was much higher than now. The advice is plain common sense and the Opposition would do better to back it.

Sir Michael McNair-Wilson: I congratulate my hon. Friend on her advice for the elderly. Will she confirm that about 20 per cent. of body heat can be lost through the top of the head and that if one wore a hat, the heat loss would be reduced.

Mrs. Currie: My hon. Friend would look very fetching in a woolly hat.

Mr. Hardy: Will the rather expensive and perhaps hard-boiled Under-Secretary restrict her more extravagant comments to cold days since the heat of the anger that she usually arouses may produce more gigajoules than a woolly hat?

Mrs. Currie: The hon. Gentleman is being niggardly in his approach to the "Keep Warm, Keep Well" campaign, which is proving to be popular. We printed 750,000 leaflets on the subject and already demand has been sufficient for us to order a reprint. I am pleased with the way the campaign is going.

Mr. Bill Walker: Is my hon. Friend aware that in Scotland where we frequently have low temperatures, grandmother's remedies are often the best? Among the remedies that grandmothers in Scotland regularly suggest is that one should wear wool mittens, wool socks and wool hats. In cold weather that helps to keep the elderly warm.

Mrs. Currie: I am glad to receive that further advice. My right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland also has a campaign in Scotland for keeping warm in winter, and that is going very well.

Mrs. Margaret Ewing: Given that any attempts made by pensioners to assist themselves to guard against the cold must, of necessity, be cash-limited, is the Minister at least prepared to discuss the possibility of implementing a continuous cold climate allowance for the winter months?

Mrs. Currie: That question should be referred in some detail to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Social Security. There is no doubt that elderly people and others can keep their homes warmer if they have them

insulated. One organisation supporting the campaign is Neighbourhood Energy Action, which has already insulated over 500,000 homes and would like to do more.

Mr. Ian Bruce: Does my hon. Friend agree that she should add to the advice she gave about keeping warm in one's own home? The one thing from which pensioners have suffered most grievously—some of them are still suffering—is the inflation that ruined their savings back in Socialist days, and the best advice she could give is for them to ensure that we keep a Conservative Government.

Mrs. Currie: Yes, that is good advice. There is no doubt that whoever we are talking about, they would be well advised to ensure that they do not get cold in winter, especially when they go out. Chills can promote heart disease and may bring on strokes, and that is what causes most of the excess winter mortality.

Community Care

10. **Mr. Patchett:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what representations he has received on the implementation of the recommendations of Sir Roy Griffiths' report on community care.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: We have received over 250 representations from hon. Members, organisations and members of the public about Sir Roy's recommendations. We are studying all of them carefully, as we frame our own proposals.

Mr. Patchett: Does the Secretary of State agree that the weight of opinion is with Sir Roy Griffiths in maintaining that the local authorities are best placed to assess local needs, set priorities and monitor performance? Will he make a categorical statement to that effect?

Mr. Clarke: I have just told the House that we are still considering our own proposals. We have had a variety of responses from all the representations I have described. Everyone agrees that there is a serious problem. We have to look at how best to provide care in the community and how best to arrange responsibility for it. We have to look at all the various models put before us before we can come to a definite conclusion.

Sir George Young: My right hon. and learned Friend will know how anxiously his decision on the Griffiths' report is awaited, not just by statutory bodies but by voluntary organisations. Can he tell the House when he hopes to reach a decision?

Mr. Clarke: I realise that it is essential that we reach conclusions as soon as we can. It is an important matter, and I believe that few people think that the status quo is highly satisfactory. It will be some time next year—I hope, early next year—before we can reach any final conclusions, because the reactions we have received are so varied and there are a number of options before us.

Mr. Tom Clarke: The Government have dilly-dallied over the Griffiths report, which was published the day after the Budget. Is not the Secretary of State worried that the growth of uncontrolled expenditure by the taxpayer on private residential homes that Sir Roy identified has now reached the £1 billion mark? Is it fair that the chaos in community care that so worried Sir Roy should continue, particularly in view of the Government's clear opposition to a democratic role for local government, which Sir Roy himself accepted?

Mr. Clarke: There has been a huge increase in public expenditure of all kinds on care in the community, most of which reflects the increased priority that the Government have been giving it. I accept that we must look at the situation again, to ensure that there are clear responsibilities for delivering the care and that the right relationship exists between all the various agencies involved. We shall announce our conclusions as quickly as we can.

PRIME MINISTER

Engagements

Q1. **Dame Jill Knight:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 13 December.

The Prime Minister: This morning I visited St. George's hospital in Tooting to visit some of those injured in yesterday's train crash, and to thank the hospital staff and the emergency services. In addition to my duties in the House, I shall be having meetings with ministerial colleagues and others later today. This evening I hope to have an audience of Her Majesty the Queen.

Dame Jill Knight: Will my right hon. Friend take this opportunity, in the aftermath of yesterday's appalling rail crash, to record the thanks of the whole House, first, to the emergency services and secondly, to the master and boys of Emanuel school who happened to be passing when the accident occurred?

As it is now emerging that rail passengers who have to stand appear to be most at risk, will my right hon. Friend ensure that that aspect is thoroughly considered in the Government inquiry?

The Prime Minister: Yes, I gladly respond to my hon. Friend's remarks, and the whole House will wish to record its congratulations and thanks to the emergency services and to the hospital staff for the excellent work that they did yesterday. I thank also those of Emanuel school who saw quickly what was happening, and who were thoughtful and swift in their reactions. They are a credit to the young people of our country.

I take note of my hon. Friend's third point concerning standing passengers. It is our purpose that all matters relating to the accident shall be considered in the public inquiry.

Mr. Kinnock: I join the Prime Minister in expressing my deep sorrow for the pain and grief suffered by those hurt in yesterday's accident, my sympathy for their loved ones, and my admiration for and thanks to those in various capacities who helped the injured. I am sure that the whole House will want to return to that question, which is one of deep public concern.

I wish to raise with the Prime Minister another matter of public concern. It is now clear that by her performance in the House and in Rhodes, the right hon. Lady threw away the possibility of securing the extradition of Patrick Ryan—*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Kinnock: Will the Prime Minister take the advice offered by myself and by others, and consider proceedings

under the Criminal Law (Jurisdiction) Act 1976, especially since the Irish Attorney-General commented in his statement today that the charges are of a most serious kind and should be investigated by a court?

The Prime Minister: The Government utterly repudiate the assertion that Patrick Ryan would not receive a fair trial in this country. The effect of the Irish decision is that a person accused of very serious crimes will not now be brought to answer them in an English court of law. That underlines how right we were to say that the existing extradition arrangements are inadequate, and we look to the Irish Government to honour their pledge to re-examine them.

As to the possible trial of Patrick Ryan in the Republic of Ireland, we do not absolutely exclude that, but only two of the four charges are covered by the Criminal Law (Jurisdiction) Act. There would be problems over the security of witnesses, whom we could not compel to go to the Republic. If the case failed because of the absence of witnesses, we could not subsequently try Patrick Ryan in our own jurisdiction.

Mr. Kinnock: The Prime Minister can repudiate as much as she likes. She is faced with the fact that Patrick Ryan will not be extradited to Britain and it is primarily her fault. I understand that the Prime Minister is very disappointed; that feeling is shared by many others, including myself. But she is also culpable. She blew the possibility of extraditing Patrick Ryan. May I ask whether she will ensure that both she and the Attorney-General will avoid making again the errors so far committed—errors of judgment, fact and conduct?

The Prime Minister: Let me answer the right hon. Gentleman by pointing to the facts. The Irish Extradition (Amendment) Act 1987 itself requires the Irish Attorney-General to state that he is satisfied that the United Kingdom prosecuting authorities have sufficient evidence on which to prosecute. I understand that the Irish Attorney-General agrees that that is so. He made his decision on an entirely different ground.

In Ryan's case the extradition proceedings in Belgium were in public, and wide publicity had been given to the nature of the charges and the allegations on which they were based before extradition from Ireland was ever requested.

May I make a third point—*[Interruption.]* Yes, because these points must be made. The extradition proceedings were held in public, with the allegations. Moreover, as the right hon. Gentleman is aware, the Irish Attorney-General could have backed the warrant within three days, which is the time for which his provisional warrant runs. He could have done that long before the question ever arose in the House.

Mr. Kinnock: All that the Prime Minister has said about Belgium and the conduct of affairs there was well known a fortnight ago. Why, then, was she so poisonous about the conduct of affairs by the Irish Government?

If the Prime Minister is quoting from the Irish Attorney-General why does she not draw attention to the fact that he also said that the matter does not end at extradition? He said:

"The charges which have been brought against Patrick Ryan are of a most serious kind, and they should be investigated by a court. The Criminal Law (Jurisdiction) Act 1976 provides a means whereby certain serious offences committed outside this jurisdiction may be tried here."

that is, in Ireland.

"Such a trial may . . . take place before a court of three judges . . . Heavy penalties are prescribed by Irish law for those offences."

Is it not still the case that because she cannot—*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. Let us hear the Leader of the Opposition.

Mr. Kinnock: Is it not the case that because the Prime Minister cannot get everything that she wants she is going to settle for nothing?

The Prime Minister: The fact is that the Irish Attorney has refused to back our warrant on grounds that do not arise from the 1987 Act. The result is that someone accused of very serious crimes will be at liberty in the Irish Republic. I notice that the right hon. Gentleman does not put his weight behind trying to secure the extradition of Ryan.

Q2. **Mr. Butler:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 13 December.

The Prime Minister: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Butler: Does my right hon. Friend believe that a permanent postal monopoly can be justified if this vital public service is continually undermined by strikes?

The Prime Minister: I am very pleased that some 60 per cent. of Post Office counter staff continued to work. That is very good news. However, I agree with my hon. Friend that if we continue to experience sporadic troubles the permanent monopoly of the Post Office will come under review, and, we shall have to consider a reduction in the present level of £1.

Dr. Owen: It is obviously a quite unacceptable insult to the people of this country to say that Patrick Ryan would not receive a fair trial in Britain. That belief should be conveyed to the Irish Government as coming from everyone—*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. It is a very serious matter.

Dr. Owen: Furthermore, is it not bound to mean that the Anglo-Irish Agreement is now questioned by everyone in Britain? Will that also be conveyed to the Prime Minister of the Irish Republic?

The Prime Minister: I am very pleased that the right hon. Gentleman agrees with us in repudiating utterly the assertion that Patrick Ryan would not receive a fair trial in this country. Of course he would, but the arrest of anyone on charges of that nature inevitably will receive front-page treatment. It would be a matter for the courts if there were any prejudice to the trial which inevitably would be heard very far from the time that we had the problem. We must use the Anglo-Irish Agreement to make our point vigorously to the Irish Government on this matter. At the time, the Irish Government promised to review their 1987 extradition Act if it was not working satisfactorily. It is not working satisfactorily, so we shall call in that promise for them to honour.

Mr. Gow: Have we not conferred upon the Government of the Irish Republic, by treaty, a place of special privilege in relation to Northern Ireland? Since Northern Ireland has suffered more grievously than any other part of the United Kingdom at the hands of terrorists, is it not a signal irony that the Irish Government are presently the harbourer of a suspected terrorist?

The Prime Minister: My hon. Friend makes his point very cogently. Under the Anglo-Irish Agreement we can tackle the Republic of Ireland about matters of security just as much as they can tackle us. The difficulty is that the Republic of Ireland unilaterally passed a different extradition Act, when we already thought that arrangements had been agreed between us. That Act is not working properly, and the decision taken under that Act, not for any reasons within it, has caused the present trouble.

Mr. Mallon: Does the Prime Minister remember her elegant words in 1964 at the Conservative party conference when she said:

"Any country or Government which wants to proceed towards tyranny starts to undermine legal rights and undermines its own law."?

Does she agree that if the Irish Government tried to bypass their extradition laws, which exist to protect the rights of their nationals, they would be undermining their own law? When do her Government intend to sign the European convention on the suppression of terrorism?

The Prime Minister: The Act to which the hon. Gentleman refers gives two grounds for refusing extradition. Those are not the grounds which the Irish Attorney-General has used. He has used nothing related to those grounds. He has chosen something totally different, which is a great insult to all British people. We must make that very clear, and I hope that the hon. Gentleman will look at the Act and agree with us.

Mr. Marland: Is my right hon. Friend aware how widespread devastation in the egg industry has become? The Sunday papers tell us that 10,000 people will become redundant before Christmas and millions of egg-laying hens will be slaughtered prematurely. All this has occurred because of the ill-considered and negligent remarks of one of her junior Ministers. Does my right hon. Friend agree that one more redundancy should be added to that list, that of the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Health, the hon. Member for Derbyshire, South (Mrs. Currie)?

The Prime Minister: So far this year 49 cases of salmonella affecting just over 1,000 people have been traced to eggs. That is why the Government have taken steps in conjunction with the industry to issue codes of practice. Those figures demonstrate that there is a problem.

The Chief Medical Officer has issued guidance, most recently on 5 December, stating that the risk to normally healthy people from eating cooked eggs was very small, although they should avoid eating food with raw egg in it. For vulnerable groups, such as babies, the elderly and pregnant women, eggs should be cooked until the white and yolk are hard. *[Interruption.]* It is our duty to give advice. That is what the Chief Medical Officer has said and it is my duty to repeat it. We shall continue to reassure —*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. These are matters of grave concern not only to the House but to those outside it.

Q3. **Dr. Reid:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 13 December.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Dr. Reid: The Prime Minister started her Question Time by congratulating hospital staff. Is she aware that many nursing staff in Lanarkshire and throughout the country have been denied fair grading because they have been deemed to be working under supervision, even when the supposed supervisor is off duty, asleep and at home? Does the right hon. Lady agree that there can be no adequate supervision when people are miles apart and completely out of touch with each other? Does not her relationship with the Chancellor of the Exchequer prove that very point?

The Prime Minister: The grading structure was agreed between the management side and the nursing staff and went before the review body. The review body added an amount necessary to implement that structure. That was not sufficient, so my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Health and my right hon. Friend the Chancellor provided an extra amount. Together, the sums came to nearly £1 billion. The structure and the money have to be applied through the regions and the districts. There is no way in which Government can undertake the regrading of 500,000 nurses. The overwhelming majority of nurses are more than satisfied with the extra that they have received, which is considerable—an average of 18 per cent., and the highest amount that they have ever had.

Patrick Ryan

3.31 pm

Mr. Neil Kinnock (Islwyn): May I through you, Mr. Speaker, ask the Government whether today or, at the latest, tomorrow, they will make a statement to the House about the Ryan affair and the statement of the Irish Attorney-General?

Mr. Speaker: This news was not received until after 1 o'clock today. Whether statements are made about it is a matter for the Government.

Public Expenditure (Scotland)

3.32 pm

The Secretary of State for Scotland (Mr. Malcolm Rifkind): With permission, Mr. Speaker, I wish to make a statement about the allocation of my public expenditure provision in the next three years. An annotated table showing the allocations for each service is available in the Vote Office and I am arranging for it to be published in the *Official Report*.

The continued success of the Government's management of the economy has allowed public expenditure to increase at the same time as its proportionate claim on national resources has fallen. As a result, planned provision for my Scottish programmes in 1989-90 will amount to almost £9 billion, 6 per cent. over planned expenditure for the current year.

We have already announced our proposals to integrate training and enterprise development functions in Scottish Enterprise. Detailed provision for Scottish Enterprise will appear in my future public expenditure plans. In the meantime, I have increased next year's provision for both net and gross expenditure on the industry programme, compared with the plans announced last year as well as with the actual level of this year's spending. Within the total, the Scottish Development Agency will have an enhanced budget of over £150 million. There will also be substantial budget increases over the current year of £2·5 million for the Highlands and Islands Development Board and £1 million for the Scottish tourist board. The HIDB will expand its advance factory programme to provide premises for small businesses.

I have been very impressed by the effectiveness of small factory units and industrial workshops in encouraging the promotion of small-scale economic development and employment. There is a strong demand for this type of industrial unit and considerable evidence that the supply of units is not keeping pace.

I am very glad, therefore, that in 1989-90 the SDA plans to provide 180 such units at a cost of about £6·5 million, and I am glad to announce that I am allocating an extra £5 million to local authorities to allow for an increase in the building of small factory units and industrial workshops. This represents a 31 per cent. increase in planned provision, and would allow local authorities to construct about another 140 units. This increased allocation, taken with the commitment of the resources to this purpose by the SDA, the HIDB and the new towns, will go a long way to easing the constraints on further expansion in this area.

I have once again identified the health programme as a priority area. Planned expenditure in 1989-90 will be £2,683 million, which is £182 million or 7·3 per cent. greater than in 1988-89. The Health Service will also benefit from savings in superannuation contributions and from further efficiency savings. Following a report from the Government Actuary, a copy of which I am making available in the Library, NHS employers' superannuation contributions will be reduced by 2 per cent. to 5·5 per cent., and this will produce savings of about £24 million per year. Together they produce a further £60 million for patient services. This means that, in total, additional resources of

about £240 million, an increase of nearly 10 per cent., will be available to the NHS in 1989-90 compared to the current year.

These additional resources will allow me, first, to fund a further major initiative to reduce waiting lists. I propose to make available at least £4·5 million for this purpose —an increase of 50 per cent. over the current year—which I estimate will, in broad terms, allow an additional 10,000 in-patients, 5,000 day patients and 40,000 out-patients to be treated. Moreover, I stand ready to allocate a further £2·5 million on top of that sum, making a total of £7 million in all, if health boards come forward with enough good quality projects specifically directed to the reduction of waiting lists. The boost in NHS resources will also allow a 25 per cent. increase in capital expenditure, and increased expenditure on medical developments, on services for the elderly, the mentally ill and mentally handicapped, and on the treatment of patients with AIDS. My decisions for 1989-90 will bring the increase in resources for the Health Service in real terms since 1979 to 34 per cent.

Next year will see the start of Scottish Homes. I am determined that the new body should make a major contribution to Scottish housing from its first day. It will have gross planned expenditure, including loan repayments, of £349 million in 1989-90. This is an increase of £86 million over the comparable planned expenditure of the Scottish Special Housing Association and the Housing Corporation in the current year. Scottish Homes will in particular be able to play a major role in the regeneration work of the urban partnership in the four priority peripheral estates. Next year also, gross local authority provision for investment in housing is planned to increase by 12 per cent. This gives the lie to any claim that local authority provision has been cut to provide resources for Scottish Homes.

I have made substantial extra provision for roads and transport—14 per cent. more than for this year and £40 million more than the previous plans for 1989-90. Planned expenditure increases to £750 million in 1991-92. This will allow a good start to be made on upgrading the A74 to a motorway, as we promised in our manifesto. This is a major project which involves substantial planning in order to create a road of motorway standard. Planning work is going ahead as fast as possible and advance works may start before the end of 1990. Other roads will continue to be improved.

Programmes protecting the environment will be significantly increased in 1989-90. I have made a 14 per cent. increase in capital investment in the water services next year. That will enable local authorities to make more rapid progress in meeting higher quality standards for water supplies; to improve further the quality of our rivers and coastal waters; and to improve the condition of some bathing waters. Additional funds have been allocated to increase archaeological survey and excavation in areas of rapidly changing land use.

Provision for education in 1989-90 will be increased to £2·354 million, or 7·6 per cent. more than the equivalent figure for this year. The major part is for local authority current expenditure, which goes up by 7 per cent. to £1,793 million. Provision for local authority capital is increased by 9·4 per cent. Also, this increase, among other things, will enable me to support our educational initiatives by appropriate training, to expand the number of assisted places in schools, to respond positively to interest in setting up Scottish technology academies, and to enable centrally funded colleges to improve both their equipment and the infrastructure of their educational provision.

The growing demands on the social work services are also fully recognised in this settlement. Increased provision of 13 per cent. will put local authorities in a very strong position to respond to the demographic and other pressures in this area. In addition, through direct funding of community service orders, which I am to introduce for the first time next year, I am planning for a further 600 orders in each of the next three years to make this alternative to custody more widely available to the courts.

Resources are being provided to increase staff numbers and to enhance training in the prison service. As part of our fight against drug-related crime, a third wing of the Scottish crime squad is being set up. I have also decided to invest additional resources in the court building programme to allow the new Edinburgh sheriff court to proceed and to overcome the inefficiencies of court business taking place in six different locations in the city.

Many positive benefits will accrue to Scotland as a direct consequence of the new allocations that I am announcing today. In many of the initiatives which we have launched in recent years, we have asked both the private sector and the public sector in Scotland to collaborate to the best advantage of the Scottish people. The allocations I have announced today, to Scottish Homes, to the SDA, to the National Health Service in Scotland and elsewhere are in the context of public expenditure actually falling as a proportion of national resources. It is therefore as a consequence of the contribution that the private sector is making to the wealth of the country that we can afford to enjoy these improvements in the public services.

Mr. Donald Dewar (Glasgow, Garscadden): The Secretary of State normally accuses me of having a mean, ungracious and Presbyterian approach to his attempts to represent himself as a reincarnation of Lady Bountiful, deploying favours to the people of Scotland. He will be glad to know that, on this occasion, I welcome some aspects of the statement, but, first, I shall make a preliminary point.

The right hon. and learned Gentleman has confirmed that the planned provision for 1989-90 is £8·97 million, as announced in the Autumn Statement. If we compare that with the estimated outturn for 1988-89, it represents a cut in real terms of £200 million. If hon. Members are interested, they will find that helpfully set out in table 1.10 of the Autumn Statement by the Chancellor of the Exchequer. I recognise that the right hon. and learned Gentleman will argue that plans for next year will not hold, but the Chancellor's figures make it clear that the Government's intentions are anything but generous.

I make it clear that Opposition Members welcome any increased expenditure for the Health Service, but I must say to the right hon. and learned Gentleman that it is not all above board. Will he accept that there will be some understandable cynicism about an increase that includes a reduction in employers' contributions to the superannuation fund and savings that will allegedly take place arising from the privatisation exercise that is being conducted? Will he confirm that any benefit in cash from the sacrifices of staff, who have had to apply for their own jobs at

[Mr. Donald Dewar]

considerably inferior terms and conditions, are now being captured by the Secretary of State and paraded as an increase in public spending?

The right hon. and learned Gentleman talks about an increase of £240 million over planned expenditure in 1988-89. However, will he confirm that, if that is to be a fair comparison, he should include the £105 million which the Health Service pay settlement—and the nurses' pay settlement in particular—cost in Scotland in 1988-89? Will he accept that, on looking at the increase that he has announced, it is only prudent to take account of inflation and the additional 3·5 per cent. that the National Association of Health Authorities calculates must be included for demographic factors and other additional aims and perfectly fair objectives as outlined in the SHAPE and SHARPEN reports? If all such factors are taken into account, I suspect that, in real terms, Health Service expenditure is standing still and little better.

I strongly welcome, however, the £4·5 million for reducing waiting lists. My hon. Friend the Member for Strathkelvin and Rearsden (Mr. Galbraith) has been hammering away at that theme for a considerable time and I am extremely glad that, on this occasion at least, there has been some reaction. I hope that the right hon. and learned Gentleman will continue to listen.

I vehemently hope that there will be sufficient room in the new budgets to ensure that health boards can settle the outstanding disputes on the regrading process in the generous spirit that was, clearly, originally intended.

In other areas there is much less pleasant news. Expenditure on education goes up modestly in real terms next year, but then falls in real terms in the following two years. I do not understand how the Secretary of State can take the extremely optimistic line that he has adopted on industry. He knows that, in 1989-90, there will be a cash increase of £10 million, but, if the GDP deflator is applied, does he confirm that that means a decrease of £4 million? If one does the same sum for the following year, there will be a decrease of £9·5 million and in 1991-92 there will be a decrease of £17 million.

On housing it is the old story. We are told that there will be a lot more cash available, but, of course, the Government's contribution will fall in every conceivable way. What the Secretary of State has done is assume higher and higher receipts from sales and from the disposal of property. Next year, in cash terms, the Government's contribution, the net figure in the table attached to the statement, will be cut by £40 million and, in real terms, by £69 million. In the following two years of the three-year period dealt with, that reduction is followed by drops of £50 million and £32 million in real terms. If the Secretary of State is honest when he says that he wants to mount an attack on the housing problems of the nation, it is obvious that he should rethink the strategy and his contribution to the effort.

This statement is nothing like as generous as the right hon. and learned Gentleman has represented. It is full of throwaway lines that are scattered through the statement, which hardly bear examination. I was interested in the image of the Scottish crime squad with a third wing. That is a curious anatomical happening and one is moved to ask whether it will fly.

More seriously, of course we are pleased that, for example, there will be a 14 per cent. increase in the capital spending on the water services. That is balanced by the fact that, if one considers the other environmental services, there is a total cut in real terms between this year and next of £21 million.

In view of the coming debate on electricity privatisation, will the right hon. and learned Gentleman note that, by 1990-91, the loss of revenue from debt repayments and so on from the electricity industry will be in the region of £200 million according to the Secretary of State's figures. If the spending projections are adjusted to take account of that, the Scottish Office net budget in 1991-92, in real terms, will be below the figure for 1988-89 by some £263 million.

I suggest Mr. Speaker, if not to you, at least to the House, that when dealing with the right hon. and learned Gentleman the term generous often has a special and rather sinister meaning.

Mr. Rifkind: If the hon. Member for Glasgow, Garscadden (Mr. Dewar) is disposed to describe my statement as nothing like as generous as I am suggesting, I think that that is his coded way of saying that he has concluded that it is pretty generous.

I will respond to the points that he raised. First, he made his usual response by seeking to compare planned provision for next year with the outturn this year. He is perfectly entitled to make that comparison as long as he appreciates that, in the past 50 years, there has never been a year when outturn and planned provision have been the same. Therefore, if outturn has been greater than planned provision in the past—unless the world has changed by an even greater extent that he and I believe likely—it is certain that outturn next year will turn out to be different from the planned provision.

The proper comparison to make is between planned provision today with what we were planning a year ago. I do not believe that he disputes the interpretation and conclusion that we have reached.

With regard to the Health Service, the hon. Gentleman made some reference to the fact that some of the improvements in the Health Service expenditure were being funded by efficiency savings and by reductions in NHS employer contributions. Let me make it clear that the improvements in no way affect the pension entitlements —*[Interruption.]* I am not suggesting that the hon. Gentleman said that, but, for the purposes of the public who may think that such a—*[Interruption.]* I am delighted that the Opposition were thinking no such thought and that no one wished to suggest otherwise. Nevertheless, I put on record the fact that the reduction in employers' superannuation contributions has no implications for the pension entitlements of their former employees. This means that an extra £24 million will be available for worthwhile improvements in the Health Service.

As for the reduction in the waiting list, I can understand the hon. Gentleman wanting to give a bit of shadow glory to his hon. Friend the Member for Strathkelvin and Bearsden (Mr. Galbraith), but I must inform him that the Government's interest in and determination to deal with the waiting list long preceded the hon. Gentleman's elevation to his current post. In the past two years the Government have given priority to this area: in 1987, £3·6 million was allocated for a crash programme of action, and in the current year a further £3 million was set aside

to fund projects for this purpose. As a consequence, there have already been welcome reductions in the waiting lists, which were inflated in the past as a result of industrial action which the Opposition continually failed to condemn.

Finally, the hon. Gentleman mentioned housing, and correctly pointed out that one of the reasons why we can make such a generous provision for it in Scotland has been the enormous response by the Scottish public to the opportunities to acquire the ownership of the homes in which they live. We are constantly having substantially to revise upwards the receipts that will be available to local authorities and others as a result of the policy that has been applied. As we said all along, the benefits from the right to buy would accrue not only to people who exercised that right but to local authorities, the SSHA and others in the form of resources for their housing stock. I am happy that that is what is happening now.

I welcome the hon. Gentleman's endorsement of the overall strategy for public expenditure.

Mr. Allan Stewart (Eastwood): I want to ask a detailed point about the roads programme. I welcome what my right hon. and learned Friend said about the A74, but does he agree that parliamentary answers elicited by the hon. Member for Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley (Mr. Foulkes) have clearly shown that the A77 is Scotland's most dangerous road? I hope that the programme for that is not jeopardised in any way.

More generally, is my right hon. and learned Friend aware that, as the hon. Member for Glasgow, Garscadden (Mr. Dewar) listed his welcomes for the statement, some of us became positively alarmed? I hope my right hon. and learned Friend can reassure the House that this is a prudent increase in public expenditure standing in marked contrast to the record of the last Labour Government. Such was their inefficiency in running the economy that they reduced public expenditure in Scotland in real terms by 4·5 per cent. in their last three years in office.

Mr. Rifkind: The Government have stated throughout the United Kingdom that our objective is that public expenditure should represent a falling proportion of national resources; but because of the healthy state of the economy and the contribution of the private sector to its regeneration, in Scotland, as in England and Wales, it is possible to provide more for the Health Service and other public services.

As for the A77, I acknowledge that there are requirements for many roads other than the A74. My hon. Friend will have noticed that he fought the last general election on a manifesto that recognised the overriding priority of upgrading the A74 to motorway standard. I have today announced an increase of 14 per cent. in the roads programme for next year, a good proportion of which will be available for other road projects that may be necessary.

Mr. Charles Kennedy (Ross, Cromarty and Skye): Does the Secretary of State agree that these welcome increases, where appropriate, from central Government will by no means overcome many of the real and legitimate problems being encountered nearer the local and community level by local authorities, and by health boards in particular? In that context, will he give an undertaking—or at least a sign—that if the outcome of the outstanding appeals to do with nurses' regrading requires further adjustment of the health figures, he will give an open-minded response to health boards?

As regards housing expenditure for local authorities, will the right hon. and learned Gentleman bear in mind the fact that the reductions in housing benefit have left many local authorities throughout Scotland—I quote Inverness as a local example—having to increase rents and put their repairs budget on an emergency or standstill basis because of the inadequate income they are now receiving? Will he also be sympathetic to that problem?

Finally—this is a matter close to my heart—will the Secretary of State at least indicate that, in his roads expenditure totals, he is not closing his mind to the much-needed bridge to Skye?

Mr. Rifkind: So far as the latter point is concerned, the hon. Gentleman will be aware that there have been discussions with the Highland regional council and various ideas are being discussed as to how such a bridge, if it were appropriate, might be financed. We may see progress on those matters.

With regard to the health aspects of the hon. Gentleman's question, for the reasons that I have mentioned relating to both the efficiency savings and the savings from NHS superannuation contributions, the Health Service in Scotland has an increase of resources available for expenditure of almost 10 per cent. It should therefore be possible for any minor adjustments as a result of appeals to be absorbed within the existing provision, which itself represents a generous increase.

Mr. Bill Walker (Tayside, North): Does my right hon. and learned Friend accept that the increases that he has announced today in those special programmes—the Scottish Development Agency, the roads programme, the housing programme and, more importantly, the Health Service—will be very welcome? They are welcome because we recognise that they result from the growth in the economy which the Government have handled effectively and well. Who would have believed us in 1979 if we had said to the public of Scotland that there would be a 34 per cent. increase, over and above the rate of inflation, in Health Service expenditure in Scotland? That is what we have achieved and we should be trumpeting it from the rooftops.

Mr. Rifkind: My hon. Friend is correct in saying that in any country the improvement of provision in the public services, such as health, housing and education, can be achieved only if the private, wealth-creating sector of the economy is successful. That lesson has now been learnt in the Kremlin, but has still to be learnt in Labour party central office.

Mr. Ernie Ross (Dundee, West): The Secretary of State must know that we cannot run the National Health Service in fits and starts. If he is to have these bursts of enthusiasm and give more money to tackle waiting lists, because he genuinely wants to tackle the problem, he must realise that, when he last gave money for that purpose, many health authorities were constrained by the fact that they did not have the proper back-up facilities to take advantage of those additional funds. We do not want bursts of enthusiasm; we want sustained, necessary

[Mr. Ernie Ross]

expenditure in the health services to allow them to build up teams around the surgical teams that he claims to want to help.

Will he also answer the question posed by my hon. Friend the member for Glasgow, Garscadden (Mr. Dewar) relating to the fact that part of the money comes from the salary cuts that are being borne by those Health Service employees who are now the employees of private companies?

Mr. Rifkind: I agree with much of what the hon. Gentleman said in the earlier part of his remarks, but there have been sustained increases in expenditure. The problem with regard to waiting lists is that there have been occasional explosions in their size because of industrial action. But for the industrial action that has taken place over the years, waiting lists in Scotland would be far less than they are at present. Occasionally, therefore, it is necessary for us to try and deal with those unexpected bursts through initiatives of the kind that the Government have promoted.

With regard to the second part of the hon. Gentleman's question, the Health Service does not exist for its employees. Its employees are entitled to proper remuneration and should provide those services that they are contracted to provide. However, the House should agree that efficiencies can be achieved in the Health Service and in other areas of expenditure. If, by so doing, we can provide an improved quality of service for patients, that must be desirable and in the interests of the NHS.

Mr. Alex Salmond (Banff and Buchan): May I suggest to the Secretary of State that Opposition Members do not like comparing his previous plans with his present plans because he has the statistical habit of setting his plans low? That is the only way in which he can announce any increases. If we compare the net outrun for the year with the right hon. and learned Gentleman's plans, we find that there are reductions in Scottish public expenditure. There is a reduction of £80 million if a comparison is made with the revised outrun, or one of several hundred million if a comparison is made with the Autumn Statement outrun. Will the right hon. and learned Gentleman tell us where he expects the cuts will fall?

Did the Secretary of State notice an article in *Scotland on Sunday*—it was written by his erstwhile colleague Michael Ancram—that complained about those who talk about Scottish expenditure without reference to

"the exploitation of Scottish-based assets"?

Does he look forward to the day when we can talk about Scottish spending with reference to Scottish revenue and Scottish assets, and not his statistical juggling?

Mr. Rifkind: I can understand why the hon. Gentleman made the most urgent exit from a banking career that he was able to find. If his understanding of economics is explained in his remarks this afternoon, the longer he stays away from banking, the better for the Scottish banking industry.

Mr. Dennis Canavan (Falkirk, West): There speaks the jailed lawyer.

Mr. Rifkind: I can only say——

Mr. Canavan: I would not want the Secretary of State to defend me in the courts.

Mr. Rifkind: If I defended the hon. Gentleman, I might not mind too much what the verdict was.

I say to the hon. Member for Banff and Buchan (Mr. Salmond) that the announcements that I have made today represent to any but the most twisted mind a generous increase in public expenditure in Scotland.

Mr. David Lambie (Cunninghame, South): Like my hon. Friend the Member for Glasgow, Garscadden (Mr. Dewar), I welcome the extra expenditure on the roads programme and on water and sewerage services. The Secretary of State will be aware that most of the priorities for spending the extra cash will be determined by local authorities, including regional councils. Will he give a guarantee that he, along with the other Ministers in his Department, will ensure that Strathclyde regional council, over which my constituents and I have little control, determines priorities for extra expenditure on roads so as to include the provision of a motorway system from north Ayrshire to the main motorway system and the upgrading of the A737, along with the extra provisions for water and sewerage departments, so that the people of Cunninghame have a pure water supply for the first time since 1975? Let us clear up the pollution on the beaches of Ardrossan, Saltcoats, Stevenston and Irvine.

Mr. Rifkind: I never cease to be amazed. The hon. Gentleman has built a career under successive Labour and Conservative Governments on accusing those Governments of interfering with the rights of local authorities. He has now made an impassioned plea to me to insist that the Strathclyde regional council ceases to use it discretion and instead uses his or mine when expending its resources. I shall pass on the hon. Gentleman's views.

Mr. Andy Stewart (Sherwood): May I offer my congratulations to my right hon. and learned Friend on his announcements today about Scotland, which will make my constituents green with envy? Does he agree that the best way to continue funding extra resources is for the entire United Kingdom to work together as one, bearing in mind that eight out of every 10 taxpayers live in England?

Mr. Rifkind: If my hon. Friend examines the resources that are being made available for his constituents in Sherwood and the announcements that have been made by my right hon. Friends in other Departments, he will find that improvements in the Health Service, housing provision, education provision and other areas of expenditure are to be found throughout the United Kingdom. They are explained by the increased wealth of the private sector. I am happy to say that the private sector in England has made a contribution to the improvement in national wealth.

Mr. Michael J. Martin (Glasgow, Springburn): I hope that the Scottish Development Association will carry out the Secretary of State's wishes and do something about unemployment. I was informed only last night that an unemployed family in my constituency had to have a sheriff's warrant sale. This took place only 14 days before Christmas. That is what people in the cities and throughout Scotland are having to tolerate. I hope that the SDA will do something to get unemployment sorted out.

I have heard hon. Members on both sides of the House talk about roads. There are so many roads in my constituency that many of them could be put in the rest of Scotland and Springburn would still have plenty left. There are people who are living on islands, as it were, who are trapped by motorways, dual carriageways and bypasses. If the Secretary of State is serious about the environment, he should examine inner-city road building plans.

Mr. Rifkind: I have enormous sympathy with what the hon. Gentleman has just said. I believe strongly that if we are to try to encourage a better quality of life in the urban environment, we must realise, especially the planners, that towns and cities are built for those who live in them and not for the vehicles that they occasionally use. It is unfortunate that in the planning of some new towns, and of some of the projects for urban regeneration, assumptions have been made on the car usage of those who will live in these areas, when a significant proportion of them do not have access to their own vehicles. The quality of their life would be greatly enhanced by their ability to walk to wherever they need to go without risk to life through traffic and the dehumanising effect of major road networks in town centres. Sometimes this cannot be avoided, but when it can it should be.

Mr. Dick Douglas (Dunfermline, West): Will the Secretary of State reflect on his remark about the Health Service not being made for its employees? There is much merit in that remark, but NHS employees cannot exist on a diet of praise whenever there is an emergency, such as the recent rail crash. It is all very well to praise public servants, but they cannot exist on such a diet. They must be properly remunerated. They should not have to buy their jobs, as they are doing in Fife, by accepting inferior standards of employment and reneging on long-won trade union agreements. That is not what we would expect from respectable public employees. When will the right hon. and learned Gentleman meet the Dunfermline district council, with me, to discuss urban renewal within Dunfermline? These matters do not come within the orbit of the four cities that he mentioned earlier.

Mr. Rifkind: I look forward to hearing from the hon. Gentleman on his proposals for Dunfermline.

I accept that Health Service employees are entitled to proper remuneration for the work that they do. They will be aware that significant increases in pay have been given to a high proportion of those who work in the NHS. For example, nurses have a standard of living that is infinitely higher than anything that they have obtained previously.

As for competitive tendering, it does not necessarily follow that the levels of expenditure for the provision of certain ancillary services that have prevailed in the past have been the best use of public resources. It is for health boards to decide whether the quality of service that is required for health services in their area can be better achieved in another way. We have required them to go out to competitive tender. The fact that many health boards have decided at the end of the day to opt for in-house contract while some have gone for the private sector illustrates that they are left with the discretion to reach their own considered conclusion on these matters.

Mr. John Townend (Bridlington): Will my right hon. and learned Friend tell the House how much the Exchequer would save if public expenditure per head in Scotland was reduced first to the level of that in the north of England and, secondly, to that in England as a whole?

Mr. Rifkind: I do not think that we have reliable figures on the level of public expenditure per head in the north of England. It might be interesting to ascertain the figures. My hon. Friend is entitled to say that Scotland, Northern Ireland and Wales have higher levels of public expenditure than the English average, and have had them for many years. Whether that applies with equal force to each part of England is another matter. There may be variations within England, given the overall size of the population in that part of the United Kingdom.

Mr. David Marshall (Glasgow, Shettleston): I welcome the Secretary of State's announcement of the upgrading of the A74. I hope that the work will be carried out as soon as possible. Has the right hon. and learned Gentleman made any additional moneys available to Strathclyde regional council to enable it to make additional payments under section 20 to ScotRail to enable it to carry out necessary improvements to rail services within Strathclyde?

Mr. Rifkind: As far as I am aware, we have not yet determined individual allocations to specific local authorities. I have announced today the global resources that are available. We shall be considering the respective priorities of individual authorities over the next few weeks.

Mrs. Maria Fyfe (Glasgow, Maryhill): Perhaps the Secretary of State will begin his afternoon's work by telling that twit on the Conservative Back Benches, the hon. Member for Bridlington (Mr. Townend), that public expenditure is higher per head in Scotland because there is higher unemployment and more poverty——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I do not think that "twit" is a very elegant word to use in the Chamber.

Mrs. Fyfe: If it is ruled that it is an unparliamentary expression, I will call the hon. Member for Bridlington an ill-informed gentleman, if that is better.

In connection with the resources that the Secretary of State referred to in his statement, will he spend a small sum to buy the Minister responsible for education and health a copy of the EEC "Childcare Network" report which the Minister admitted that he had not heard of at the last Scottish Question Time? I assume that the Minister has not found the time or taken the trouble to read that report, as he has failed to make any response to it.

I will remind the Secretary of State about the contents of the report. All member states of the EEC have formed a network of childcare experts which published its report a few months ago. The report found that British childcare levels were the worst in Europe and that the level of childcare support in Scotland was worse than in the rest of Britain. What resources will the Secretary of State provide to solve that problem? Is it not a disgrace that he has not referred to a penny of support for care for the under-fives in Scotland?

Mr. Rifkind: I have already indicated the level of increases available for education and other matters involving the care of children. The hon. Lady might like to reflect on that. With regard to the earlier part of her question, unemployment in Scotland is considerably lower than unemployment in the north of England, but as yet we

[Mr. Rifkind]

have no reason to believe that public expenditure in the north of England is any higher than in Scotland. Indeed, it may be less. The hon. Lady would be ill-advised to take that comparison too far.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett (Pembroke): Has my right hon. and learned Friend seen the answer in yesterday's *Hansard* which shows that net disposable income in Scotland, after taking account of housing costs, is higher than in the north of England, the midlands, Wales and Northern Ireland? As public expenditure is also higher in Scotland, is it not the case that the taxpayers of England and Wales are making a net contribution to Scottish expenditure?

Mr. Rifkind: My hon. Friend is correct to state that the net disposable income of those in employment is higher in Scotland than in most of the rest of the country outside the south-east. In the United Kingdom we do not think in terms of English, Scottish or Welsh taxpayers; we think of United Kingdom taxpayers and decisions of the United Kingdom Government on how the resources should be used. Some hon. Members prefer to consider this on a sectional or separatist basis, but they represent an insignificant minority.

Mr. Harry Ewing (Falkirk, East): Is the Secretary of State aware that it is rather pitiful to see him joining his English Back Bench colleagues in the comparison between English and Scottish expenditure per head of population? Is the Secretary of State aware that in relation to health, only Finland has a higher number of deaths from cardiac failure per head of population than Scotland? Is he aware that no other country has a higher number of deaths from respiratory illnesses per head of population than Scotland? Is he also aware that our infant and perinatal mortality rates are third from the top of a rather dubious league? The reason that we get the money for the Health Service is that we have the problems.

Mr. Rifkind: The hon. Gentleman is correct and I am bound to add that if in 1988 that is true, notwithstanding a 34 per cent. increase in real terms since the Government came to office, one must ask what priority was given to those issues by the Labour Government of which he was a Minister responsible for health in the Scottish Office.

Mr. Canavan: Will the Secretary of State remind his hon. Friends the Members for Bridlington (Mr. Townend) and for Sherwood (Mr. Stewart) that since the Government came to power they have had the advantage of £62 billion of North sea oil revenues, much of which has come from Scotland not just for geographical reasons, but because of the efforts of Scottish enterprise and Scottish working-class people many of whom have given their lives? The result is that the Chancellor of the Exchequer down here has been able to impose a morality throughout the United Kingdom which is like Sherwood forest in reverse; the Government are robbing the poor to pay the rich by dishing out tax concessions to the rich friends of the Tory party instead of giving money to the National Health Service in Scotland and elsewhere in the United Kingdom to enable a fair implementation of the nurses' grading review.

Mr. Rifkind: As usual, the hon. Gentleman is light years out of touch with the real world. If today I have been able to announce a massive increase in resources for the Health Service in Scotland, which is comparable to that throughout the United Kingdom, and if that has come about because of the increased prosperity of the private sector in the United Kingdom economy, the hon. Gentleman should appreciate that without a thrusting, thriving and successful private sector, it is impossible to improve the quality of public services. He must remember that, because he was most critical of the Labour Government's inability to fund the public services. The main reason for that was because of the poor condition of the British economy at the time.

Mr. Tony Favell (Stockport): It is unfortunate that comparisons have been made in public expenditure between various parts of the United Kingdom. Does my right hon. and learned Friend agree that, thanks to the Labour party, Scotland is getting the reputation of having a handout mentality? Scotland's great contribution to the United Kingdom and the world was on the back of individual contributions to commerce, industry, insurance, the law and banking, not through public expenditure.

Mr. Rifkind: I have no doubt that we need a healthy balance between the major contribution that Scottish enterprise in its wider sense and the private sector as a whole can continue to make to the regeneration of the economy. We have always emphasised that in Scotland as elsewhere in the United Kingdom, it is through the regeneration of the private sector that we can afford the major resources available for improvements in the Health Service and elsewhere. That is not a Scottish phenomenon; it is common to the United Kingdom as a whole. I believe that there is a continuing change in the attitude of people in Scotland to the role that the private sector can play. Given the nature of Scottish history, as my hon. Friend said, it would be surprising if that was not the case.

Dr. Norman A. Godman (Greenock and Port Glasgow): With regard to the allocation of funds for the SDA, I sincerely hope that Inverclyde will be treated with some sympathy—aye, and perhaps a splash of generosity. May I remind the Secretary of State that east Greenock has the highest level of unemployment in the Strathclyde regional council area? May I also point out that the Inverclyde initiative has done little or nothing to dent that scandalously high level of unemployment? No employer of any size has come to the lower Clyde since the initiative was set up. Will the Secretary of State give me an honest answer to this question: when are we to see a decent improvement in the economy of the lower Clyde?

Mr. Rifkind: The hon. Gentleman will be well aware that each of the initiatives suggested by those who live in Inverclyde has been responded to positively by the Scottish Office and the Government. In particular, the establishment of the Inverclyde enterprise zone has already led to a significant number of inquiries from people contemplating investment in Inverclyde and the consequential employment that would flow as a result.

Obviously the benefits will not come overnight. We are completing the designation of the enterprise zone and the SDA has acquired some of the land that Scott Lithgow no longer requires to adapt it as suitable for investment. As the hon. Gentleman would be the best qualified to inform the House, one of the curious and rather difficult factors

about Inverclyde is that, although, as he rightly says, it has high unemployment, because of its topography it has very few sites available for a major inward investor without work being carried out by the SDA and others to improve potential sites to make them suitable for investment. Problems must be overcome, but if the hon. Gentleman considers the matter he will agree that an enormous amount is going on on the ground to solve the problems.

Mr. Tom Clarke (Monklands, West): When the Secretary of State referred in his statement to the elderly, mentally ill and mentally handicapped, did he not regret that he has not yet found the limited resources to introduce the section of the National Health Service (Amendment) Act 1986 which would have introduced joint planning in Scotland? Is that not a pity because, apart from the fact that virtually every voluntary organisation in those areas that I know of supports the proposal, the introduction of that section of the Act would simply take Scotland to the level of participation which has rightly been enjoyed by England and Wales for more than a decade?

Mr. Rifkind: We have made significant progress in that area and the voluntary arrangements currently available are leading to real improvements. Obviously I will carefully consider the points that the hon. Gentleman has made.

Mr. Neil Hamilton (Tatton): Does my right hon. and learned Friend agree that his statement today should be particularly welcomed by all who believe in high and rising levels of public expenditure? Does that not also demonstrate the value to Scotland of the Union with England? Is it not therefore surprising that the hon. Member for Glasgow, Garscadden (Mr. Dewar) should be so churlish in his response this afternoon? Without the union with England, the Labour party would be even more embattled and unelectable than it is.

Mr. Rifkind: I have to say that I do not think that the hon. Member for Garscadden was churlish. By his standards, he gave an almost effusive welcome.

Mr. Jimmy Wray (Glasgow, Provan): Does the Secretary of State agree that his statement is hypocritical as far as nursery education is concerned? That is one item on which the Government say that they are spending 26 per cent. more. Can the Secretary of State tell me why it is that, although, in 1977, 29,000 children received nursery education and now in 1988, 38,000 children receive nursery education, the Government are spending £300,000 less on Scottish nursery education and £3 million less than in 1977 in Strathclyde region?

Mr. Rifkind: The hon. Gentleman's comments on local authority expenditure may say something about the priorities of the local authority in question. Strathclyde regional council is probably responsible for more resources than any other local authority in Scotland or, probably, in the United Kingdom as a whole. If it does not attach the importance to nursery education that the hon. Gentleman wishes, he should address his comments there.

Mr. John McAllion (Dundee, East): Will the Secretary of State tell us whether he has included in the allocations this afternoon a sum to cover the cost of the latest scheme promulgated by the Scottish National party on Tayside regional council? It recommends that people who pay poll tax in full and early should be given a 5 per cent. discount. When it was pointed out to the nationalists on Tayside by an official that the costs of their scheme for helping the better off would have to be borne by the poor, the nationalists responded by saying that they were a party that represents the rich as well as the poor. I know that the Secretary of State does not share their point of view and I ask him, if money is made available, to ensure that their madcap scheme never comes into being.

Mr. Rifkind: The hon. Gentleman must understand that he has put me in a very difficult position. I have to say that it does not surprise me that the nationalist party should behave in a way that is so inconsistent with its theoretical position. Angus district council, for example, which is the only council that is under nationalist control, will co-operate fully in collecting the community charge; and now that the nationalists on Tayside, as the hon. Gentleman has claimed, wish to provide incentives to ensure that the community charge is raised as quickly and as smoothly as possible, I look forward to welcoming their continuing support in every possible way.

Mr. Tony Marlow (Northampton, North): I wonder whether I could ask my right hon. and learned Friend if he can explain kindly to my English constituents why it is that per capita expenditure in Scotland is, and always has been, much higher than it is in England. I think he can reassure them that it is not because the Government are trying to reward Scotland for a predilection for voting Socialist, but perhaps has something to do with the fact that Scotland is heavily over-represented in the House, which enables a massive distortion in the pressure for the allocation of public expenditure. May I suggest to him, as a member of a Cabinet that wishes to cut public expenditure, that the easiest way to do that would be to cut the number of hon. Members from Scotland in the House? Could he further say that, if there is any party in the House that has any silly ideas for tinkering with the proposal for devolution, the condition precedent for anything like that taking place would be a massive reduction in Scottish seats in the House?

Mr. Rifkind: I have to say to my hon. Friend that he is certainly right in saying that institutional arrangements for the representation of Scottish constituencies in Parliament have not done any harm with regard to the allocation of resources in the United Kingdom over the years, but he must bear in mind that the nature of many Scottish constituencies is somewhat different, from a geographical point of view, from his own slightly more compact constituency. Although Scotland may have only 9 or 10 per cent. of the population in the United Kingdom, its land mass represents 30 to 40 per cent. of the total land mass of Britain and, as a consequence, expenditure on roads, houses, schools and health cannot have the same benefits of scale that are sometimes available to his constituency and, perhaps, mine.

Mr. George Foulkes (Carrick, Comnock and Doon Valley): I am grateful to you, Mr. Speaker, for restoring me to my traditional position of sweeper.

Does the Secretary of State recall his visit to Cumnock and Doon Valley in the summer? If he does, he will be aware that the people of Cumnock and Doon Valley will judge whether he is to be considered a Santa Claus or a Scrooge in the light of his statement, and on the basis of whether it will enable the Cumnock and Auchinleck

[Mr. George Foulkes]

bypass, which was so drastically cut from the programme last year when everything was ready to go ahead, to be restored to the programme? Can he give me an assurance that it will go ahead in the next financial year, and can he say whether, in his extensive provisions, he has made just a modest little contribution for an appropriate celebration when Heart of Midlothian return with the UEFA cup?

Mr. Rifkind: I will bear in mind the latter suggestion on the likely achievements of that football club, which is well known to me. My visit to Cumnock and Doon Valley was a very pleasant experience and I have become familiar with the perspective of the hon. Gentleman about the needs of his constituents. Matters involving the individual allocation to local authorities have still to be determined. I shall bear the hon. Gentleman's comments in mind.

Mr. Ernie Ross: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. I wonder whether you heard, when my hon. Friend the Member for Dundee, East (Mr. McAllion) was making a factual statement referring to the comments, on the record, of the SNP on Tayside regional council, that the hon. Member for Banff and Buchan (Mr. Salmond) said, "It's all lies." I am sure that you would want him to explain that he was not suggesting that my hon. Friend was telling lies when he gave that factual report.

Mr. Speaker: I did not hear that.

Mr. Salmond *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Let me deal with the matter. I was listening carefully to the hon. Member for Glasgow, Maryhill (Mrs. Fyfe) and I was trying to interpret "twit" —what I understood to be an endearing term in Scotland although it is less so in England—so I did not hear what else was going on. Does the hon. Member for Banff and Buchan want to correct that?

Mr. Salmond: Yes. The word I used was "rubbish" and I am happy to stick to that.

Mr. Speaker: In that spirit, we shall move on.

[Following is the table:

£ million

	1988-89		*1989-90*			*1990-91*			*1991-92*	
	Cm. 288-II[1] provision		*Cm. 288-II[1] provision*	*Revised provision[2]*		*Cm. 288-II[1] provision*	*Revised provision[2]*		*Provision[2]*	
	Net	*Gross[3]*		*Net*	*Gross[3]*		*Net*	*Gross[3]*	*Net*	*Gross[3]*
Agriculture	197	198	211	204	205	210	200	200	210	210
Industry	267	289	261	277	307	260	280	310	280	310
Tourism	15	16	16	17	19	20	20	20	20	20
Transport	615	616	660	700	701	680	740	740	750	750
Housing	639	882	698	599	1,057	720	640	1,020	680	1,150
Other environmental services	693	750	710	706	768	740	720	780	750	800
Law, order and protective services	681	692	692	741	744	710	760	760	780	780
Education	2,186	2,188	2,226	2,354	2,360	2,290	2,400	2,400	2,480	2,480
Arts and libraries	88	88	94	95	95	100	100	100	100	100
Health and social work	2,830	2,838	2,948	3,182	3,189	3,070	3,310	3,320	3,450	3,460
Other public services	125	125	130	122	122	130	130	130	140	140
LA current expenditure not allocated to services	40	40	41	37	37	40	40	40	40	40
Nationalised industries external financing	134	134	−74	−61	−61	−190	−210	−210	—	—
	[4]8,510	8,856	8,610	8,973	9,543	8,780	9,130	9,610	9,680	10,240

Note: Figures for 1990-91 and 1991-92 are rounded to the nearest £10 million.

[1] White Paper (Cm. 288-II) figures adjusted for pre-survey changes.

[2] Figures reflect survey changes and changes since the Autumn Statement. Some figures may be subject to detailed technical amendment.

[3] Gross provision consists of total net provision plus capital receipts and for housing, from 1989-90, some Scottish Homes' loan repayments.

[4] The figure differs from the net outturn figure of £8,720 million shown in the Chancellor's Autumn Statement for 1988-89; the main differences are continued spending by local authorities above the level provided for and NHS pay settlements.]

STATUTORY INSTRUMENTS, &c.

Ordered,

That the draft Grants by Local Housing Authorities (Appropriate Percentage and Exchequer Contributions) Order 1989 be referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.—*[Mr. Neubert.]*

Orders of the Day

Electricity Bill

Order read for resuming adjourned debate on Question [12 December], That the Bill be now read a Second time.

Question again proposed, That the Bill be now read a Second time.

[Relevant documents: Third report of the Energy Committee of Session 1987-88 on the Structure, Regulation and Economic Consequences of Electricity Supply in the Private Sector (House of Commons Paper 307), and the third special report of the Committee of the same Session containing the Government's observations on the third report (House of Commons Paper 701).]

Mr. Speaker: There were some inordinately long speeches earlier yesterday afternoon. I propose, therefore, to limit speeches to 10 minutes between 6 pm and 8 pm today. I hope that right hon. and hon. Members who are called after that time will endeavour to keep to that limit, because it enables all who wish to be called to be accommodated.

I must announce to the House that yesterday, I selected the reasoned amendment in the name of the hon. Member for Banff and Buchan (Mr. Salmond).

4.28 pm

The Secretary of State for Scotland (Mr. Malcolm Rifkind): As I listened yesterday to the opening speech of the hon. Member for Sedgefield (Mr. Blair), I could not help but note that he presented himself as a champion of the consumer and based many of his arguments on benefits that the consumer would enjoy if a Labour Government could be elected or if Labour policies could be pursued.

In the kindest and gentlest way possible, I exhort the hon. Member for Glasgow, Garscadden (Mr. Dewar) not to be tempted in a similar direction. If he sought to present himself as a champion of the Scottish consumer, I should have to remind him that, under the present Government, electricity prices in Scotland have increased by the equivalent of 2 per cent. in real terms, whereas from 1974 to 1979 they increased by no less than 20 per cent. in real terms. That phenomenon was repeated throughout the United Kingdom.

Let us judge the Opposition not by their words but by their deeds, because that will provide us with a fine basis on which to determine the implications for the consumer. An additional factor is that the Bill allows for the first time for compensation to be given to the consumer in the event of an inadequate service being provided. I understand that the Opposition are to vote against that provision, which is unprecedented in this country.

I listened with great care yesterday to the hon. Member for Glasgow, Cathcart (Mr. Maxton) who, having made his contribution to the debate, appears to have decided that it was not necessary to be present for the second day. [HON. MEMBERS: "He is here."] We should be very pleased indeed if the hon. Gentleman could return every time we mentioned his name. He bewailed the fact that there was not to be a separate Scottish Bill and implied that the Government had made an improper and unacceptable decision in that respect.

I wished to be absolutely fair to the hon. Gentleman, so I examined his argument, which I found totally devoid of coherence. He did not at any time explain, for example, why it was acceptable for the Labour Government to bring together 53 Scottish undertakings with 500 English undertakings in a single Act of Parliament in 1947, but unacceptable for a Conservative Government to return to the private sector, in a much simpler way, the consequences of that nationalisation.

I presume that the hon. Member for Cathcart has paid the Bill cursory attention and will know that, of 103 clauses, only five refer exclusively to Scottish affairs. That means that, if we had accepted his advice, we should have burdened the House with two major Bills, largely identical in form and substance.

Mr. George Foulkes (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley): The Secretary of State will recall that one of my questions yesterday elicited that response from the Secretary of State for Energy. To read the *Glasgow Herald* and *The Scotsman* one would have thought that I was not here yesterday, but we are getting used to that. If the hon. Member for Glasgow, Govan (Mr. Sillars) had asked the question, we should all have read about it on the front page of every newspaper.

Does not the Secretary of State agree that the arguments advanced yesterday by my hon. Friend the Member for Glasgow, Cathcart (Mr. Maxton) were valid? When the industry was nationalised, we had one Minister and one Department to deal with it. Now, however, the Secretary of State for Scotland has separate responsibilities. The reason that he did not want to have a separate Bill for Scotland was that he would have had to appoint a Scottish Committee to consider it. He does not have the troops to man Scottish Standing Committees, just as he does not have the troops to man the Select Committee on Scottish Affairs. Why does not the right hon. and learned Gentleman come clean?

Mr. Rifkind: The hon. Gentleman said that he was puzzled that his remarks did not get into the press; his most recent contribution provides us with a convincing explanation for that. As I have tried to explain, 98 of the 103 clauses do not refer specifically to Scotland, so to insist on a separate Bill of a comparable size would therefore have been absurd. It was certainly not the policy pursued by the Labour Government when it nationalised the industry, in a much more complex way, in 1947, and I do not recall the Labour party objecting to that decision.

Mr. Alexander Eadie (Midlothian): The Secretary of State has argued positively and specifically that there should be only one Bill. Perhaps he will explain why, when I raised the matter earlier this year, he told the House that he and his right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Energy had not yet made up their minds.

Mr. Rifkind: We had not made up our minds then because we wanted to identify the extent of the difference between a Scottish Bill and an English Bill. We decided that it would be pretty silly for the United Kingdom Parliament to deal with two major Bills 97 per cent. of whose provisions were identical. I suspect that the hon. Member for Midlothian (Mr. Eadie) might have reached the same conclusion had he thought about the matter. I recollect that, at the beginning of the last Labour Government's period of office, they proposed to introduce provisions for elected assemblies for Scotland and Wales in a single Bill. It took several months, if not years, of

[Mr. Rifkind]

argument to persuade them that that was not entirely appropriate. Opposition Members should look to their own record.

I shall concentrate on the elements of the electricity industry that are distinctive to Scotland, but first, I shall comment on the main thrust of the Opposition's arguments yesterday. It emerged clearly from the eloquent speech of the hon. Member for Sedgefield that the Labour party in the 1980s remains wedded to the concept of monopoly. We have known for many years that monopoly, whether private or public, is undesirable if it can be avoided. The Monopolies and Mergers Commission exists precisely to try to prevent the emergence of unnecessary monopolies.

I had hoped that the Opposition would address the matter from the same starting point as the Government: we have had a state monopoly for 40 years and if it is possible in any way significantly to diminish the monopoly element in the electricity industry we should do so. We should not be divided on that on a doctrinal basis.

The Government have never sought to suggest that electricity is an industry that can be considered suitable for the application of classical concepts of competition. Of course that is not possible, and of course aspects of the electricity industry are natural monopolies. Nevertheless, it is clear that under the Bill it will be possible to introduce real competition in a number of sectors of the electricity industry for the first time. For example, independent generators will have the opportunity to come forward, and in various parts of the United Kingdom there will be competition between generators.

In addition, industrial bulk purchasers of electricity will have the opportunity to choose where to purchase their electricity. [HON. MEMBERS: "In Scotland?"] The provision will apply in Scotland. If hon. Members had read the Bill, they would know that provision for common carriage for electric power applies throughout the United Kingdom, and that bulk purchasers in Scotland will not be obliged to purchase all their electricity from the generator in their area. In addition, the opportunity available to Scotland to export surplus electricity will mean considerable competition as regards the best terms for that, which will be of considerable benefit to the Scottish consumer.

No one has suggested for a moment that perfect competition will be available in the electricity industry. The hon. Member for Sedgefield seems to suggest that, if we cannot have perfect competition, a monopoly is preferable. That is totally at variance with the experience of the rest of the Western world, and against the interests of the British public, whether in Scotland or in England.

The Opposition's assumption that the electricity industry under state control has had a perfect record of planning for the future needs to be examined. [HON. MEMBERS: "No one has said that."] I am sorry, but the hon. Member for Sedgefield said specifically that the whole purpose of nationalisation was to get away from 80 per cent. over-capacity in the electricity industry. I have to inform the Opposition that over-capacity is not a problem of the past. In England there is under-capacity and in Scotland there is not 80 per cent. but almost 100 per cent. over-capacity. That offers considerable benefits to the Scottish electricity industry. As a Scottish consumer I am not complaining about that phenomenon, but whether the British taxpayer has benefited from that system is another matter.

Mr. Rhodri Morgan (Cardiff, West): Does the Secretary of State accept that if, at any time in the past three years, with the opening of Torness coming up, he could have doubled the size of the interconnectors, Scotland would be exporting 2 GW instead of 1 GW to England, and the problems of the Scottish coal mining industry in the past two years would have been solved? The right hon. and learned Gentleman must accept responsibility for planning alongside the Secretary of State for Energy in the past two years.

Mr. Rifkind: The hon. Gentleman has misunderstood my point. Electricity consumers in Scotland demand less than 6,000 MW. As a consequence, we have doubled the capacity in Scotland, and it now stands at 12,000 MW.

Mr. Morgan: The same problem applies in Wales.

Mr. Rifkind: The hon. Gentleman confirms my point, that state control and central planning have not led to a rational distribution in the provision of electricity capacity, which the hon. Member for Sedgefield implied was the purpose of nationalisation in the first place.

The third factor is that, as long as an industry is ultimately controlled by the state and by Ministers, there will inevitably be political interference in the running of that industry. That has been the experience of all nationalised industries, whether under a Labour or a Conservative Government.

One of the electricity industry's crucial requirements is that, as with every other industry in the private sector in the United Kingdom, it should be able to make its own investment decisions based on its investment needs and on the resources that it can raise in order to fund that investment. But the House must be aware that, under successive Governments over many years, the borrowing limits of nationalised industries have in part been determined by their investment requirements and in part by the Government's overall public expenditure policy. It must be the case that the electricity industry, unlike those in the private sector, has been penalised in that it has not been able to plan on the basis of its requirements exactly what its investment requirements may be.

Mr. A. J. Beith (Berwick-upon-Tweed): What else are the provisions in the Bill relating to nuclear power, except a means of preventing the privatised companies from making their investment decisions and political interference by the Government in the industry's investment decisions?

Mr. Rifkind: The hon. Gentleman is right to say that specific powers in certain aspects of the industry remain available to Governments, but I hope that he is not suggesting that complete control over all the industry's investment decisions is preferable.

We have never said that the Government should wash their hands of all matters involving the electricity industry, which has strategic importance in the United Kingdom, as the Bill makes abundantly clear. My point is that, until now, all the industry's investment decisions have been subject to Government control. The fact that in future that will apply to one specific area—nuclear power—is considered a significant improvement by the industry.

Let me deal now with the specific conclusions that we have reached on the implications of privatisation for the electricity industry in Scotland. We start with three specific features that are peculiar to the industry in Scotland. First, Scotland has a diversity of resources for electricity generation hardly to be found in any other part of the United Kingdom. Oil, coal, hydro, and nuclear are in abundance. That is peculiar to north of the border.

Secondly, as I have already said, we have a surplus capacity which is unprecedented in the United Kingdom and which offers substantial opportunities, as the hon. Member for Cardiff, West (Mr. Morgan) said, through the development of the interconnector, for export to other parts of the kingdom which do not have such a surplus.

Thirdly, Scotland has a substantial nuclear capacity. Over 50 per cent. of Scotland's electricity requirements will be provided by the nuclear part of the industry when the Torness power station has been commissioned.

It is against that background that we examined the precise and proper way to privatise the industry in Scotland. The first question that had to be examined was vertical integration. For a number of years, Scotland's industry has been administered on the basis of vertical integration of generation, transmission and distribution. We did not automatically assume that that was essential; we looked at the matter with an open mind to see whether it made sense in the Scottish context to divide generation from transmission and distribution.

We came to the conclusion that that would be inappropriate, for two reasons. First, the size of the Scottish market makes it inappropriate. Electricity demand in Scotland is equal to about the equivalent of one English board. Therefore, to divide generation from transmission and distribution would have created relatively small companies whose prospects of economic viability would have been far more uncertain. In addition, we would have had to take into account the fact that, in the north of Scotland, in the area of the Hydro Board, a proportion of the hydro power is dedicated in terms of distribution to particular parts of the north of Scotland, from which it could not be physically separated. For those reasons, plus Scotland's particular demography, we concluded that vertical integration made sense and should be continued.

The next question was whether there should be a single Scottish private company or two. I am bound to say that our announcement that we had concluded in favour of two Scottish companies was widely welcomed on both sides of the House by all political parties. It was not an easy decision, because, while there was a natural desire to prevent the creation of a single private monopoly in Scotland of the kind that would have been achieved if the South of Scotland electricity board's proposal had been adopted, there was on the other hand a recognition that electricity generation in Scotland had been developed on the basis of a single market and, particularly with regard to nuclear power, on the basis that it would be available to consumers in all parts of Scotland.

It was on that basis that we put forward the proposals that we announced in the White Paper and subsequently —the creation of two companies in Scotland based on the SSEB and the North of Scotland Hydro-Electric Board, but with certain exchanges on a contractual basis of capacity and other such matters. In addition, a nuclear company was to be created, wholly owned by the south company and the north company, in order to ensure availability throughout Scotland of nuclear power in a form that meets the requirements of the Scottish consumer.

We took account of the fact that, until now, there has been a joint generating agreement which has had certain advantages through the application of the merit order scheme, but which has also had certain disadvantages because it has concealed the costs of the two parts of the industry, which is undesirable from the consumers' point of view. Therefore, we sought to develop a system which enabled the merit order approach to continue for the benefit of the consumer, but which created a new transparency with regard to the respective costs of the generation of electricity in the two companies. That can only be to the benefit of the public.

As a result of the decision to create two companies, we have had to consider the role of the regulator. We have accepted from the beginning that in Scotland, as in England and Wales, where there is not proper competition throughout the industry it is necessary to have a director general to deal with regulation and for him to have the primary responsibility of ensuring that, in those aspects of the industry where competition does not apply, the consumer should be properly protected and that other matters should be properly dealt with.

As we have made clear, the director general is a joint appointment by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Energy and me. I noticed that last night the hon. Member for Cathcart expressed some anxiety, incredulity or dubiety about how the director general could be answerable to two Secretaries of State. This is not an unusual phenomenon. The Forestry Commission is answerable to three Secretaries of State in respect of its functions in the various parts of the kingdom. There is no reason why that should not apply in the case of the director general. He will have an office in Scotland, as in England, along with a staff to service the requirements of regulation north of the border. There is no reason to believe that his responsibilities will not be effectively carried out.

To consider, instead of that arrangement, having a separate Scottish director general would have been foolish because, in practice, they would have had to work so closely together as to make the separation of their responsibilities one of form rather than substance. If Scotland is to benefit from the substantial export of surplus electricity south of the border, clearly, the questions of regulation, especially of the interconnector and of matters of equal interest to consumers both north and south of the border point to the sort of system proposed in the Bill.

Mr. Jimmy Hood (Clydesdale): Given that there is to be joint responsibility between the Secretary of State for Energy and himself, will the Secretary of State for Scotland say who will have the casting vote if they disagree?

Mr. Rifkind: Which board is the hon. Gentleman talking about?

Mr. Hood: If the two Secretaries of State disagree, who will have the casting vote?

Mr. Rifkind: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Energy and I live in almost total harmony from one day to the next. In the improbable scenario to which the hon. Gentleman refers, and on the rare occasions when

[Mr. Rifkind]

Ministers do not agree with one another, there are governmental procedures for resolving problems. There are precedents, even if they do not apply in this context. I advise the hon. Gentleman not to worry too much about that. I am sure that we shall be able to devise an appropriate procedure whereby agreement will be reached.

Mr. Hood: Will the Secretary of State send me written details of the procedure, because I would be interested to see them?

Mr. Rifkind: I shall certainly consider that constructive request, but the hon. Gentleman must appreciate that, as his question is hypothetical, so my answer will be based on an improbable hypothesis.

The role of the regulator is specified in a number of detailed ways in the Bill. I wish to comment particularly on the non-fossil fuel obligation and the attendant levy which is dealt with in the Bill.

Liability for a non-fossil fuel obligation applies in principle throughout the United Kingdom but there is no need in the foreseeable future for an order applying it to Scotland because of the high level of nuclear capacity in Scotland, which will be substantially enhanced when Torness becomes available.

Clearly, there will be no need in the foreseeable future for any additional provision for non-fossil fuel. That also applies to the levy, which is a consequence of the non-fossil fuel obligation. Any exports that the Scottish industry may make to the distribution companies in England—this also applies to exports from elsewhere in the United Kingdom or from France—would be subject to that requirement in order to ensure a proper competitive relationship between those supplying the electricity industry.

Mr. Foulkes: Would it be permissible for an English generating company to build a generating station in Scotland, in particular a nuclear power station?

Mr. Rifkind: It is possible for anyone wishing to introduce new generation to seek to do so. They must obtain a licence from the director general. The rules governing the provision of such a licence in Scotland will be no different from those elsewhere in the United Kingdom. Whether, in the next few years, anyone is likely to wish to invest in a new nuclear power station in Scotland is another example of a hypothetical question. The legal procedure to be followed is clear.

As hon. Members will have seen from the Bill and the information provided with it, the capital restructuring that may be required in Scotland is significant, and different from that in England and Wales. Largely as a consequence of the over-provision of capacity in Scotland, there is a high level of debt there. It stands at £2,700 million at present. As the House will have seen, the Bill provides for the Secretary of State to have the power, if he so chooses, to convert some of that debt into equity or debentures or to alter the capital structure of the companies in question before flotation takes place. No decisions have been reached on that at present, but those matters will have to be addressed in order to ensure that important public assets are dealt with in a responsible and constructive way.

I shall now deal with the opportunities that will exist for Scotland and many English regions as a result of privatisation.

Mr. Dick Douglas (Dunfermline, West): I hope that I am not interrupting the Secretary of State just as he is about to move on the coal industry and his responsibility, together with the Secretary of State for Energy, for ensuring the future of deep mining in Scotland. Surely, before Christmas, he will say something about the threat hanging over Longannet and other deep mining complexes in Scotland.

Mr. Rifkind: There are opportunities, challenges and concerns facing the coal industry in Scotland. We have seen a substantial expansion of the opencast sector of the industry.

Dr. Lewis Moonie (Kirkcaldy): What opportunities are there for deep mining?

Mr. Rifkind: If the hon. Gentleman will listen, I will tell him.

Over the past 10 years, there has been tremendous growth in the opencast sector, so that it is now producing over 50 per cent. of the coal mined in Scotland. The latest decision on the Kilroot power station in Northern Ireland provides further welcome opportunities for coal from the Ayrshire fields. The decision on that was welcomed by Members representing the area as good news for employment.

Clearly, we hope to see a substantial future for the deep mining sector. Exports of surplus capacity provide the best prospects. If the two Scottish companies can export a significant proportion of their surplus electricity, it should be possible to see a significant demand for deep-mined coal in Scotland. Much of the answer to the problem lies with the coal industry through improvements in productivity and the quality of coal produced from the deep-mined pits. I hope, together with the hon. Member for Dunfermline, West (Mr. Douglas), that it will be possible to see real developments which will secure the future of those pits. I cannot give any guarantee, but I believe that it will be influenced by the success in exporting surplus electricity in the way I have suggested.

One of the most difficult aspects of the Opposition's view to understand is the implication of nationalisation and privatisation for regional policy. Over the years, we have seen a policy of nationalisation pursued by Labour Governments. Whatever the doctrinal or ideological reasons for that or whatever economic justification they may feel their arguments have had for the United Kingdom, there can be little doubt that one of the consequences of nationalisation was the diminution of the private sector in Scotland, Wales and many of the English regions.

In successive nationalisations, we have seen the amalgamation of large numbers of private sector companies, many of them in the regions, and, as a consequence, the concentration of control in the hands of the Government of the day in London. Scottish Members, Welsh Members and hon. Members representing the English regions have been concerned that that has been a weakening factor for the economy of their regions.

Mr. Alex Salmond (Banff and Buchan): Would the Secretary of State care to estimate the percentage diminution of the Scottish private sector during his tenure of office?

Mr. Rifkind: Nothing that the Government have done in terms of legislation has led to the loss of a single private

sector company. Under successive Labour Governments, the opposite has taken place. For example, we know that the nationalisation of the electricity industry led to the nationalisation of some 53 separate Scottish undertakings, some of them municipal and others in the private sector. We know that, when British Shipbuilders was nationalised in 1977, it led to the loss of private sector companies such as John G. Kincaid in Greenock, Swan Hunter at Wallsend, Cammel Laird in Birkenhead and other companies in various parts of the United Kingdom.

When British Steel was nationalised in 1967, it led to the transfer of control to London of Dorman Long and Company and of Colvilles, both from Scotland, of Richard Thomas and Baldwins and the Steel Company of Wales, and of the Consett Iron Company in north-east England. On each occasion that there has been nationalisation, one consequence has been the erosion of the private sector in the English regions and in Wales and Scotland. One of the consequences of privatisation will be a significant move in the opposite direction.

It is not just I who take that view. I am sorry that the hon. Member for Gordon (Mr. Bruce) is not present in the Chamber today. Although, as I understand it, there was a limit on the time available to him in yesterday's debate, I am sorry that he did not repeat the remark he made in Central hall, Westminster, on 12 March, when he remarked that the privatisation of the electricity industry "would create powerful corporate headquarters in Scotland, Wales and the regions, which could be engines of growth for these economies."

I am delighted that that is the view of the SLD's energy spokesman. One must assume that its members will go into the Government lobby this evening to help facilitate the creation of powerful corporate headquarters in Scotland, Wales and the English regions; if they choose not to do so, I shall be interested to know how they reconcile that decision with their own interpretation of the benefits that the Bill will bring.

Mr. Salmond: If the Secretary of State will not say why he has allowed the diminution of Scottish private sector companies, will he say why, if he is asserting that privatisation means Scottish control, he did not argue for a Scottish Telecom, Scottish Gas or Scottish Steel?

Mr. Rifkind: Since the hon. Gentleman and his party came to slightly greater prominence in the last few months, most of Scottish industry has been pointing out how disastrous it would be for the Scottish private sector if his party's views were ever translated into policy. I would be more impressed by the hon. Gentleman's comments if he were not pursuing a policy disastrous for new as well as existing investment in Scotland.

As to previous privatisation, we always seek to identify where it makes sense to implement separate Scottish or English privatisation, but as most right hon. and hon. Members believe in a united kingdom, it is not always appropriate or sensible to split an existing industry. In the case of electricity, we already have a Government-controlled structure of individual Scottish companies, so privatisation presents an exciting opportunity to see two new major Scottish companies established north of the border. The electricity industry has not been part of the Scottish private sector for 40 years. As a result of the Bill, it will be a major part of it, and those who wish to encourage the growth of Scottish-based companies welcome that.

Mr. Alistair Darling (Edinburgh, Central): Does the Secretary of State accept, that while the companies' headquarters may be in Scotland, Scotland does not have enough money to buy the companies? The lion's share of the issued shares will probably be owned outside Scotland and possibly abroad. The Government are merely transferring an electricity industry that we now own collectively to individuals who have little or no interest in Scotland.

Mr. Rifkind: The hon. Gentleman now uses arguments contrary to those that he used previously. He will acknowledge that the headquarters of the Scottish electricity industry must be based in Scotland. As a consequence, the industry's requirements will be serviced from within Scotland. As to ownership, both consumers and employees of the Scottish electricity companies will have an opportunity to acquire shares. I cannot anticipate, any more than the hon. Gentleman can, how they will respond to that opportunity. The hon. Gentleman will recall making the same criticisms with regard to the privatisation of the Scottish Bus Group. He now has egg on his face because of the response of the group's employees, who wish to acquire ownership of the companies in which they work.

There are 5 million Scottish consumers north of the border who will have an opportunity to acquire shares, as will Scottish financial institutions and those who work for the industry. If the hon. Gentleman takes the view——

Mr. Norman Hogg (Cumbernauld and Kilsyth) *rose*——

Mr. Rifkind: If the hon. Gentleman will not allow me to finish my remark, I can hardly be expected to give way to him.

I cannot predict what proportion of the electricity industry will be acquired by shareholders resident in Scotland. I can predict that the industry's privatisation will create Scotland's two largest private sector companies and make an enormous contribution to the growth of private sector enterprise north of the border.

Mr. Hogg: Has the right hon. and learned Gentleman noticed that the headquarters of both Scottish electricity boards are already located in Scotland? Also, where does he get his figure of 5 million consumers? Scotland has a population of fewer than 5 million people, and even allowing for that tiny part of the north of England that is supplied by the SSEB, the boards' consumers cannot possibly total 5 million. Finally, given that the North of Scotland Hydro-Electric Board accounts for only 2·5 per cent. of the nation's consumers, how many of them does the Minister estimate will purchase equity in the new companies?

Mr. Rifkind: The creation of a private sector hydro-electric company presents an exciting opportunity to the north of Scotland. It will be by far the largest company there. As hydro-electric power has often been seen as a resource that comes from the north of Scotland, and as a renewable source in the Highlands and Islands, I thought that the hon. Gentleman would welcome the opportunity that the Bill provides for the people of the Highlands and Islands, and of Scotland generally, to acquire at least a proportion of the company providing their electricity.

[Mr. Rifkind]

I conclude by referring to remarks made in the House on 3 February 1947 by the then Minister of Fuel and Power, Mr. Emanuel Shinwell, when moving the Second *Reading of the Bill nationalising the electricity industry:*

"Electricity is an all-pervading service, and if it is to be satisfactory we must maintain the closest contact with local requirements, together with a sense of local responsibility . . . It is far from my desire that problems which can be settled locally shall be taken to London."—[*Official Report*, 3 February 1947; Vol. 432, c.1410.]

Mr. Shinwell's solution, and that of the then Labour Government, was to nationalise 560 separate electricity undertakings and to transfer control of them to London. The Conservative Government of the 1950s broke up that state monopoly to some extent by the creation of the South of Scotland electricity board with headquarters in Scotland and answerable to the Secretary of State for Scotland. It is entirely appropriate that it should be another Conservative Government that propose taking that policy one stage further and creating two new Scottish electricity companies to meet the requirements of Scottish consumers in a more efficient, successful and dynamic way than it has been possible to enjoy for the past 40 years.

5.8 pm

Mr. Donald Dewar (Glasgow, Garscadden): If at some point during the course of this evening I descend into a strangled squeak, it will not be due to any lack of conviction in the arguments I advance.

I was not greatly impressed by the arguments used by the Secretary of State, and I hope that he will not resent me saying so—although I give him praise for making a better speech than did his Minister of State last night.

Responding to last night's debate, the hon. Member for Galloway and Upper Nithsdale (Mr. Lang), argued, almost as the theme of his speech, that the Government are privatising the electricity industry "because we bother". It would be overstating the case to say that that was a memorable comment.

The Minister of State, Scottish Office (Mr. Ian Lang): I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman, who has obviously caught my affliction, for allowing me to intervene. If he is to quote me, perhaps he will kindly do so accurately.

Mr. Dewar: The Minister said, "We bother", and then went on to speak of anything and everything except electricity privatisation. I thought that I would help him by trying to discover why the Government have bothered to take this course. I want to examine the rationale, and to look for some of the answers that Ministers have been unable to provide.

As I understand it, the crux of the Government's argument is that, although privatisation may not produce "classical" competition, it at least produces useful competition. Competition is of course a slogan with which Ministers are at home, but it is not one that is universally applicable, and I consider it particularly inappropriate when applied to the electricity industry.

The Secretary of State for Scotland criticised the industry's record, suggesting that it had either been negligent in some way or had simply not responded properly to market forces, with the result that we had been left with a heavy over-capacity. As one of my hon. Friend's pointed out, that was a rather odd argument, particularly as one of the few props on which it is balanced in Scottish terms is over-capacity in relation to the interconnector and the possibility of sales south of the border.

In any event, perhaps the Minister will agree with me that the electricity industry in Scotland has been—if I may coin a phrase—"efficient, well-managed and successful" in recent years. I use those words because the Minister used them in March this year. This is not a case of the industry having to hang its head in shame; it has done splendidly, and the Minister has said so. We are left with the assumption that, splendidly though it has done, it could do better under what I suppose would be called the spur of competition.

Mr. Beith: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for giving way, and I hope that he can now rest his voice for a moment.

Why is the hon. Gentleman so fulsome in joining in the Minister's praise of the SSEB, which has built nuclear capacity far in excess of demand and in defiance of the wishes of many of the communities in which it has been based?

Mr. Dewar: I do not know which communities the hon. Gentleman means, but I hold to my general point that the electricity industry has served the communities well in the broader sense. I will not be put off by the hon. Gentleman, who is very much in the second division of the Scottish league.

Let us look at the arguments on competition which the Secretary of State has used, and to which he has very fairly referred today. On 2 March he said:

"I do not consider that it would be acceptable to create a single monopoly which would place the ownership and control of the entire Scottish industry in a single set of hands, whether or not involving a regional sub-structure."—[*Official Report*, 2 March 1988; Vol 128, c. 977.]

That was a rejection of the case argued by the SSEB, which wished for one company in Scotland with two wholly owned operating subsidiaries. The right hon. and learned Gentleman invited us to assume that, while a monopoly supplier and generator would not do, if by some sleight of hand or alchemy that single monopoly were split into two monopolies, complete in their own right, Scottish consumers would be given the necessary advantages. As an argument, that is rather lame, as I think the right hon. and learned Gentleman recognises.

The Secretary of State returned to the argument on 7 March, however. On that occasion he unveiled for the first time the argument to which he referred today, the argument about non-classical competition. He said:

"I must advise those hon. Members"—

that is, those who had made a mockery of his arguments—

"that they start from a false premise, so it is not surprising that they reach a wrong conclusion. They start from the false premise that the Government are somehow maintaining that it is possible to achieve classical standards of competition in the electricity industry . . . my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Energy made it clear that, in transmission and distribution, we are dealing with natural monopolies."—[*Official Report*, 7 March 1988; Vol. 129, c. 117]

I am sure that he did make it clear, and for once he got it right: we are dealing with natural monopolies. Now, with great tenacity but no conviction, Ministers maintain that we are not dealing with natural monopolies, and that a form of useful competition is being achieved. That was given very short shrift by the House and by the Select Committee.

On 2 March the Secretary of State went on to say:

"The two-company structure will provide competitive pressures within the industry in Scotland. In the short term, there will be potential for competition by comparison—".

At that point he was interrupted by laughter, an unusual accolade for one of his efforts. He continued:

"—by which means customers will have a basis for comparing and assessing the prices and service they receive. By helping to ensure effective regulation of prices, this will be an important gain for the consumer."—[*Official Report*, 2 March 1988; Vol. 128, c. 977.]

If the Secretary of State believes that, he is the only person who does. The Select Committee on Energy, chaired by the hon. Member for Havant (Sir I. Lloyd) and with a Conservative majority, pointed out that yardstick competition was largely meaningless. That was a pretty fair and balanced summation.

I am prepared to concede that in theory there may be some marginal advantages for large industrial consumers, but only for a small handful, certainly in Scotland. Almost all other industrial consumers, and certainly all domestic consumers, will see the "competition by comparison" argument as empty and rather cruel nonsense. I believe that even in Government circles there is a lack of confidence about it. In their response to the Energy Committee report, at paragraph 62, the Government refer to

"Indirect competitive pressures . . . The key role of the Director in analysing and publicising the performances of the two companies"—

here they strike a rather anti-climactic and unconfident note—

"should not be under-estimated."

It probably should not be underestimated; it would certainly be very difficult to overestimate it. I should have thought that if it exists at all it is at the margin of the edge of any reasonable argument.

Let us suppose that I am a domestic consumer in the city of Glasgow—part of which I happen to represent—and, following the advice of the Secretary of State, do a comparative study in depth. I get hold of all the regulatory tables and figures and come to the conclusion that the privatised monopoly that services me is not doing the job that it should be doing. What can I do? I challenge the Secretary of State for Scotland to tell me what I can do except continue to take the electricity and nurse my anger to keep it warm.

Mr. Rifkind: May I make two points? First, certainly nothing could be done at present. Secondly, under the Bill, for the first time the consumer will be entitled to compensation if he is receiving inadequate services from his electricity company. I understand that the hon. Gentleman is proposing to vote against the Bill containing those provisions.

Mr. Dewar: If I can find a chartered accountant who will, on an analysis of financial performance, return on capital, assets and tariffs conclude that the SSEB—or a successor private company—is doing worse than, let us say, the East Anglia board, can I lodge a claim for compensation?

Mr. Rifkind: First, the hon. Gentleman knows perfectly well that we were talking about standards of service. Secondly, he should remember that bulk purchasers of electricity will indeed be able to change their source of supply, which they certainly cannot do now. Again, the hon. Gentleman is saying that, because perfect competition is impossible, we should stick with total monopoly.

Mr. Dewar: I do not think that for the vast majority of consumers there will be any competition worth talking about. The advantages being advertised simply do not exist, and the Government should face up to that.

The Government have been caught in complete confusion over their arguments. On the one hand they boast that privatisation will be an enormous asset: they have to do that to bolster the competition case. On the other hand they boast that regulation will stop or at least limit the damage that would result if competition actually existed.

The major point that the Secretary of State is making again and again—he made it, fairly, during this debate—is that Government interference in the electricity industry is a bad thing, as are inhibitions placed on managerial judgment; that they should be done away with, and would be at least diminished by privatisation.

On 7 March, the right hon. and learned Gentleman referred to the inevitability that

"any industry controlled by Government is subject to interference from Government."—[*Official Report*, 7 March 1988; Vol. 129, c. 116.]

There is some truth is that, although interference is a pejorative way of putting it, yet in almost every speech the Minister will be spiriting up as a reassurance the all-embracing omnicompetent registrar, suggesting that he will protect us against the dangers and the damage that could result from competition and from handing over an essential service to a company that is run on the basis of profit and the interests of the shareholders.

Paragraph 29 of the Select Committee report states:

"There will be a price control formula which will limit the price to be charged to consumers."

We are being reassured that there will be someone to limit the price rises that we would have expected if we merely handed over a natural monopoly to a group of directors with a legal duty to maximise profits for the shareholders. That is the essence of our case. The Government are asking a group of directors, a private company, a profit engine to act in a way not normal to such an animal. On one hand the Government are saying, "That is what we are creating," and on the other hand they are rushing to stop it acting in the way for which it was built by appointing an all-powerful registrar.

Non-classic competition simply will not do. As the Secretary of State for Energy said, it is a natural monopoly, and natural monopolies force up profit margins and prices and have to be regulated. That is the catch 22, the inconsistency in the Government's case which has not been answered properly.

Mr. Allan Stewart (Eastwood) *rose*——

Mr. Dewar: I am happy to give way to the only Scottish Conservative Member in the House.

Mr. Stewart: Does the hon. Gentleman agree that, whatever may be the case about distribution, generation is certainly not a natural monopoly?

Mr. Dewar: It will be an actual monopoly in Scotland. If the hon. Gentleman dislikes that, no doubt he will table a relevant amendment to the Bill when the opportunity arises.

[Mr. Dewar]

I now turn to the arrangements for the regulator—a rather odd and distinctive argument. The Bill is silent here, and I take the Minister's point that it is not necessary to spell out which Secretary of State will be in control or which Secretaries of State will have a finger in the pie. However, there is a case for a separate regulator for Scotland. The arguments were set out perfectly well in the Select Committee's report to which I have referred. Paragraph 60 of the Select Committee report makes it clear that there will be a separate office in Scotland and a separate Scottish official who will

"be responsible to the Secretary of State for Scotland for all he does in relation to the Scottish industry."

Logically, there should be a separate regulator. It is not a matter of enormous principle, but that would be the sensible, practical approach. I certainly prefer the views of the Select Committee to those of the Secretary of State.

I am disappointed by what the Secretary of State had to say about the independence of the companies being created in Scotland. I make my point more forcibly because my disappointment was sharpened by the trailing in the press of the important and exciting things that the Secretary of State would say. Today's edition of *The Scotsman* remarked that he would

"outline the powers that will be taken to act as a barrier to a takeover from abroad or from England."

However, we received only an interesting account of the possibilities of share ownership in Scotland, but no guarantees as to how the control or the independence of the companies would be maintained.

This is not a minor point, and as the Secretary of State knows it is spelt out again in paragraph 14 of the Select Committee report:

"The electricity industry is of considerable strategic importance. The new companies will therefore be protected from unwelcome takeover by the retention by Government of a special share."

We are entitled to a good deal more detail than that. Perhaps the Minister who replies to the debate will say something about it, as presumably it applies in England as it does in Scotland.

The Scottish companies will be small—certainly the northern company will be small by international or United Kingdom standards—and I should have thought that they will be open to a predatory raid. I hope that we shall hear something about the defences that will be put in place and how those defences will be manned. I am sure that the Minister will accept that there is cynicism in Scotland, particularly after the Britoil experience, about golden shares and the reserve of powers to Ministers. It is very important that those matters are spelt out adequately during the passage of the Bill.

Perhaps the Minister, or the Secretary of State for Energy, will say a few words about the terms and conditions of the sale and when the Scottish companies are likely to be on offer. Has a running order been decided? I am told, and there are certain strong rumours, that four English distribution companies will go first, then one of the generating companies and then possibly one or both of the Scottish companies. It would be fair and useful if we were told about those decisions, if they have been taken.

I was also disappointed that the Secretary of State remained pretty mum about the interconnector. We all know that its present capacity is equivalent to 850 MW and that plans or a scheme propose its expansion to 1,600 MW. Obviously that is immensely important in terms of the coal burn in Scotland and the capacity of the Scottish power generating industry. I am told that the cost will be £180 million. I am not sure whether it will go ahead before privatisation, or if not, whether the English distribution companies or the Scottish Office will make a contribution to the costs. Again, we should know about that if we are to have an informed debate about the future.

Mr. George Robertson (Hamilton): My hon. Friend makes some very cogent points about the Scottish dimension of this important Bill. Will he reflect on the absence from the particularly Scottish dimension of the debate and the previous debate, when Scottish public expenditure was considered, of the brand-new hon. Member for Glasgow, Govan (Mr. Sillars)? The hon. Member for Govan told the House, and constantly has been telling Scotland, about the way in which he would oppose the Conservative Government. He has not been here this afternoon, but I was telephoned by an irate constituent who saw the hon. Member for Govan at 1.30 pm today doing his Christmas shopping in Marks and Spencer in Argyll street, Glasgow. *[Laughter.]* Is it not amazing that on the very afternoon when the Secretary of State is making his diabolical statement about public expenditure, the man who was going to take Parliament by storm—the hon. Member for Govan—is not here?

Mr. Dewar: Occasionally, I think that we hear to much about the detailed doings of the hon. Member for Glasgow, Govan (Mr. Sillars). However, I share my hon. Friend's astonishment, particularly as the hon. Member for Govan might have seen Christmas as an unpleasant English importation into Scottish culture.

Mr. Salmond: I am having some difficulty with my arithmetic. I was trying to do a quick count of the number of missing Scottish Labour Members. I do not know whether they are doing their Christmas shopping, but perhaps the hon. Member for Glasgow, Garscadden (Mr. Dewar) will help me and give me the official version of where they are?

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Harold Walker): Order. Interventions do not help us get on with the debate. Many right hon. and hon. Members seek to take part in a debate and interventions will have to be taken into account to determine who catches the eye of the occupant of the Chair.

Mr. Dewar: I promise you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that it is not my fault. I am doing my best.

I turn back to the much less interesting subject of the debt structure of the SSEB, which is about £2·7 billion. It is not often remembered that the debt of the north of Scotland board is just as heavy pro rata as that of the southern board, which is not surprising as it has pooled generation and distribution costs. Despite what the Minister said about no decisions having been taken, I hope that he will at least note that we expect to have some details of what is intended, at least in Committee. Clearly, the amount that will be written off will affect the price of the share offer and have an impact on people's ability to afford electricity. I hope that the Minister will be more forthcoming.

Last Friday, in *The Scotsman* under the byline of Mr. Keith Aitken, the industrial editor, there was an interesting report of a meeting in Torness held by Mr.

Donald Miller, the chairman of the SSEB. The burden of Mr. Miller's remarks was that the company cannot be privatised

"unless the Government writes off a large part of the £2·2 billion debts it incurred in building them."

He was referring to nuclear power stations. Clearly, the electricity board is as anxious as hon. Members. I hope that in Committee we shall hear more from the Minister.

I turn to the important matter of nuclear power. The Secretary of State has decided that there will be a nuclear company which will hold all the nuclear capacity of the south board and will be wholly owned by the south and the north companies in a 75:25 proportion—there has been some debate about the precise proportion. I understand that the minority position of the north board will be protected in the memorandum and articles of association and that there will be reserved functions—it sounds a little like the voting structure of the EEC. I gather that there will be reserved functions in terms of capital expenditure, pricing policy and so on, where the unanimity rule will apply. Apart from that, the company will run as a normal company. The Minister may want to say something about that point.

I should like the Minister to address his mind to the extraordinarily strong words uttered by Mr. Donald Miller, the SSEB's chairman, when dealing, not with the physical dangers but with the financial dangers of having an electricity board concerned with a substantial nuclear presence. Mr. Miller was blunt, strong and almost brutal on the subject. He said that there were a large number of uncertainties and unquantifiable possible costs which were dependent upon Government policy and the pricing policies of British Nuclear Fuels plc and which could create problems for any private company trying to operate. As the Secretary of State knows, Mr. Miller has good reason for fearing that problem. The SSEB's annual report for the last financial year shows a trading profit of about £13 million, which was promptly converted into a loss of £70 million because of the costs of transferring Chapelcross to Cumbria, the reprocessing costs—which the board had planned to postpone for decades but was told by the Government it could not—and the ever-escalating BNFL reprocessing charges.

Mr. Miller's message to the Secretary of State—it is important in view of its source—is that, unless he gets an undertaking that clause 88 will be fully implemented and the taxpayer will underwrite any of those bills as and when they come and unless he gets what he declares to be the "ultimate insurance", the company will be unsellable. Mr. Miller says that those assurances

"will have to be signed and sealed before one writes a prospectus—otherwise it will not be worth writing."

That is a serious charge, coming as it does from the person who, presumably, will be the chairman-designate of the new private company. He says that his company will be unsellable unless he gets a great deal of information and a guarantee from the Government under clause 88.

Mr. Miller says that the Government must respond now and accept those liabilities on behalf of the taxpayer. If the Minister accepts that, there are serious repercussions for the taxpayer and the scheme's viability and acceptability. If he does not, we should in all honesty have —after all the glitz and the glamour and the wonders worked by the image-makers in the television advertising campaign to sell the company—a Government health warning saying, "Despite all this, the chairman of the company believes that his company is unsellable in the absence of guarantees that we are not prepared to give." If we doubt whether the honesty to give that guarantee and to face up to the problems will be forthcoming, we are entitled to say that there is a fundamental flaw in the scheme.

I ask the Secretary of State for Scotland to respond on this point. That is the bluntest possible warning from Mr. Miller and it is essential that the Goverment respond to it. [HON. MEMBERS: "Come on."]

Mr. Keith Mans (Wyre) *rose*——

Mr. Dewar: I am sure that the hon. Gentleman has an honoured place in the Conservative kindergarten on Scottish affairs but I am interested in the attitude of the Secretary of State. Does he accept the point made by the SSEB's chairman that the SSEB cannot be responsibly, sold unless we spell out the taxpayers' liability under clause 88? Does the Minister accept that or does he repudiate it, and, if so, on what grounds? [HON. MEMBERS: "Answer."]

The Secretary of State will not be surprised to know that we shall return to this matter at some length during later stages of the Bill. With such an important statement by such a central figure in the public domain, the Secretary of State is letting himself and the House down by refusing to address himself to those remarks.

Mr. Rifkind: As the hon. Gentleman is aware, the Bill already provides for certain guarantees and for certain provision to be made by the Secretary of State in appropriate circumstances. No doubt we shall have plenty of opportunities to consider the precise terms of the clause in question.

Mr. Dewar: Unless we get further information before we come to the selling point, we are entitled to go around quoting Mr. Donald Miller as saying that the company cannot be prudently bought by a prudent investor. I hope that that aspect will be properly represented in the Government's doubtless balanced advertising of the issue.

With the Secretary of State, I have watched with fascination the growth of the energy debate, especially the debate on nuclear power. I am used to Ministers lecturing us. The Minister of State, Scottish Office did so yesterday. We are used to board chairmen courteously instructing us about the "competitive cutting edge" and the absolute advantage for the consumer, the board and the commonweal of Scotland of the nuclear baseload. The message is that every commercial piece of logic would drive any sensible board down the nuclear road. But then I read what is in the Bill—the references to fossil fuel levies and the 20 per cent. statutory obligation on generating companies. Now we have Mr. Donald Miller pointing to the dangers and uncertainties with which industry must live when 60 per cent. of the units sold, as in Scotland, come from the nuclear baseload.

More interesting is Mr. Miller's view that, whether the industry can or cannot live with it, shareholders cannot be expected to do so and the taxpayer will have to take the strain. It is essential that the Secretary of State spell out exactly how much will be available and what it will cost, and that he come clean. He knows, as I do, that the public are nervous—they raise this matter repeatedly with hon. Members on both sides of the House—about the handover to the private sector of such a sensitive aspect as nuclear power. The scramble to reassure people with references to

[Mr. Dewar]

the nuclear installations inspectorate and the control which will be tightly imposed does nothing to eliminate the persistent and clamouring doubt that safety standards will possibly be squeezed in the long run and that we are moving a particularly inappropriate industry out of the public sector and putting it into the hands of the private sector.

The Government cannot walk away from the strategic decisions that must be taken and that dominate this important industry. My hon. Friend the Member for Dumfermline, West (Mr. Douglas) said that vital talks will take place over the next few days on the coal burn in Scotland and the contracts between the SSEB and British Coal. I use the word "vital"—a much misused term—advisedly because the future of the industry and the jobs of thousands of people could be at stake.

The Minister talks about opportunities and challenges in a sort of dismissive way, a pep talk for the young. There has been major investment in our coal industry and designated pits have been sunk, such as those in the area of Longannet, to serve the power stations. Security of supply is still a weighty consideration in this nation's energy planning—or it ought to be. The Peterhead station will take 50 per cent. of its energy in the form of sour gas from the Miller field. British Petroleum is talking about importing coal from Australia and other companies are talking about importing it from Lord knows where else.

In 1987, the South of Scotland electricity board responded to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission audit report by making it clear that it did not think that it was in the long-term interests of its consumers, or in the public interest, to start importing all its coal rather than taking it from the Scottish fields. The board was right then and it will be right now to rethink what we understand to be its present position.

Mr. Mans: Is the hon. Gentleman saying that the Scottish industry or Scottish consumers should suffer a coal tax so that Scottish coal can be bought, even though it turns out to be even more expensive than imported coal?

Mr. Dewar: No, I am not saying that. I hope that the hon. Gentleman will apply the prejudice that he has just displayed to the fuel tax that is contained in the Bill.

There is a strong national interest in maintaining security of supply. That is what weighed with the SSEB in 1987, and it should not dismiss that consideration now. Of course, the Minister may say that it is different now because the industry is to be privatised and that there is no need to bother about the national interest to the same extent. If that is the argument, it reinforces the case against the Bill a hundred times. We have been trying for months to cajole, persuade, or even force the Minister to go beyond the pious hopes that he has expressed that some agreement can be reached. We have not succeeded, but we shall continue to try because this matter is of real and vital national importance. We at least recognise that there is a public interest in the debate. The Government should recognise what we know to be there.

I note that the SNP amendment has been selected for a Division, and I shall advise my right hon. and hon. Friends to vote for that amendment. No doubt the Committee will be selected very shortly. Whatever the Minister's view about a separate Bill and the process of parliamentary scrutiny, he will surely join me in saying that it is important that the distinctive Scottish aspects of the argument to which he properly addressed his attention in his 30 to 40-minute speech are properly examined and echoed in the Committee. This is an important point, although it may sound like a narrow, procedural one.

I hope that he will agree that that cannot be done if the Committee is cast on such a scale that it will contain, at most, two or three Scottish Members apart from a Front Bencher. We shall press, and shall expect to have his support, for an unusually large Committee on which there can be proper representation, not only by my hon. Friends but by hon. Members in all parts of the House. I am glad to see that the hon. Member for Tayside, North (Mr. Walker) is offering his services, as ever, in this cause. What a trooper!

We look at the Bill with growing gloom. I accept that it is attractive to the Treasury and I suspect that it has a great deal to do with the greater glory of the Secretary of State for Energy. Perhaps, if the price is outrageously discounted, there may even be something for a few shareholders looking for a quick profit. However, there is nothing in it for the consumer and nothing for the nation. When we look, for example, at the history of the gas industry since privatisation in terms of consumer experience, we see some of the warning examples that lead me to that conclusion.

I acknowledge that we know a little more about the Government's plans, although we still do not know enough. We have seen some horse trading on assets between the north and south boards. We have seen 600 MW of coal capacity being swapped for the Cruachan pumped storage system and we have seen 50 per cent. of Peterhead up for transfer and bought. All the patching and all the switching does not produce a plausible vehicle that can be offered honestly for sale to the people of Scotland or to people in any other part of the United Kingdom. There are too many ambiguities, confusions and internal flaws for the Bill to carry any real conviction.

The Government are not succeeding in convincing Scotland that its hostility to a measure that offers it nothing should be abated. Tories that I talk to in Scotland see it as driving the privatisation obsession past the edge of reason. The Government are taking a great public utility and turning it into a fragmented private monopoly, but still into a monopoly. It is asset stripping on a grand scale. It is not some sort of mean folly, but massive irresponsibility by the Government. They should think again.

In one of his early press statements the Secretary of State for Energy described the Bill as evolutionary. I think that that means that it has not been thought through properly and he knows that he will have to come back to the House with many amendments to try to get it creaking in some sort of unsatisfactory way. We want none of it, and we shall vote accordingly.

5.45 pm

Mr. Allan Stewart (Eastwood): I reside in the constituency of Glasgow, Govan and welcome the news given to the House by the hon. Member for Hamilton (Mr. Robertson). I am a fairly typical constituent and I have no doubt that all the other constituents of the hon. Member for Glasgow, Govan (Mr. Sillars) will be as appalled as I

am at the disgraceful and scornful way in which he clearly regards his duties in the House on behalf of his constituents. *[Interruption.]*

The Labour party has presented a wholly bogus argument about the need for separate Scottish legislation. However, my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland clearly showed the case against that. It would be absurd to have two Bills, each with more than 100 clauses, when about 98 of those clauses would have been identical in both pieces of legislation. Some of the five or six separate Scottish clauses are simply technical.

The hon. Member for Glasgow, Garscadden (Mr. Dewar) made a great deal of his allegation that there would be an absence of control by consumers in the new privatised undertakings. Of course, that is a good argument for him to become a shareholder, because with other shareholders he could exercise his power, if he thought it necessary, to remove the board of directors of the privatised company. He could do that if he and other shareholders were dissatisfied with the board's performance.

In the short time available to me, I should like to make two points. First, we are clearly transferring financial control from the centre to Scotland. The Opposition have not appreciated that. Of course the Scottish Office is the present sponsoring Department for the two boards, but in any nationalised industry, financial control ultimately rests with the Treasury in London. We are now moving towards control being exercised by the boards located in Scotland. A board will be able to make its own investment decisions unaffected by the necessary constraints that the Treasury under any Government must impose for its own reasons. That is true, even under a Labour Government.

Mr. Norman Hogg: The hon. Gentleman is making a strong commercial argument. How does he account for the fact that Winston Churchill, when he was Prime Minister, invited one of my illustrious predecessors, Tom Johnston, to set up the North of Scotland Hydro-Electric Board?

Mr. Stewart: I am confused about what the hon. Gentleman is getting at. It is an advantage to have separate boards in Scotland and for the Scottish Office to have an operational overview, but the fundamental point remains that financial control of the electricity industry, as is the case with any other nationalised industry, ultimately derives from the Treasury, and the removal of such control will be a major benefit for those who are trying to run the industry.

My second point is that, since 1979, private shareholding in Scotland has doubled. That is a major achievement and an advance in giving people a stake in industries and businesses, but shareholding in Scotland is at a lower level than elsewhere in the United Kingdom. Surely this is a major opportunity for Scots—for all practical purposes, every Scot is an individual customer of one or other board—to take a real stake in a major Scottish industry.

The hon. Member for Edinburgh, Central (Mr. Darling) has said that there is not enough money in Scotland to take a major stake in industry. He should walk around Charlotte square in his constituency and count the assets of financial institutions such as pension funds and life funds; he will then agree that a massive amount of money is controlled there. I hope that a proportion of it will also go into the new shareholding of the Scottish boards.

I hope that my right hon. and learned Friend will make the share offer favourable. I hope also that he will realise that this is an opportunity to make ownership by the people a reality, not the myth that it is under nationalisation. We hear a great deal from Opposition Members about ownership by the people. They equate ownership by the state with ownership by individual people. It is a myth. The individual has no control over a nationalised industry. Shareholding gives people a real stake.

The hon. Member for Garscadden spoke about the timing of the sale of the new companies. I hope that the Scottish companies will be privatised, if not immediately, which would be ideal, then as quickly as possible. Let us try to take the lead in Scotland. My right hon. and learned Friend has confirmed that there are debt matters and so on to be sorted out. Let that be done quickly, and let Scotland take the lead. This is an opportunity for a major expansion of private enterprise in Scotland and for Scots to have a real stake in a most important industry.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: It might be sensible if I remind the House that Mr. Speaker has announced that, from 6 o'clock to 8 o'clock, the ten-minute limit on speeches will apply.

5.52 pm

Mr. Stanley Orme (Salford, East): Despite what the Secretary of State says about competition within the proposed privatised industry, we are to turn a public monopoly into a private monopoly. The consumer will have no choice—there is no argument about it; the point was explored on the Floor of the House yesterday and this afternoon—just as he has no choice in the British gas industry.

One aspect of this privatisation makes it different from any other privatisation that has taken place under this Government. The Secretary of State criticised the people who work within the industry. He implied that the industry is not producing as it should and that, under privatisation, it could be dramatically improved. He ignored the fact that it is one of the safest and most efficient electricity supply industries within the developed world. If it had not been for recent price increases, the industry would be providing electricity cheaper than anywhere else in western Europe—certainly cheaper than in the United States or Japan.

Yesterday, the Secretary of State for Energy and I had an exchange on nuclear power. The central issue is the nuclear dilemma that the Government face. It is not a matter of whether one is in favour of or against nuclear power. Whatever the policy, we are to have some nuclear power into the next century. Under the Government's proposals, how is nuclear power to be dealt with and priced? There is no argument. When challenged, the Secretary of State for Scotland refused to respond to the case of my hon. Friend the Member for Glasgow, Garscadden (Mr. Dewar) on the cost and control of nuclear power.

With this Bill, the Secretary of State will put a fence around nuclear power. It will clearly state that it is

[Mr. Stanley Orme]

different and will be dealt with and priced differently. Four PWRs are promised by the end of the century. There is also Sizewell B. We shall be faced with the decommissioning of AGRs and Magnox stations, which will cost several billion pounds. We must consider the tiny Calder Hall experiment, which is being decommissioned at the moment, and the problems that it is creating. What will happen when larger AGRs must be decommissioned in the foreseeable future? What about the cost of that?

My hon. Friend the Member for Garscadden referred to Mr. Donald Miller and his trenchant remarks about the saleability of the industry if the cost of nuclear power is not removed from the privatisation. If we were to approach Lord Marshall, we would get a similar argument.

Nobody is more enthusiastic about nuclear power than Lord Marshall.

Mr. Beith: The right hon. Gentleman can say that again.

Mr. Orme: The hon. Gentleman says that I can say that again.

Lord Marshall's enthusiasm will be tempered when he is answerable to private shareholders, who will ask, "Who will pay for the new power stations and for the present decommissioning?" The Sizewell B inquiry lasted for about four years. The inspector eventually said that, on balance, he thought that nuclear power would be cheaper than coal. What would he say today? The Bill strips away the protection that nuclear power has had in this country over recent years and exposes the fact that, compared with the cost of fossil fuels—coal and oil—nobody argues that nuclear power is cheap. That is the reality we face, but what does the privatised industry, which will be answerable to its shareholders, say about that? It says that it exists to make profits.

That industry will want to use the cheapest coal available. My hon. Friends will be aware that imported cheap coal will be one of the priorities for the privatised industry. Will the British public allow the nuclear part of the industry to be taken out of the Bill, put on one side and completely protected from natural market forces? If that happens, the cost will be borne by the British taxpayer, but not by the shareholders of the privatised companies. They will be excluded. We must face that.

Last week there was an excellent article in the *Spectator* by Jonathan Davis who spelt out clearly what will happen. He said:

"Gone, with the stroke of a Parly draftsman's pen",

is the previous support for nuclear power. The article continues:

"Although it does not spell out the message in so many words, Mr. Parkinson's Bill effectively marks the end of that particular hoary game. The prices of oil and coal, nuclear's fossil fuel competitors, have fallen to their lowest level in real terms for many years, and are likely to languish there for some time. In these conditions, even the PWR, the American-designed pressurised water reactor on which so many of the British industry's hopes now rest, cannot expect to compete with coal. No private sector utility would dream of building one in the present climate."

Given that the Government have supported nuclear power, have pushed it down our throats and have used every means possible to encourage its development, we now face an extraordinary situation.

I am sure that my hon. Friends will agree that, in an economy which uses a mixed-fuel input—coal, oil, nuclear power, and alternative sources—for our electricity supply, the way in which to deal with that industry, upon which everyone depends for light, food, fuel and work, can only be through public control. That is in the best interests of the consumer.

To take nuclear power out of public control is extremely dangerous. The British people want it kept under firm control. I understand that there is a nuclear power station on the edge of the area that was recently hit by an earthquake in the Soviet Union. Fortunately for everyone concerned, it was not damaged; I am sure that we are all extremely thankful for that.

Mr. Malcolm Bruce (Gordon): It has been shut down.

Mr. Orme: Yes, that is correct.

The British public need to recognise that this Government, or any Government, will give them proper protection. The industry must be answerable to Ministers and, through them, to Parliament. In that way we can discuss it.

Given that the Bill proposes a separate unit responsible for nuclear power and that it is to be dealt with in a special way, will the Minister give an undertaking that public accountability, through the parliamentary process, will remain? If it does not, our people will realise that they cannot support the Bill.

The Bill contains a nuclear dilemma, which is unique in comparison to any other development. When the Bill is in Committee, we must explore in detail not just the costs, but the overall management policy for the industry.

It is absolutely criminal that a well-run economic industry, which has produced what the nation needs, should now be broken up purely in the cause of profit. It has nothing to do with competition or improvements in the industry. When we have had an opportunity to debate this matter further, and when the argument is taken out to the public I believe that they will begin to see through the Bill and will discover that it is not in their interests.

6.5 pm

Mr. David Harris (St. Ives): I am sure that the right hon. Member for Salford, East (Mr. Orme) will forgive me if I do not follow his arguments now that the ten-minute speech rule is in play. Unlike the right hon. Gentleman, I support the Bill. My remarks about a particular aspect of it should not be taken as meaning that I intend to oppose the Bill. I am in favour of its general principles.

I wish to concentrate on a matter of acute importance to one area of my constituency and I believe that it is important to all constituents in rural areas. I believe that parity of charges between comparable consumers throughout a company's area should be written into the Bill.

My particular interest in this matter stems from the injustice that is suffered by my constituents who live on the Isles of Scilly. For 31 years the Isles of Scilly have had to pay the highest tariff for electricity in the United Kingdom. That stems from the simple fact that, until next year, they must rely on the oil-fired power station on St. Mary's. In April next year all that will change when the submarine cables, which have been laid to the Isles of Scilly, begin to operate. Then, the Isles of Scilly will be connected to the national grid.

Those cables are the result of a long campaign in which I have played a part, but which has been spearheaded by the islanders. I should like to pay tribute to three islanders, Colin Daly, John Poat and Tony Dingley. They are the officers of the Isles of Scilly electricity tariff parity action group.

They have won the battle to connect the Isles of Scilly to the mainland grid and they have won the argument for parity between the tariff paid by the islands and the tariff charged by the South Western electricity board. They now fear, however, that that parity might be snatched from them as a result of privatisation. I trust and believe that the Minister of State will assure me that that is not so. I believe that one of the provisions of the European regional development fund grant, which was given for laying the cables, is that parity should not be taken away once it is given. I do not believe that the islanders have anything to fear on that score.

Let me draw attention, however, to clause 3(2) which relates to the provisions for Scotland. It gives, as in so many cases, special and privileged treatment to Scotland. That clause makes it clear that the Secretary of State can make an order under which tariffs shall not distinguish, directly or indirectly, between different parts of the area covered by that order. The Isles of Scilly would certainly like such a provision written into the Bill——

Mr. Salmond: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Harris: I cannot give way; I have only 10 minutes.

My constituents would certainly like such a provision.

I have been involved in detailed correspondence with my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Energy and my hon. Friend the Minister of State on these points while the Bill has been in preparation. I asked my right hon. Friend on 4 July whether he would give an assurance

"that the new privatised electricity companies will have parity of charges within their areas, so that, for example, there will be no disadvantage to consumers on the Isles of Scilly in my constituency or, indeed, consumers who live in rural as opposed to urban areas within that company's supply system".

I am pleased to say that my right hon. Friend replied:

"We are extremely conscious of the anxiety that is felt in areas such as the Scilly Isles and the south-west. We recognise that it is a serious problem. We are sure that, when we make our proposals, my hon. Friend will be happy with them."—[*Official Report*, 4 July 1988; Vol. 136, c. 713.]

I hope that my hon. Friend the Minister will make my happiness complete and give me the assurances that I seek on this important matter.

At present, my constituents on the Isle of Scilly pay 27 per cent. more for their electricity than the rest of the consumers served by the South Western electricity board. Those with businesses and block tariffs pay 50 per cent. more than those on the mainland. That injustice will be corrected when the cable comes into play, and I hope that this parity will not be snatched away.

This is a point of much wider application than merely to my constituents on the Isles of Scilly. I heartily agree with the Select Committee on Energy; which states:

"We do not think rural customers should be charged more per kilowatt hour consumed than people living in towns".

It is a sad reflection on the Opposition that they have not seized on that point—*[Interruption.]* At least, they have not done so in this debate. But it is an important point, about which I want a reassurance from the Minister.

I hope that this fear will not be realised. I appreciate that the legislation on this wider point will be exactly the same as the legislation that is now in place. I want something written into the Bill to ensure that there is no discrimination against those who live in rural areas as opposed to those who live in towns, and I confidently expect an assurance from my hon. Friend that the needs of my constituents in the Isles of Scilly will be met.

6.13 pm

Dr. David Owen (Plymouth, Devonport): Electricity generation, unlike water, is not a natural monopoly, and there is no reason why there should not be genuine competition and private generating companies. Indeed, there would be advantages in that.

The problem with this legislation is that part of the generation of electricity in this country is nuclear. How we should deal with the nuclear power industry raises quite separate questions. At this stage, the Government's intentions, if not the Bill, do not match the genuine public anxieties aroused in this respect.

Two generating companies for England and Wales are not enough. I strongly challenge the idea of including nuclear power in the National Power company, with about 70 per cent. of present CEGB assets. The Scottish precedent should be followed in England and Wales, and there should be a separate nuclear generation company. That would provide much greater transparency, and the true nuclear costs would be easily identified.

The nuclear generating companies should not be taken to the market and privatised at this stage unless one of two solutions is adopted. The first is Government involvement, probably through the UK Atomic Energy Authority, in the nuclear generation companies. Initially, that would involve a majority interest in the companies—one in Scotland and one in England and Wales. If the Government reject that, the other option is to keep the nuclear generation companies as franchise companies that construct and run nuclear plants, but the ownership of the nuclear plant and all the rest of the material for storage that is not with BNFL would be owned by the Atomic Energy Authority.

The Government will have great difficulty in floating the nuclear generating company in Scotland. What Mr. Miller has said about that is true. National Power, the big company in England and Wales, will also be difficult to float. The market will be far more sceptical about the true economic costs of nuclear generation.

On environmental grounds, one of the advantages of this legislation and the impetus from it is that we are now beginning to discover the true cost of nuclear generation. I suspect that not a single hon. Member believes that we shall in our lifetime again hear nuclear generation justified on economic or commercial grounds. Yet when one thinks of the continual lies that have been told by the CEGB about the costs of electricity generation, I cannot understand how anyone can defend the status quo. I know of no public body that has distorted the truth over decades more than the CEGB. I experienced that in my own constituency when the board wanted to put an oil-fired power station at Millbrook on the Tamar estuary. The board's "facts" were shown to be incorrect, again and again.

I have no real confidence, either, in the continuation of the existing system of electricity supply. It was vital that the Secretary of State won the battle with Lord Marshall for the separation of the grid from the generation of

[Dr. David Owen]

power, but the Secretary of State was wrong to create a company for transmission which was wholly in private hands. There is a public interest in transmission and I would have preferred the company to be publicly held. However, I must admit that a powerful argument against that can be adduced. Successive Governments have interfered in the pricing of electricity and overridden the market. The last Labour Government, of which I was a member—I take my share of collective responsibility for this—caused a massive increase in electricity charges, but that Government were not the only sinners; Conservative Governments have also used prices as a means of raising revenue from the country.

There is something to be said for the grid being taken out of Government control, but the problem of leaving it to the 12 supply companies is that there may be collusion between them over their pricing mechanisms. That is why even a 10 per cent. public stake in the transmission company would be an adequate safeguard against collusion. The Government should examine that carefully and consider either a Treasury or an Atomic Energy Authority involvement. Either way, the public interest should be reflected by an involvement in the transmission company. That would go a long way to alleviate anxieties about the dangers of the solution that the Government have adopted. There would be no objection in principle to such a move, and I recommend it to the Secretary of State.

The other advantage of taking the Government out of electricity generation in its widest sense is that they can then start to do what successive Governments have failed to do—apply stringent environmental standards to it. Those standards must be applied, first, to the nuclear generation element and, secondly, to the coal-fired and oil-fired generation element. This country has been a massive polluter in terms of sulphur emissions and many people do not yet believe that the environmental standards in nuclear generation are sufficiently tough. If the Government are outside the system, adding those costs to the industry, on the basis of "the polluter pays", that will add to the overall cost of generation, but we will then have a clear view of the exact costs of generation.

The real criticism of the Government is that they have gone against their own basic principles. They have not been prepared to trust the market or commercial judgment and they have rigged the market in favour of nuclear power. If nuclear power is as uneconomic as I suspect most people now believe it to be, the only case for providing nuclear power is strategic. We might not wish to be totally dependent on fossil fuels, but we have not yet built up sufficient alternative sources, through wind power, wave power or, as I should far prefer, barriers. There is far more economic sense in heavy initial capital investment in such projects as the Severn barrier and I hope that they will come through on economic grounds.

However, if we decide, for strategic purposes, that we do not want to be totally dependent on fossil fuels, we should not believe that the only option is nuclear power. The Government also have the option of backing barrage power. We need to hear about that. Let us have a little less talk about a preserved nuclear element. Some of us would like a preserved barrage element. We must bear that in mind.

There is then the question of how we deal with a strategic element. If the Government decide that they need diversity—I do not deny any Government that power since it is a prudent power to hold—it should be justified in this House on every occasion. The Minister should come to the House for separate authority for a nuclear power station to be built, if the Government believe that there is a strategic need, and justify that decision against commercial costings and market forces. Such an installation should not be put entirely within the private sector. It would be better to put it under the overall authority of the Atomic Energy Authority, with its construction and running franchised to commercial companies.

Time is short, and I do not wish to detain the House. We are not opposed in principle to the Bill. We see its merits, but we do not believe that it is yet right, particularly in respect of the nuclear and grid aspects. There should be a greater element of public interest in the decision-making, albeit perhaps in a commercial undertaking. We hear a great deal from the Government about public-private partnerships for the inner city. Why cannot there be public-private partnership for this most important strategic element, the generation of electricity? We have nothing against the structure of the Bill because it allows for three or more generating companies in England and Wales and would thus allow for nuclear generation. There would be no need to privatise nuclear generation and we would have an evolutionary approach to this complex subject that might command a surprising consensus throughout the country.

We shall judge the Bill in that spirit. I hope that it will not be yet more legislation in which the Government resist any fundamental amendment. The Select Committee has already seriously criticised the provisions and the House has the right to influence the legislation, for the good. I hope that the Secretary of State will not close his mind to some significant amendments along the lines that I have suggested.

6.23 pm

Mr. Malcolm Moss (Cambridgeshire, North-East): It is a rare privilege to follow the right hon. Member for Plymouth, Devonport (Dr. Owen) and I agree with a great deal of what he said. The House should accept his comments, which have been made in a forthright way.

The right hon. Gentleman is right to say that the electricity supply industry has suffered, as have many nationalised industries, from a combination of Government interference, poor accountability and a lack of market discipline. That has led to inefficient investment decisions being taken, for which the customer has had to pay. This Bill is driven by the needs of customers; we must thank the Secretary of State for underlining that fact when drafting the Bill.

There are three essential benefits to the customer. First, there will be competition in generation. As that generation accounts for some 80 per cent. of the price of electricity, any competition introduced at this level must exert a downward pressure on prices.

Secondly, for the first time in this industry, proper regulation will ensure that the benefits from competition will be passed down to customers.

Thirdly, the consumer will be given a new legal status with legal rights and safeguards that will ensure a better service.

While I was researching for this debate, I came across an article written by the hon. Member for Gordon (Mr. Bruce). He was here a moment ago, but has now disappeared. I was pleased to see him return today after having disappeared in high dudgeon last night. The problem was that he did not have time to say everything that he wanted to say. Perhaps I might help him. He wrote in the *Liberal News* in October of last year:

"It is impossible to defend the status quo in the electricity industry. The CEGB has become a centralised monopoly which is closed, secretive and accountable to no-one. The economics of generation and conservation are neither being properly examined nor subjected to market forces."

The title of the article was

"Why I shall be buying electricity shares."

I could not put it better myself. I agree with everything that the hon. Gentleman has written. I hope that he will come back to make a further contribution tonight.

We have heard from Labour Members more peddling of the myths and misrepresentations that surround the industry. They would have us believe that the electricity supply industry, under its present organisation, has done the best possible job over the past 30 years. They tell us that there is no alternative to a monopoly and to a vertically integrated generation and distribution system and they claim that it gives the best deal to customers. There is nothing to suggest that an industry under national ownership, such as we have had for many years, will keep a downward pressure on prices.

In the years between February 1974 and May 1979, the average annual increase in electricity prices was 22 per cent., a total of 180 per cent. in that period. To tell us that the present nationalised system will give us the best deal is totally unfounded.

Opposition Members tell us that the management of the present system cannot be better. Why, then, does it take 18 years to construct an AGR station? How can we justify a pricing structure of the bulk supply tariff which has led to increased prices to customers? The Energy Act 1983 was designed to open up competition in the industry. It has been a total failure because the percentage of independent generation has gone down since then. The CEGB has protected its monopoly by redefining those "unavoidable costs". In other words, it has upped the fixed price content, which has increased from 1 per cent. in 1983 to about 30 per cent. today. That means that no independent generator can get into the market.

Then, of course, there is the mystique about nuclear power. I find it strange that, at the Sizewell inquiry, the CEGB told us that nuclear power was cheaper than coal. Now, at the Hinkley C inquiry, it appears that that is not correct and that there has been a 180 deg turnaround in that period. I wonder whether that is simply to muddy the water and sway public opinion about privatisation or whether it is a destabilising ploy for the contract negotiations that it is presently undertaking with the area boards.

As the right hon. Member for Devonport said, for the first time nuclear costs will be exposed to scrutiny. They will be clearly identifiable, as they never have been before. It is not true, however, that nuclear power is intrinsically expensive. We must look to better management to reduce costs within the industry. Schedule 12 will bring into the clear light of day the costs of waste, reprocessing and disposal. Any grants will require parliamentary scrutiny and approval. That is hardly the way to keep information from the public. It is hardly the way to fudge the nuclear issue.

There has always been a nuclear cost component to the CEGB's electricity prices. The cost or levy would continue in future irrespective of whether the industry was privatised, and the so-called nuclear tax is not a new tax. Had the industry continued under the present organisation, the levy would be part of the cost component.

The essential questions are, first, who is paying for the back-end cost of nuclear generation? Secondly, who is paying for future unforeseen costs? Thirdly, who covers the cost risk for new nuclear station construction? The consumer has already paid for the back-end costs. I understand that about £3 billion is already in the kitty for the decommissioning of the Magnox stations and to help with the decommissioning of the AGRs. The Government state categorically in the Bill that they will set aside between £1 billion and £2·5 billion to meet unforeseen costs. For the first time, construction risks for new stations will have three-pronged support, from the taxpayer, the consumer through the nuclear levy, and the shareholders.

Nuclear generation is essential from a strategic point of view. Without it, the lights would have gone out during the coal strike and the oil price hike. It is essential for other reasons as well. With Third-world development, there is a tendency to generate electricity from fossil fuels. That technology is easier for Third-world countries to adapt. If we in the developed countries put pressure on fossil fuels, we either price Third-world countries out of generating electricity altogether or drive them to nuclear generation, which we might not want.

There are environmental considerations which, for the first time, begin to make nuclear generation much more attractive than CO_2-emitting fossil fuel power stations. Further, the world energy market is shifting towards electricity. Between 1970 and 1984, energy usage overall increased by only 1 per cent. whereas electricity usage increased by 36 per cent. Surely this means that nuclear-generated electricity will move more into its own, and diversity of generation gives balance and security of price and supply.

Nuclear generation is important, but it is not the overriding consideration in the Bill. We heard from the hon. Member for Sedgefield (Mr. Blair) that prices would automatically increase with privatisation, and Opposition Members made light of the fact that new generating capacity is coming forward. We are told that about 20 major companies are making serious approaches to area boards, but I shall give just two specific examples. In the Eastern Electricity region, which covers my constituency, there are five significant new plant proposals, three of which are close to determination. These are combined cycle gas turbine plants of 500 MW capacity, which will be helpful in the further development of North sea gas resources and new fields. In the east midlands area, British Coal is already negotiating with the area board to build fluid gas desulphurisation plants at the pit heads. These plants will produce electricity at a lower price than some of the medium-sized coal stations. The price of coal is already beginning to come down.

The key to the Bill is competition. We must introduce a third force into generation, and the Government must ensure that, in the critical period of negotiation of

[Mr. Malcolm Moss]

contracts, the CEGB, with its duopoly inheritance, does not tie up the market and prevent new generators from entering it.

6.35 pm

Mr. Dick Douglas (Dunfermline, West): I do not propose to take up the remarks of the hon. Member for Cambridgeshire, North-East (Mr. Moss).

It seems that the argument in favour of having two Bills, and not the one that is before us, has been advanced during the debate. We seem to have been talking about two Bills. Arguments that have been adduced on behalf of England and Wales have had little bearing on Scotland. This afternoon, the Secretary of State talked about the Scottish coal industry and its relationship to the privatisation of electricity, but before referring to his remarks I shall draw the attention of the House to what was said by Mr. Donald Miller, the chairman of the South of Scotland electricity board, in answer to questions put to him by members of the Select Committee on Energy.

On 23 March, my hon. Friend the Member for Pontefract and Castleford (Mr. Lofthouse) raised the issue of the relationship of the SSEB to British Coal, and Mr. Miller's reply to question 555 was illuminating:

"First of all, we cannot be in the business of conniving with British Coal to charge the Scottish electricity customer on the basis of dear coal and subsidising other users; that is not what our board is paid for."

I am sure that his words were carefully chosen. He has said that he is not to "connive" with British Coal. My hon. Friend pressed him further, and he said:

"On the first point, whether I have discussed with the Secretary of State for Scotland the implications of the Scottish coalfield being wiped out: the answer is 'no', because it does not arise, there is no need for it to arise."

Eight or nine months on, we have news for the Secretary of State and Mr. Miller. We are witnessing the possibility of deep-mined coal being wiped out in Scotland because of a slavish, doctrinaire approach to market forces. I have known Mr. Miller for a long time—I do not like talking about personalities in this way—and previously he was an eminently sensible gentleman. It seems, however, that he is being pushed by privatisation into adopting the following posture and statement—this is the effect of what he said—"I am not conniving with British Coal."

Let us not say that Mr. Miller should connive, but let us suggest to the Secretary of State that he should show an interest in the future of a vital Scottish industry. Let him do what his hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State for Energy did recently and visit the site of a vital investment of about £60 million in the constituency of my hon. Friend the Member for Clackmannan (Mr. O'Neill), just outside the borders of my constituency. The Under-Secretary visited the Longannet complex, and yesterday, in answer to my question, said:

"Under privatisation, and with our plans to expand the interconnector between Scotland and the rest of the United Kingdom, the coal can produce electricity which can be sold freely into the British system."—[*Official Report*, 12 December 1988; Vol. 143, c. 639.]

As my hon. Friend the Member for Glasgow, Garscadden (Mr. Dewar) asked, what are the plans for the interconnector? Is it the Department of Energy, the South of Scotland electricity board or some other body that will facilitate its expansion and strengthening? My constituents and those of other hon. Members are entitled to know what will happen to the future of a vital industry in Scotland, and they are entitled to know tonight.

If the issue is to be left to market forces, and if Mr. Miller is to be allowed to import 2 million to 3 million tonnes of coal, he may be able to proceed without necessarily influencing and jacking up world prices, although I have doubts about that. Lord Marshall of the CEGB could not import 65 million tonnes of coal without having an effect on world prices. It would seem that my hon. Friend the Member for Garscadden is correct: the interests of the nation lie in security of supply, not the short-run equilibrium of supply and demand.

Mr. Miller, who does not now desire to connive with British Coal, had previously to sit down and reach long-term contractural agreements with British Coal to safeguard the supply. If that is not a vital responsibility for people with the national interest of all Scotland and the United Kingdom at heart, I do not know what is.

I have heard a lot of rubbish about what happened in the miners' strike and how we broke the miners' strike because we had nuclear power. Unfortunately, the breaking of the miners had a lot to do with the public sector. A major reason for the miners being broken in the strike—they were not humiliated, because they preserved their dignity—was the imposition and unification of what was tantamount to a national police force. When it suits them, the Government can misuse the public sector. We are interested in using the public sector for the long-term benefit of the people of this country.

The Secretary of State defended his new desire to introduce to us his views about perfect competition. We know that there is no such thing as perfect competition in the real world—page 1 of Cairncross taught us that. I notice graduates from St. Andrew's university on the Conservative Benches; I am always willing to educate St. Andrew's graduates.

Under the Scottish proposals, two companies will own the nuclear sector. That will create a company with 80 per cent. of the assets and 60 per cent. of the generating capacity. How on earth can that be called competition of any magnitude? That is prostituting competition and duopoly. The Secretary of State cannot defend that on the basis of the consumer. However, we are told that the Scottish board will have the magnificent possibility of selling surplus capacity over the wires. There will be no new capacity in Scotland before the year 2000, but the Scottish Board can export it, provided that it goes to the market at a price that will bear the costs.

If the price of the Scottish assets is high, it will be difficult to sell the electricity over the wires. Conversely, that will relate to the low price of the English assets. There is a conundrum. The only way to solve it is to cook the books in pricing terms. We can suggest that here, but that does not mean to say that investors in Charlotte square would be daft enough to be taken in by such action.

We have heard about the criteria for public or private ownership. I am no slavish adherent to the public sector. The public sector should deliver facilities efficiently. I do not believe in feather-bedding any public sector employee. However, there is duplicity on the Conservative Benches.

People in the public sector are sick and tired of being praised when there is an emergency in the North sea, on the railways, or in the Soviet Union. At the Dispatch Box last week, the Prime Minister was pleased to say that the public sector would be the first to respond because London

firemen were to fly out. She was cutting those firemen's facilities, but she had the cheek and audacity to praise them. We have a responsibility to the public sector to ensure that the employees are adequately rewarded.

Yesterday, the Minister of State, Scottish Office said that the Labour Government brought the organisations into the public sector with one Bill. Unfortunately, he omitted the North of Scotland Hydro-Electric Board. The test of private versus public is an extreme test when one is in difficulty. In the dark days of the war, Churchill went to Tom Johnston to argue for the creation of a public sector board for the Highlands. I am not going to quote Tom Johnston. Instead, I will quote Lord Airlie. On 9 June 1943, he said:

"I believe that what will happen is that in certain areas which are at present supplied by private companies, would-be consumers will be unable to get electricity on account of the fact that they will be unable to afford, after this war, to pay the charges which the private companies have to impose . . . There is only one way it can be done,"—

he was talking about the Hydro Board—

"and that is for the State to do it."—[*Official Report, House of Lords*, 9 June 1943; Vol. 127, c. 973, 974.]

That is what a traditional Tory anxious to preserve the rights of Scotland and the Scottish Highlands said. Today, we see the Tories reneging on Scottish responsibility.

6.45 pm

Mr. Michael Colvin (Romsey and Waterside): Please forgive me, Mr. Deputy Speaker, for jumping in and out of the Chamber so frequently this evening. However, democracy does not prevail only here; it prevails upstairs in the Committee Rooms where many elections have been taking place. For a moment I confess that I wondered whether I had stepped in on what is essentially a Scottish party, with reels and all. As a three quarter Scot who probably draws electricity from the hydro-electric scheme in Scotland when he switches on an electric switch in his house, I think that I am justified in taking part in the debate.

Mr. John Maxton (Glasgow, Cathcart): How does the hon. Gentleman work that out?

Mr. Colvin: That is how it works.

I welcome the Bill because many of my constituents work in the power generation industry. They will also welcome this proposal to denationalise one of Britain's biggest businesses, thus honouring the 1987 Conservative party general election manifesto commitment to privatise more state industries, and to increase share ownership for employees and the public at large. Almost one in five of the adult population now own shares directly and more than 1·5 million people own shares in the companies for which they work.

My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Energy has shown considerable ingenuity in devising the corporate structure for the electricity industry following privatisation. He and the merchant banks that will advise him will have to show great ingenuity in devising schemes to ensure that shares in the 15 electricity companies with £27 billion-worth of assets are spread as widely as possible. There is probably scope there for creating another 1 million shareholders.

Southern Electricity, my local area distribution board, shares my welcome for the Bill. The board favours becoming a publicly owned company believing, in the words of its chairman, Mr. Duncan Ross, that it can "look forward to a more diverse and competitive electricity generation market, in which it can shop around to obtain the best buys for its 2·4 million customers."

That is the answer to those who say that following privatisation there will be no competition. The distributors will be able to shop around for electricity and that competition would be lost if the Labour party regained office and renationalised the industry as Opposition Members told us that they would yesterday. So much for the Opposition's commitment to repeal clause IV—the nationalisation clause in their constitution. That must be double-talk.

I represent a very energy-related constituency. It has the largest oil refinery in Europe—the Esso plant at Fawley—which provides fuel for a major power station which stands on an adjacent site. Fawley used to fuel the Marchwood power station further up the Solent. That power station was made redundant a few years ago but the site also houses the Marchwood research laboratory.

The Bill is doubly welcome to my constituents because the public inquiry into the proposed Fawley B power station has had to be shelved, probably indefinitely. That is proof, if it is needed, that competition has an effect on the industry. When the distributing company-to-be, Southern Electricity, was asked to guarantee that it would buy the energy produced from Fawley B, it refused. Fawley B power station would have cost £1·3 billion and would have produced 1,800 MW a year. Somebody would have had to buy it, and that provides the key to the Bill.

The Bill shifts the responsibility for ensuring that the juice is there when we turn on the switch in our house from the generating company—the CEGB—to the distributors, and they can shop around. Southern Electricity is considering other sources and because of the trends today and because of research, will find that many smaller power stations are probably better than the mega-power stations that have been built hitherto. Yesterday, we heard hon. Members talk about alternatives such as combined heat and power as more effective ways of making full use of our fossil fuels.

The Bill is certainly welcome in Romsey and Waterside. It is also welcome to Hampshire ratepayers because it will save them about £1 million, which is the cost of fighting the public inquiry into the proposed power station and jetty.

I am sure that my hon. Friend the Minister will forgive me for not going through the ritual back-slapping exercise that usually prevails in these debates. I intend to be quite critical on three aspects, which are raised not only in the Bill itself, but by the proposal to develop Fawley B. The first is the question of the environment. The second, is the question of coal imports and the third that of research.

Earlier this year, the White Paper on privatising the electricity industry made no reference to the privatised electricity companies having to have any concern for the environment—nor does the Bill. I have read the Bill from cover to cover and it has little to say on a subject that has been of increasing public and political concern in recent years. It simply repeats, in schedule 9, the limited objectives of the Electricity Act 1957 on the protection of flora and fauna. It relates only to the natural beauty of the countryside and the physical condition of any buildings of special, architectural or historic interest. That is not enough. The Bill does not incorporate other much wider matters of environmental concern that have grown up over the years, such as emissions from power stations,

[Mr. Colvin]

atmospheric pollution, the management of radioactive waste and, of course, other audible and visual pollution of the environment.

I accept that those matters are covered, in part, by the Control of Pollution Act 1974 and, of course, by the recent European Community agreement which implements the large plant directive to reduce emissions from power stations. However, I still believe that the Bill should specifically contain broader environmental provisions and I am sure that in Committee, additional clauses on the environment will be suggested.

My second point concerns coal. The Fawley B proposal would necessitate the building of a jetty for bringing in coal. That coal would not necessarily come from abroad, but might come round the coast. That would require substantial investment, so once the facility was built, there would be strong economic incentives to maximise its use. That applies to coal jetties generally. It is clear from what Lord Marshall and British Coal have said that the importation of foreign coal is an important option in keeping our coal industry competitive. Opposition Members who represent constituencies with coal interests commented on that in considerable depth yesterday.

I want to point out that it would be wholly wrong to proceed with the Fawley jetty—or any other facility for importing coal—without being certain that the inland infrastructure is there for the movement of that coal to other power stations inland, and that it is adequate. In the case of Waterside, where we fought a public inquiry on the proposal for moving oil from Wych Farm in Dorset to Fawley for processing, was refused simply because the railway line was inadequate. The movement of coal, lime, gypsum and all other power station products, is equally impractical because it would require many more trains than the oil proposal. That is a lesson that we must take on board.

My third point concerns research. Section 7 of the Electricity Act 1957—which is due to be repealed in its entirety by the Bill—sets out the mandatory and permissive frameworks that have led to the existing high level of research work in the electricity supply industry. The Berkeley, Marchwood and Leatherhead research laboratories spent £224 million in the last financial year, which has helped our electricity industry to lead the world in so many areas.

What do the Government propose as an adequate replacement for section 7 of the 1957 Act? No framework is provided under the Bill. It has been for the CEGB to decide, following discussions with the Department of Energy, that, subject to the enactment of the Bill, Berkeley nuclear laboratories and the Central Electricity research laboratory—except for the part of the CERL site engaged in transmission-related work—will be owned by the new National Power company—big G. Marchwood engineering laboratories, in my constituency, will be owned by the new Power Generation company—little G. That part of the CERL site at Leatherhead that is already engaged in transmission work will be owned by the new National Grid company.

I question whether the allocation of these research facilities is the right one, especially in relation to Marchwood where 400 to 450 people work, mainly in nuclear power research—on which they spend 60 per cent. to 80 per cent. of their time—and which will be allocated to little G, when it should be to big G. This reorganisation must be considered again because Marchwood faces closure and the loss of 450 jobs. Those research facilities there at present, which are non-nuclear, will probably be moved to Ratcliffe-on-Soar power station, and that could sound the death knell for Marchwood.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Sir Paul Dean): Order. I am sorry to interrupt, but I must be fair to other hon. Members and the hon. Gentleman has had a little more than the time allocated.

6.57 pm

Mr. Peter Hardy (Wentworth): I shall try not to speak for the whole time that is allocated, although I should have very much liked to comment on the speech made by the hon. Member for Romsey and Waterside (Mr. Colvin). I am very pleased that, unlike most of his colleagues, he has realised that the electricity industry has been responsible for significant achievements, and it was good to see some of his hon. Friends wince when he expressed that view. It is not a view that would have been expressed by the hon. Member for Birmingham, Northfield (Mr. King) who, in an aside, summed up the approach of Conservative Members when he talked about getting £20 billion in the kitty to fight the next election. That is what the Bill is about.

The Secretary of State, who is rather more polished and urbane, would not say that, but he deliberately, or negligently, misled the House yesterday when he said that the Bill would be achieving something enormously important in breaking new ground and giving the suppliers the duty to supply electricity. He suggested that that goes further than any responsibility placed on the public sector. He told us about that part, but he did not tell the House—and perhaps the Minister of State can explain—that the absolute promise that the Secretary of State gave to the House yesterday about the duty to supply seems to be remarkably hedged about in clauses 15 and 16.

If any supplier does not wish to fulfil the terms of clause 3, to which the Secretary of State was referring, clauses 15 and 16 seem to give it every possible opportunity to evade that mythical responsibility. The Secretary of State may not have read the Bill. I hope that he has an enjoyable Christmas, although he may not like the idea of what is to come. He will still be Secretary of State in January and February during the Committee Stage, and he and his Ministers will have to do much more homework than appeared to have been done yesterday.

That was not the only point on which the Secretary of State was somewhat misleading. He implied that he was negotiating with the trade unions and that they were quite happy to talk to him about the distribution of shares. As far as I know, the trade unions have had no contact with him at all. They are probably quite interested in the allocation of shares, but they see it as peripheral compared to the future of an industry that is so important to their members and the country.

It is fashionable for Conservative Members to criticise the industry. We should remember that many of them represent rural constituencies and they should understand that two enormously important developments assisted rural Britain in the 1940s and subsequently. One was the Agriculture Act 1947 which brought rural areas a share in urban prosperity—a Labour Government achievement—

and the other was the nationalisation of the electricity industry, which brought light and power to areas of Britain that would not otherwise have been able to afford them. If the decision were left to the private sector now, I doubt whether it would find some of the areas represented by Conservative Members particularly attractive as markets.

In addition to the future of the rural areas, I am concerned about conservation. The Bill is woefully inadequate in its provision for conservation and the environment. The Government have merely lifted the appropriate part of an Act of 1957, but the fact that throughout their period in office they have ignored its requirements does not give us much hope that the provision will prove satisfactory. The fact that the Nature Conservancy Council has not been consulted and that there is no structure for consultation with public agencies seems to me a woeful omission. The conservation lobby fears that the priority afforded to environment issues will be grossly inadequate.

One begins to wonder about Conservative Members' intelligence in that regard. The other day I did a study of what would happen in Britain if we did not take environmental problems seriously enough, and if the sea level rose. I found grounds for satisfaction. The Government are utterly unconcerned about the environment. They are utterly unworried and remarkably negligent when it comes to support for fluidised bed combustion and so on. They are ignoring anything beyond the next balance sheet and the next election, and history will hold them responsible for the rise in the sea level.

Unfortunately, 90 per cent. of our low-lying areas are represented by Conservative Members. When the sea level rises as a result of Conservative negligence, it will be interesting to see what those attached to private affluence and to the eradication of the public sector will do. Perhaps they will come squealing for public sector support, and when they do, some of us may point out that the Conservative Government whom they support are responsible. That Government may well be quite prepared to obliterate the research capacity to which the hon. Member for Romsey and Waterside referred. I hope that Conservative Members will be consistent enough to say to their constituents, "Build your own sea walls, walk about in your own wellington boots and pay your own electricity bills."

There is another question that the Minister must answer. The Secretary of State forced quite unnecessarily high electricity price increases last year, on the ground that the CEGB needed to invest £1 billion. But the CEGB was about to do that; it was already budgeted for. I ask the Minister to tell the House, therefore, whether the CEGB will be investing an additional £1,000 million in the current financial year—the money that the Secretary of State compelled it to raise. If the CEGB is not to spend that sum, the House and the country will require an explanation.

I should declare an interest; I am involved with NACODS, the National Association of Colliery Overmen, Deputies and Shotfirers, and with the National and Local Government Officers Association. Some months ago, I asked a question in the House about potential redundancies. Only in two ways can a profit be made: first by reducing labour costs and second by reducing input costs. I feared that many jobs would go, as Mr. Alex Henney suggested. The Secretary of State gave me an absolute assurance, not only that there would be no redundancies but that additional jobs would follow privatisation. Can the Minister confirm that pledge? If the Government have retreated from it, he should let us know now. It will be no consolation for the workers in the industry to be given a few crumbs of shares if they then find that the pressure of ruthless privatisation makes them join the ranks of the unemployed.

The Secretary of State referred yesterday to imported coal. He clearly has no understanding of the international coal trade, which could not have sustained a sudden switch from domestic to imported coal. He referred to low-sulphur coal. How can the Government talk about low-sulphur coal or high-sulphur coal when we have shown in recent months that they do not even know which country the coal is coming from? That is a serious point. The miners in the constituency of my hon. Friend the Member for Barnsley, East (Mr. Patchett) have their coal washed at the Manvers site in my constituency. In the last three months we have produced coal at 81p a gigajoule on average and last week they were producing it at 68p a gigajoule.

In destroying that achievement, the Government would not merely bring embarrassment and long-term danger to the electricity industry and to the consumer; they would destroy an important part of the potential for British industrial growth. The damage that they have already inflicted upon high energy users such as United Engineering Steel in my constituency by an unnecessary increase in prices this year shows that a balance of payments deficit of enormous and hitherto unimaginable dimension is of no consequence to them. Those of us who take a longer view would suggest that the achievements that the hon. Member for Romsey and Waterside has just begun to recognise are about to be sacrificed by a bunch of people whose motivation, like that of the hon. Member for Northfield, is pure greed.

7.8 pm

Mr. Michael Irvine (Ipswich): The hon. Member for Sedgefield (Mr. Blair) is a barrister. His speech yesterday was fluent; it had a certain polish and it went on rather too long. In other words, it was very much the speech of a barrister. Barristers have clients, and I found myself asking just who the hon. Gentleman's clients were. I decided that they were just about every vested interest and every force against progress that is to be found in the industry. The hon. Gentleman's clients are the National Union of Mineworkers, the anti-nuclear lobby, the state corporatists. They are all those who are against the operation of market forces and competition and who recoil with a shudder from the idea of giving the consumer some clout.

The CEGB has much of which it can be proud, and I acknowledge it. I acknowledge that it has achieved and maintained high technical standards, but it is by no means the creature of perfection that many of its apologists would have us believe. Its record on investment shows that it has over-invested far too often. A look at the way in which its power stations have been constructed and supervised reveals an appalling record.

Look at the time that it took the CEGB to construct Dungeness B. Originally it planned to build the power station in five years; it took 20. When it put its hands on Hartlepool, the power station there was expected to take six years. It took 18 years. It was not just the AGR power stations that took such a time. The Isle of Grain power

[Mr. Michael Irvine]

station was planned to take seven years, but it took 13. Ince B was planned to take five years, but it took 10. In some respects, the CEGB has not served the nation well, although in others I acknowledge that it has.

Yesterday, the hon. Member for Clydesdale (Mr. Hood) spent a great deal of time talking about fat cats. He spat out the words with considerable ferocity and frequency. Looking at him, I was moved to reflect that he had a not inconsiderable waistline himself. Apart from the hon. Member for Clydesdale and the fat cats to whom he referred, there are others. Could it not be that the CEGB is a bit of a fat cat? Could it not be in need of slimming down? Could it not be that it occasionally needs to meet the sharp end of competition? If you will forgive the pun, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that would do it a power of good.

This Bill will open the way for many small-scale generating schemes. We shall see many more power and heat schemes. I am convinced that a great number of small gas-generated power stations will open as a direct result of the Bill. Section 5 of the Energy Act 1983 paved the way for such small gas-generated power stations and the like to generate directly into the national grid.

Unfortunately, that section was not the success that was hoped for. The trouble was that the CEGB was in control of the national grid and it had no desire to see small gas and other generating stations move in on its territory. Things will now be different. Following the Bill, the national grid will be under the control of the distribution companies, which will have an interest in encouraging different sources of supply, in diversifying and in seeing competition brought into the generating industry. That will be a considerable force for good.

Labour Members from time to time during the debate have mocked the special status that the Government are according nuclear power in the Bill. Power generated through nuclear fission is, and should be, treated as a special case. The cost of constructing nuclear power stations is heavy, but the great advantage is that, once those costs have been incurred, the running costs are comparatively cheap. Quite apart from that, there is the issue of security of supply.

In his opening speech, my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State said that on several occasions during the past 20 years there had been threats to security of supply. There have been threats to oil and coal supplies to power stations. There has not been the same threat to power supplies from nuclear stations. It is noteworthy that not one Opposition Member has addressed himself to that argument. That shows its force and weight and why it is so important that the Government should have it in mind.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I must ask the hon. Gentleman to come to his last sentence.

Mr. Irvine: The Government's approach to nuclear power is refreshingly pragmatic. They are going forward not with dogma but with pragmatism. In giving nuclear power a special status, they are not showing favouritism but rather indulging in plain good common sense.

7.14 pm

Mr. Alex Salmond (Banff and Buchan): I beg to move, to leave out from "That" to the end of the Question and to add instead thereof:

"That this House declines to give a Second Reading to a Bill which is ill considered spatchcock legislation; notes that electricity supply, as a basic service, properly belongs in the public sector; that the Bill fails to introduce effective competition into the privatised structure in England and Wales and particularly in Scotland, leaving consumers to face higher bills to finance the doubling of company rates of return; further notes the lack of public provision for the strengthening of the electricity interconnector between Scotland and England and the failure to guarantee that the Scottish companies will not be forced to compete to sell electricity to a monopoly buyer at a loss of some tens of millions of pounds, the effective removal of the social clause from the Hydro-Board operations and the failure to appoint a separate Scottish regulator to oversee the distinctive characteristics of the Scottish electricity system, the Government's failure to respond adequately to the Select Committee on Energy's detailed and robust criticisms, and the continued intent to shelter the nuclear industry from competition at the expense of the coal industry; and considers that Scottish consumers risk being denied the full benefits of the development of hydro power and North Sea Gas, the two cheapest and most environmentally sensitive major sources of electricity generation."

There has been some interest in the use of the word "spatchcock" to describe the Government's proposed legislation. That word was used by the Select Committee on Energy. As all hon. Members will know, it means a chicken that is ill-prepared—slaughtered before its time. The word is derived from the Indian army. I can think of no better word than one used by the Indian Raj to describe what the Scottish Raj is doing to Scotland in the Bill.

I was prepared for the fact that the Secretary of State for Energy would know little about the Scottish side of the legislation when he opened the debate. He knew so little that he refused point blank to answer questions on the Scottish issue. But I was not prepared for the Secretary of State for Scotland to display a similar level of ignorance. If I interpreted him correctly, the Secretary of State for Scotland said that only about 3 per cent. of the issues involved in the Scottish privatisation were different and separate from those involved in the privatisation in England and Wales. There can be no better testimony to the Secretary of State's total ignorance of the measure that he is co-sponsoring through the House.

The Scottish and English privatisations are like chalk and cheese. The issues involved in the vertical integration of the Scottish electricity industry and its privatisation are separate and distinct from the issues involved in the different structure south of the border. Such remarks show why, according to the MORI poll published last Friday, 61 per cent. are now dissatisfied with the Secretary of State's performance. That is only 1 per cent. more than the dissatisfaction accorded to the Leader of the Opposition. The Secretary of State is now chasing hard on the heels of the Prime Minister to be the most unpopular political figure in Scotland.

Why are the Scottish public so dissatisfied with the Secretary of State's performance? The major reason is that he persists in imposing policies which have no popular support in Scotland. The Bill is an excellent illustration of that. I defy any Tory Member to tell me where, in Scottish local election results, general election results or opinion polls, there is any sign of convincing support for electricity privatisation in Scotland.

When that point is pursued with the Secretary of State, he says that the companies support privatisation. I can think of nothing more pathetic than being reduced to claiming the support of people whom he appoints or whose future he controls. That displays the Tory party's

attitude to Scotland. On so many issues, the Tory party has appointed place people in a failed attempt to reinforce its support in Scotland.

The Secretary of State is unpopular because of the contempt with which he allows Scottish business to be treated. The distinctive nature of the Scottish electricity industry was recognised by the Select Committee on Energy. In the absence of a Select Committee on Scottish Affairs, the Energy Select Committee went into the Bill's Scottish aspect, although it recognised that it could not do the thorough job or do the matter the justice that a Scottish Affairs Select Committee would have done. Now we find that there is to be no Scottish Bill, no Scottish debate and no Scottish Standing Committee, all because the Government lack the troops to man their Scottish Benches. We see another perfect illustration of that this evening.

Mr. Bill Walker (Tayside, North): Will the hon. Member give way?

Mr. Salmond: No. I am restricted to 10 minutes, so I am not prepared to take information from the hon. Gentleman who has just arrived.

The Government are trying to disguise their lack of a Scottish mandate and to call the English battalions to their rescue by keeping the two Bills together.

The Minister of State, who has just arrived, will remember that one reason why, according to the MORI poll, 61 per cent. were dissatisfied with the Secretary of State was due to the Government's lack of backbone in defending Scottish interests. It was incredible to hear the argument for a separate Scottish regulator described as "foolish" by the Secretary of State earlier. The Select Committee on Energy, which has a majority of English Back Benchers, concluded that the distinctive nature of the Scottish electricity system justified a separate Scottish regulator. There can be no better illustration of the lack of backbone of the Secretary of State for Scotland. He is unwilling to demand for Scotland even that which was recommended by a majority of English Tory Back Benchers.

There are many reasons for opposing the Bill, and many are detailed in the amendment. Because of the shortage of time, I shall concentrate on two of them. First, inevitably, electricity privatisation in Scotland will result in higher prices. There is an argument on the English and Welsh legislation. On one side it is argued that higher rates of return and increased costs through separating the generators from the grid will result in higher prices. On the other side it is argued that pressure and competition in generation will bring prices down. That is an argument, although it is one in which the hon. Member for Sedgefield (Mr. Blair) has the initiative over the Secretary of State for Energy.

In Scotland there is no argument. There is no competition in the Scottish measure and no downward pressure on prices. Rather than relying on the opinion of the Secretary of State for Scotland, we should turn to people who know about the industry. The chairmen of the two companies in Scotland that are to be privatised gave evidence to the Select Committee. Mr. Joughin, the chairman of the Hydro-Electric Board, was not an unimpressive witness but when pressed as to whether competition would be promoted by the Scottish measures, he was unable to give an answer.

The succession of questions ran as follows: he was asked what a consumer was to do when he was dissatisfied with the privatised Hydro Board's cost of electricity. He said:

"He can come to the Annual General Meeting and chase us."

I then asked him:

"Say he is not a shareholder, but just a customer?"

Mr. Joughin replied:

"I would hope he would soon become a shareholder, the same as you would in any other company in which you wanted to take a challenging interest."

He was then asked:

"You are surely not saying that the customers who are not shareholders will not be uppermost in your mind when you move into the private sector?"

Mr. Joughin replied:

"Customers will, as they are now, be uppermost in our minds, yes."

He was then asked:

"However, they will not be able to do anything about it if your performance is not very good?"

Mr. Joughin's last word on the subject was:

"With due respect, Sir, this is not our debate. We are the Management, we have a Government which has said that it wishes to privatise, and it is our responsibility to be sure that we make the best decisions possible to enable that privatisation to be as effective as we can for our consumers."

In the final analysis, when asked to explain where the competition was in the Scottish measures, the best that the chairman of the Hydro Board could say was, "We are doing what we are telt." In that, he was similar to the chairman of the South of Scotland Electricity Board who completely destroyed the argument that there was competition in supplying to industrial consumers in Scotland when he told the Select Committee:

"the nuclear company will own, as I have indicated, 80 per cent. of the generation assets, in Scotland and produce 60 per cent. of the electricity, and so a very high degree of co-operation is required between the partners. At the same time, we are enjoined by the White Paper to compete. That is an unusual situation. To our knowledge, it has no precedent anywhere in the world."

From both the Hydro Board chairman and the South of Scotland electricity board chairman there is an admission that there is no real competition in the Scottish measures. That is why the Select Committee on Energy concluded that the claims of competition by emulation were "largely meaningless".

In the absence of competition and downward pressure on prices, it is inevitable that an increase in rates of return —a doubling is estimated by the Hydro Board—will lead to higher prices for Scottish consumers in the private sector.

There is one area of competition in the Scottish measures, and that is that the two boards will be involved in the cut-throat competition of selling electricity to England and Wales. As yet, we have no absolute guarantee that the English and Welsh distribution companies will not combine to form a monopoly buyer to force down the price at an estimated cost to Scotland of tens of millions of pounds. I am asking for that guarantee now. The one achievement, in competition terms, of the Secretary of State for Scotland is to see that competition between the two Scottish boards forces down costs for consumers in England and Wales. What a triumph for the Secretary of State for Scotland!

I shall deal with the fallacy of Conservative Members' claims of control in Scotland. The Secretary of State for Scotland refused to say how much of the Scottish private

[Mr. Salmond]

sector had disappeared into external ownership during his tenure of office. The estimate from *Scottish Business Insider* is about two thirds. He also refused to tell us why he did not argue for a Scottish Telecom, Scottish Gas or Scottish Steel.

When the right hon. and learned Gentleman argues that the two major companies will enliven and bring rebirth to the Scottish private sector, we should remember that it was only a year before the elimination of Britoil as Scotland's major private sector company that the Secretary of State for Scotland, at the opening of its new offices in Glasgow, was saying what an asset it was to Scotland. The claim of the Scottish Conservatives that there is something distinctly Scottish in the measures they are suggesting is as bogusly Scottish as the hon. Member for Tayside, North (Mr. Walker) dressed in his latest kilt.

I want to turn——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I must ask the hon. Gentleman to come to his last sentence.

Mr. Salmond: The measure before us betrays the interest of the Scottish people. The enormous generation assets and potential of Scotland in terms of coal, hydro power, and cheap gas are being wasted. We are further than ever from an energy policy for Scotland that would allow those assets to be used for the benefit of Scottish industry and Scottish consumers.

7.26 pm

Mr. Keith Mans (Wyre): I should like to make a few comments about the transfer of the electricity industry into the private sector and the need to rely upon a variety of generation systems.

I was struck by the inconsistency of the arguments by the hon. Member for Sedgefield (Mr. Blair) yesterday and his colleague, the hon. Member for Glasgow, Garscadden (Mr. Dewar) today. Yesterday, we discussed the so-called nuclear levy and we were told that prices would rise if the electricity industry was privatised. Today we were told that Scottish coal is a special case and that the Scottish electricity industry should not be allowed to import coal, despite the fact that it might be cheaper. At the same time, it was suggested that prices would still rise in Scotland. That is the sort of inconsistency that has coloured many of the Opposition's arguments over the past two days.

I want to concentrate on the reasons why the industry should be moved into the private sector. Yesterday we heard a great deal about the conditions pertaining many decades ago when much of the industry was in the private sector. It was suggested that the problems of the 1920s and 1930s were good reasons for not moving the industry into the private sector. I am afraid that that argument, like so many others put forward by Opposition Members, looks to the past, not to the future.

I am the first to admit that the creation of the national grid in the 1930s was a good idea. However, I am the last to admit that the nationalisation process that took place after the last war was a good idea. Our generation industry would have been just as efficient, if not more so, with a national grid had we not had that nationalisation measure.

In the public sector, the solutions to the problems of the electricity industry, like in so many other industries, are of a general nature. Quite often the Treasury decides the amount of money that an industry should borrow to fund its investment. In the electricity industry in particular, we can see the effects of that over many decades. Prosperity or the need for the Treasury to spend or save more money has often dictated the investment plans of the industry rather than the needs of the consumer and the needs of the industry itself.

In the public sector, too little regard is paid to alternative methods of generating electricity. Again, we tend to be blinkered. The fashion may be, perhaps according to the Government of the day or to the philosophy of the chairman running the Central Electricity Generating Board at the time, to go for a nuclear, coal or oil option. Little regard is paid to smaller systems of generating electricity that are becoming more popular abroad, and which I suggest will become more popular in this country once the industry is privatised.

It is necessary for the electricity industry's long-term interests, and for those of its consumers, for there to be a number of different systems of generating electricity. More specifically, it is important to retain the nuclear option. One can see what happens when there is no variety of generating systems in a country such as France, where, because of high oil prices, they went overboard in terms of nuclear-powered electricity. The French have saddled themselves with a £20 billion debt as a result.

I was interested in the remarks made yesterday by the hon. Member for Sedgefield (Mr. Blair), although I did not quite understand his logic. I gather that his suggestion was that, whereas electricity costs in France are higher, that country can still sell electricity to the CEGB at a lower price than that at which it can be produced in this country, so the French Government are subsidising our domestic electricity industry.

One element of consistency in the debate on the electricity industry is the inconsistency in estimates of the cheapest source of electricity over a long period. Twenty years ago, oil was in vogue and undoubtedly provided the cheapest source. As a result of oil price increases, coal became the cheapest 10 years ago, but two years ago, when oil prices fell, there was doubt as to whether it would not be feasible to generate electricity from oil again. Today, perhaps coal has the slight advantage.

Throughout all of that, there was the nuclear option as well. Even today it is, in terms of running costs, a cheap way of generating electricity. The drawback is the cost of building nuclear stations. Factors such as interest rates play a large part in decisions on the best way to proceed.

Another important factor is the decisions made by Governments—specifically Labour Governments—over many years, about the nuclear industry. Yesterday, my hon. Friend the Member for Havant (Sir I. Lloyd) rightly observed that, in the past, Britain's nuclear industry has largely been technology-led, which has often taken us up blind alleys in terms of the cost of Magnox stations and, more specifically, the delays suffered as a result of advanced gas-cooled reactors. Today, I believe that, as a result of our decision to change to pressurised water reactors, there is less likelihood of any kind of nuclear levy being applied in future, based on the experience of other countries running PWR stations rather than on our own experience in respect of Magnox and AGR stations.

The relationship between electricity generation and the environment is becoming more important. There is a good case to be made for retaining the nuclear option because, with nuclear power, many of the environmental problems

associated with it were taken into account when its cost was calculated. [HON. MEMBERS: "Oh!"] There remains the cost of shutdowns, clearing the sites, and waste storage. I can understand Opposition Members encouraging me to make that point. What we do not yet know are the full environmental implications of having a generating system that is largely or totally based on coal or other fossil fuels.

A coal-fired power station, for example, generating 1,800 MW, in the category into which Drax B falls, produces 11 billion tonnes of carbon dioxide and 16,000 tonnes of sulphur dioxide annually. That can be overcome by fitting fluid gas desulphurisation devices, but that will add to the costs—which is not taken into account when the equation is done. It does not end there. If one has fluid gas desulphurisation, one must also get rid of the gypsum, which amounts to 500,000 tonnes a year, and of 1 million tonnes of ash annually. None of those factors was taken into account in arriving at the cost of coal-fired, as compared with nuclear, power stations. When such costs are taken into account in future, the so-called nuclear levy may not arise.

For too long, many people in this country have believed that the best way of running large public utilities such as electricity was by retaining them in the public sector. In an age in which the interests of the consumers and of the environment are of increasing importance, such a view is no longer appropriate. We need to free the industry from the Treasury's purse strings, and to give both industrial users and regional boards freedom of choice. We must allow the industry to rely on a variety of sources of supply for the generation of electricity throughout the country.

For all those reasons, and because I believe that environmental and consumer interests will be better protected if the electricity industry is in private hands and the regulator in public hands, I welcome the Bill and shall vote for it tonight.

7.36 pm

Mr. Terry Patchett (Barnsley, East): I do not propose taking up a great deal of time, as I am anxious to hear the contributions of Conservative Members. This is the second day of debate on the Bill but, as yet, I have heard not one convincing argument from Government Members, including the Secretary of State, for privatising the electricity supply industry. We keep getting a parade of parroting about competition and its benefits to the customer, which, I feel sure, Conservative Members know in their hearts not to be true.

Private power companies may be forced into making deals with large industrial users, such as car manufacturers, who may threaten to build their own generating plants as part of their bargaining power in negotiating electricity prices. No such tactic is available to the domestic consumer. Where industrial users take advantage of the new situation, the power companies' shareholders will expect them to find their profits from elsewhere—and they can come from no other source than domestic users.

Much has been said about competition, but there is only likely to be any between the big City corporations, over which of them is prepared to pay more into the Chancellor of the Exchequer's kitty to reap the benefits of the captive market. They are the "fat cats" to whom my hon. Friend the Member for Clydesdale (Mr. Hood) referred yesterday. They can do so safely, in the knowledge that a great deal of the money that they pay to the Chancellor will be returned to them personally by way of promised tax cuts. So those people will win twice on the deal.

It is ironic that, while the Government appear to advocate competition, they consider it unfair that the nuclear power industry should compete equally with other energy sources, and they insist on its being guaranteed 20 per cent. of the energy market. Not only that, but the Government are prepared to prop up the nuclear industry, given the unknown costs of decommissioning nuclear power stations in the future. The Government leave the nationalised coal industry to fend for itself in its battle against cheap, subsidised foreign coal that is flooding the world now, but which may not be available at a future date, by which time the Government's policies may have annihilated our domestic coal industry.

The Government are not only deserting our coal industry but openly and actively contributing to its downfall, even to the cynical use of private Bills. The North Killingholme Cargo Terminal Bill and others like it were introduced as private Bills, then openly and avidly supported by the Government payroll vote. The last time that the Killingholme Bill came before the House, there was an open if unofficial Whip on it: the Government had put a two-line Whip on the business that followed it, when they knew that there would be no vote on the matter. The two-line Whip was dropped immediately after the vote had been taken on the private Bill.

I deem that cynical politics, and would expect it to leave a nasty taste in the mouths of Members of Parliament who believe in the parliamentary procedures of the House. The only reason for supporting that Bill was to allow easy access for cheap imported coal and to decimate our own coal industry, which would have considerable difficulty in competing with cheap imports born of subsidies and cheap labour—even, in some instances, child labour.

It has been estimated that unrestricted foreign coal imports by privately owned power stations could lead to the loss of 160,000 jobs, of which 65 per cent. would be in the coal industry. That would decimate constituencies such as mine, which are already reeling under high unemployment because of the Government's earlier pit closure programme. The number of collieries is expected to halve. By 1992, British Coal will be reduced to 48 collieries employing 45,000 people and producing between 73 million and 80 million tonnes of coal a year. That forecast is based on coal imports of 40 million tonnes.

The level of import penetration in the electricity industry will ultimately depend on the relative value of sterling. Nevertheless, there are reasons for expecting a massive increase. For example, the coal division of British Petroleum is understood to have held informal talks in Britain about the possibility of buying Australian coal for power generation. Despite the extra transportation costs, BP believes that it could undercut British Coal by quite a margin. While private electricity industry may gain from such deals in the short term, our country will lose. Not only will our balance of payments be affected, but huge numbers of people will be out of work and have to be paid dole rather than contribute from their taxes, as they would much prefer to do.

The Bill has been described by an outside expert on the electricity industry as a

"mixture of political prejudice and technical ignorance."

The industry itself cannot easily forecast supply and demand, which can fluctuate daily. In an emergency, when

[Mr. Terry Patchett]

demand may shoot up surprisingly in a few days, we are told that the various groups would have to co-operate rather than provisions being included in the Bill to control such an emergency.

We are asking companies to compete to benefit the consumer; in a crisis, however, they are expected to co-operate with one another. That seems to me a contradiction in terms. The electricity industry is much too serious a matter for this flippant Bill, born out of pure political dogma and with no concern or benefit for the consumer. It is merely yet another example of the Government's selling off the family silver to prop up their economic policy—which, like the Bill, is a complete failure.

7.43 pm

Mr. Ian Bruce (Dorset, South): Many hon. Members have said that they have never believed CEGB statistics before, but suddenly believe them when they suggest that nuclear power is more expensive than coal. Perhaps we should examine that a little more closely. I seem to be the only hon. Member left in the House who believes that nuclear power is the most economic form of fuel, let alone that it is the most environmentally safe.

We must consider like for like. This country has opted for 20 per cent. nuclear power and 80 per cent. other forms of power. Across the Channel, France, a country of similar size, has invested heavily in nuclear power. I must take my hon. Friend the Member for Wyre (Mr. Mans) to task for referring to a £20 billion debt; I wish that we had made as large an investment in our nuclear industry. With its 80 per cent. nuclear power, France can boast the cheapest electricity in Europe—far cheaper than ours.

I am also extraordinarily surprised to hear Scottish Members claim that the SSEB will be so terribly disadvantaged. Perhaps they should have gone and listened to its chairman when he was in London a few weeks ago, speaking of the enormous success of its AGRs and Magnox stations. They have demonstrated how even a small nuclear programme can be extremely effective and profitable.

It is strange that the CEGB should tell us that it is having its costing re-examined, particularly on reprocessing. Reprocessing was always very safe when done at Sellafield. We are all flown up to look at the wonderful THORP reprocessing plant and to be told how many extra billions of pounds will be spent on it, but all that is being back-end-loaded on the Magnox stations and the reprocessing. Of course that suddenly looks bad according to the economics of a "tailing off" industry. The CEGB has made a hash of running its AGRs: two of its stations are a disaster. Yet a few months ago, if asked what its AGR stations were doing, the CEGB would have produced the story that they would come right next year or the year after.

Now the chairman of big G, finding that he is the only member of the English generating industry who must have nuclear power on his side, is trying to talk down the value of his assets, like any sensible man wanting to demonstrate in the future what wonderful profits he is making. Yet in the Hinkley inquiry, the CEGB is putting forward the case today that Hinkley C would have even cheaper electricity than the most modern coal-fired stations. We must look carefully at the statistics that are thrown at us, and ask why the CEGB is suddenly producing such a mish-mash.

Many hon. Members are keen to tell us about the alternatives—wind power, barrage power, oil and gas turbines. I say, "Great: this is what privatisation will allow us to prove." It will not be for the CEGB to say, "Wind power is not an efficient way to generate electricity." Opposition Members, or Mr. Porritt from Friends of the Earth, can go out and invest their own money—or other shareholders' money—to create alternative power sources. They know that they will be able to sell their electricity on to the grid and to any number of people who want to use it. If it is economic, we shall see such development very quickly.

The United States has had the same problem of consumers worrying about nuclear power stations on their doorstep, with the scaling down of electricity generation by that method. Much of that has been brought about by the combined heat and power method. It has proved economic for the present, while being produced in small packages. Industrial companies that wish to use the heat that they are creating on site and can also generate electricity. Unlike the CEGB, which says that, as it is the only customer who can buy it, it will pay next to nothing, they can sell it at a competitive price on to the grid.

We must, however, talk about the environment. It is easy to form a view of a nuclear industry that we have constantly loaded with costs to ensure that it is ultra-ultra-safe. Unfortunately, the coal industry has been creating an enormous amount of pollution, and the chickens are now coming home to roost. The amount of CO_2, NOX and sulphur being put into the atmosphere has been a constant environmental problem. I was most grateful to the hon. Member for Wentworth (Mr. Hardy), who stated that the Conservative Government would still be in power in the year 2020, and therefore should be worrying about the possible greenhouse effect and any floods in hon. Members' constituencies when considering the Bill. As I live only 50 ft above sea level, I am most concerned about that.

We must look extremely carefully at research, particularly research into nuclear electricity as well as other forms of electricity. Money has been spent on the possibilities of fusion rather than fission reactors. Opposition Members, who seem to be so against nuclear power, are keen to preserve the jobs of fast breeder reactor workers in Scotland. We must also consider the smaller nuclear reactors. I heard a very good presentation about the economics of small nuclear power stations, the speed at which they can be produced and the fact that economically they can be much more effective than very large stations. We will be considering an enormous number of questions in Committee. I certainly welcome the light and fresh air coming into the industry. Clearly, without the privatisation of this enormous monopoly, we should not have had such a sensible and sane debate.

7.51 pm

Mr. A. J. Beith (Berwick-upon-Tweed): If the hon. Member for Dorset, South (Mr. Bruce) believes passionately in the economic case of nuclear power, why does he not let it take its chance in the free market, which

the Government are not prepared to do? The Bill is designed to ensure that the disciplines of the free market never apply to nuclear power.

I shall return to that later, but I wish to register a small matter, which is important in my constituency and which is still not clarified—the question whether the south of Scotland company will be allowed to be a retail electricity company in England. If it is not, that will represent a change in the arrangements under which a large part of my constituency is supplied by the South of Scotland electricity board. It would be useful to know whether we are to continue to be provided with electricity by the SSEB, and if so, whether or not it can expand beyond the areas it currently supplies in England.

I shall concentrate on three reasons why my right hon. and hon. Friends are right to oppose the Bill. First, it gives no priority to energy conservation. Why is there no obligation on the face of the Bill to make energy conservation, and the efficient use of energy, a priority? Why is it not recognised as part of the non-fossil fuel quota? Why are the energy efficiency improvements which could be achieved in other ways not recognised as part of the non-fossil fule quota? If the object of the non-fossil fuel quota is to make the country less dependent on fossil fuels, any measure which makes it less dependent should count towards that quota. Increases in energy efficiency must come into that category, and that should be put right.

The notion of the non-fossil fuel quota is misleading, as it is couched only in terms of nuclear power, particularly in the financial provisions which back it up. There is no mention of dual firing, or any other means by which dependency on any one fuel could be reduced. No priority is given to energy conservation.

Secondly, nuclear power has a protected status. The consumer is taxed so that he shall have nuclear power. The taxpayer is taxed so that nuclear power shall be provided. Companies are placed under an obligation to buy it. It is the most blatant piece of market distortion since the direction of industry in the second world war. It is such a blatant distortion of the free market that it would qualify the Secretary of State to be Energy Secretary in Albania —the country so often used by Conservative Members to describe the attitude of the Labour party. The Secretary of State deserves that categorisation for his incredible departure from the principles that he is supposed to espouse.

The Secretary of State intervened in the speech of my hon. Friend the Member for Gordon (Mr. Bruce) to suggest that one of the advantages of the Bill was that in future there would be a more open debate on nuclear power. Tonight, there has been some focus on the figures for nuclear power and some justified criticism of the CEGB for its grotesque nuclear power figures in the past. We have heard some rather surprising praise of the SSEB from the Labour Front Bench for its record on nuclear power, of which I am extremely critical. It has grossly over-invested in nuclear power recently. How can there be a more open debate on nuclear power if it is no longer possible at a public inquiry on nuclear power stations, such as the one planned at Druridge bay in my constituency, to argue that there is no proven need for the power that that station will generate?

The answer to that challenge will be that Parliament has decided that, whether or not it is needed, we are obliged to have it. That rigs future public inquiries into nuclear power stations. Unless the Minister can demonstrate that there will be a different approach, the argument will be adduced that it is not a question of need, Parliament has decided and the law says that we have to have it whether or not it is needed. It will cease to be possible to argue at a public inquiry that the environmental damage caused by building a nuclear power station is not justified by any overwhelming need for the power that it would generate.

In the context of the Druridge bay power station which the CEGB wishes to build in my constituency, how can the Department of Energy issue fact sheet 11 at the time of the publication of the Bill, which lists a Druridge bay power station as one of those to be allocated to the National Power Company? There is no Druridge bay power station; nobody has applied for planning permission for that power station, no planning permission has been granted and no licence has been issued for it. It is simply a malevolent gleam in the eye of the chairman of the CEGB. Even he recognises that it is well down the track of his own plans, given the overriding need for more power in the south rather than in the north of England.

Will the Minister explain how that power station is listed as an assett to be transferred to National Power when it does not exist? His ministerial colleagues may refuse planning permission for it. Is the Minister prejudicing a later decision on the planning permission for that station by listing it in a fact sheet as if it were a foregone conclusion? My constituents have the feeling that it is all cut and dried and that Ministers have given some behind-the-scenes promise that the CEGB and National Power will be able to build at Druridge bay and that the planning arrangements will be a foregone conclusion. That must not be so. We shall fight it, and we are entitled to know why it was listed in that way.

One consequence of the protected status of nuclear power is that those who object to the building of particular nuclear power stations will have their arguments ruled out by the Bill.

My third reason for being so strongly opposed to the Bill is that it lacks any acceptance of vital social obligations. The Bill allows the vicious penalty of standing charges on pensioners to continue. The SSEB goes one further: it imposes six standing charges a year on its customer. They are quarterly for most of England, but six a year in Scotland. They are very much resented, and the Bill does nothing to remove them.

The Bill does nothing to help those who are not on mains electricity. Many of my constituents and many people in other rural areas do not have mains electricity. The Government are not continuing the present Hydro Board obligation to help people in rural areas, and they are certainly doing nothing like that to help consumers in other parts of the country. It is simply not good enough for the industry to pass out of public ownership with no provision for the remaining people who do not have the benefit of mains electricity.

I and my right hon. and hon. Friends are no enthusiasts for the present structure of the electricity industry. Ministers have quite rightly quoted my hon. Friend the Member for Gordon, who suggested that it would be possible to consider ways of privatising the generation of electricity so as to ensure there was some real competition. But that requires continued public maintenance of the national grid, which is conspicuously lacking in the Bill. It would require much more real competition than the Government are introducing. The Government are putting the electricity industry in turmoil without any hope of

[Mr. A. J. Beith]

increasing competition, without any hope of promoting conservation, without any hope of maintaining the social obligations of the industry and with the express purpose of subsidising, feather-bedding and protecting nuclear power.

I agree with the comments by the right hon. Member for Plymouth, Devonport (Dr. Owen) about the electricity industry. The point of difference between us is that I do not share his apparent belief that the Government have any intentions of putting the Bill right and turning it into the kind of legislation that could reasonably attract wider support. The Bill will throw the electricity industry into turmoil without achieving the objectives which I have set out, and it deserves to be opposed.

8 pm

Mr. Tim Janman (Thurrock): I have great pleasure in supporting the latest element of the Government's denationalisation programme. It will be the most successful element of that programme because there will be more competition than with telecommunications and gas.

I refute the Opposition's absurd allegations that Conservative Members are ideological and dogmatic. In 1947, when electricity was centralised and nationalised under the then Labour Government, the industry was not technically inefficient. There had been no labour disputes between 1926 and 1947. Over a 20-year period, output increased by a factor of 10. The industry had modern, not dilapidated plant and there was within it no high unemployment. There was no case for the electricity industry being taken from private companies and local authorities other than that of spiteful Socialist dogma. That was why the industry was put into the nationalised sector in 1947.

Mr. Frank Haynes (Ashfield): What is the hon. Gentleman talking about? He was not born then.

Mr. Janman: I can see that the hon. Gentleman was born a long time before me.

It is worth examining the merits of nationalisation which the Opposition would put forward. There is the so-called merit that we all own the electricity industry because it is nationalised. What utter nonsense. If we asked the majority of people in this country whether they own electricity, they would look at us in blank amazement. The state owns it, and it is run by politicians and bureaucrats with their own interests at heart, not those of consumers. Citizens may not own the electricity industry, but we are all consumers, whether at home or because people work for companies which use electricity for industrial purposes. Because of the competition element in the legislation, the entire population, as consumers, will benefit from the downward price pressure that will be brought about in the medium and long term once denationalisation has taken place.

Another myth of nationalisation is that it leads to improved industrial relations. Between 1945 and 1987, 1·928 million man days were lost in the three nationalised industries—gas, electricity and water. That is hardly proof that nationalisation brings about a calmer atmosphere and fewer days lost through strikes. The devil of nationalisation has two heads, of course—that of the monopoly of capital which it brings about and that of the monopoly of labour with its power over consumers, the economy and the nation.

We are told that nationalisation is a guarantee of lower energy prices. Since 1963, there have been seven price increases in a given 12-month period of about double or more than double the inflation rate. The worst two examples occurred under Labour Administrations—in 1974, there was a one-off price increase of 33 per cent., against inflation of 17·9 per cent., and a year later, an increase of 47·1 per cent., against inflation of 24·6 per cent. I am not scoring points off the Opposition but wish to show that nationalisation is no guarantee of low prices. In 1963, under a Conservative Administration, when inflation was running at 1·6 per cent., the price of electricity increased by 8·7 per cent.—more than five times the inflation rate. The issue is not the political hue of the Government of the day but whether the consumer is best served by choice and competition or by a monopoly which the Opposition would wish to impose.

There are two coal-fired power stations in my constituency. Over the past few months, I have taken it upon myself to talk to management and officials of the Transport and General Workers Union. I assure my hon. Friend the Minister that the managements of those power stations are enthusiastic and optimistic about the future of the stations. I should, however, like him to respond to some of the worries that members of the TGWU have expressed to me. They would like information on the likely level of foreign investment in the electricity industry, post-denationalisation.

Given the changes that will occur in the industry, it would be useful to get a commitment that the changes will be handled sensitively. The TGWU officials in my constituency talk about the many existing industry traditions. That is a euphemism for too much demarcation and therefore too much overmanning. If the industry is to become more efficient, as it will after denationalisation, there may have to be some reductions in the work force. I do not, of course, know the circumstances of any one plant. Are there likely to be reductions? If so, I should like a commitment that it will be sensitively handled by generous voluntary redundancies.

Time is short and, because other colleagues wish to speak, I shall summarise my arguments. It is clear that the legislation will mean major changes in the electricity industry. It will mean a change in the way that investment decisions are made. Instead of being producer-led, they will be consumer-led. Investment will be led by the way in which the new distribution companies choose to buy their source of energy. The investment decisions of the new generating companies—there will definitely be more than two such companies—will be affected by market conditions and not by political priorities in Whitehall. There will be much more competition and consumer choice, which will lead to a downward pressure on prices. There will be a long-term future for the energy industry and, in particular the electricity industry. There will be increased flexibility for all concerned on the generating and the consumer sides, with the industry being accountable directly to the industrial consumer and to the domestic consumer via the 12 distribution companies.

This is an excellent Bill, which is long overdue. We should have introduced this measure in the 1950s. I am pleased to support it.

8.9 pm

Mr. Allen McKay (Barnsley, West and Penistone): I wish that we had more time to develop the arguments advanced by the hon. Member for Thurrock (Mr. Janman) because we could show the House how wrong he is. I shall deal with two of the matters that he raised, the first of which is consumer choice. There is no such thing in the Bill, and the consumer cannot do a thing about it. He has to take the electricity that is supplied to him. The domestic consumer does not have a row of switches enabling him to take his supply from a Scottish board, a Yorkshire board or a board in the south. He must take the electricity from wherever it is distributed. He has no choice in the matter and it is time that we got away from that argument.

I should like to nail the lie about price increases in 1963, 1964 and 1965. I worked for British Coal from the 1950s up to the 1960s, and we said at that time that the Labour Government were wrong in their policies towards the coal industry. We told them that the Arabs would not always live in tents. That proved to be right, because in the 1960s the price of oil was increased not two or three times, but four times. That was the reason for higher prices to industry. The Government were warned then, and we are warning the Government now, to be careful how they treat the electricity industry. In the Army there used to be a saying, "If it moves, salute it, and if it doesn't, whitewash it." That is the Government's idea of privatisation. Everything goes and they are whitewashing the costs of nuclear generation.

The generation and supply of electricity are not marketable commodities. This is a key strategic industry, but what is wrong with it? It is clearly efficient and provides an excellent service and the customer trusts it. I am not convinced by the argument about competition. Perhaps later the Minister will explain where the competition will come from and how it will arise. Perhaps he will also give us an estimate of how much prices will fall. We have been told that prices will continue to fall, but the Minister should say when that will happen.

Electricity is a marvellous commodity. One cannot hear it, touch it, taste it or smell it and it cannot be stored. It must be used at the point of production. The Government are selling something that we cannot hear, smell or touch. This is competition in the industry, because the merit system used by the distribution boards ensures that electricity is supplied at the cheapest possible price. Anybody who goes to the distribution boards to see how they work will see that, if a small pump breaks down and causes an increase in the generation price, it is stopped and the next cheapest one is used. That goes on throughout 24 hours.

The Magnox nuclear power station is nearing the end of its life, and will probably finish in about 10 years. We have five AGRs and three of them are not working properly. Millions of pounds have been poured into those three AGRs to try to get them working before privatisation. The generating boards will tell any hon. Member who wants to ask that Magnox electricity is far dearer than that produced by a coal-fired power station, that AGR electricity is marginally dearer than coal-fired electricity and that the PWR electricity is the only one that is cheaper. However, we have only one of those. It is said that we need four more and that they will cost £6 billion. Who will pay £6 billion without an assurance that at the end of the investment there will be a sale? That is what it comes down to. Clause 4 of the Bill makes it an offence to

> "(a) generate electricity for the purpose of giving a supply to any premises or enabling a supply to be so given;
> (b) transmit electricity for that purpose; or
> (c) supply electricity to any premises"

unless the Secretary of State gives a licence.

People who talk about small power stations being allowed to operate are fooling themselves. The Secretary of State will not allow small power stations. He wants to ensure that they do not compete with nuclear power stations so that they can be kept. That is what the clause is all about. If that is what the Government intend to do, they should say so. Of course we shall continue to oppose them, but there is far more of a quarrel when they try to cover things up. Who will bring in small generating plants and feed the electricity into the grid? If such small generating stations are allowed, what will happen to the large boys and to the £6 billion that is to be invested? They will not allow small generating stations to depress their profit margins. The domestic customer, not the industrial customer, will suffer.

Prices will not decrease—they will increase. My hon. Friend the Member for Sedgefield (Mr. Blair) was right when he spoke about a 25 per cent. increase in prices. The figures have been worked out and I am sure that my hon. Friend is correct. There will be no competition and no consumer choice and there is no need for the Bill.

8.14 pm

Mr. Andrew Hargreaves (Birmingham, Hall Green): I am grateful for the opportunity to speak in the debate because I have had experience of dealing with foreign power-generating companies and their experience is relevant to some of the proposals in the Bill.

In contrast to what has been said by some Opposition Members, I shall begin by saying that the Bill is long overdue. That is because there are no longer any valid reasons for the provision of power being in the state's hands alone, other than because of a threat to continuity of supply, strategic national interests on security. In peace time and with an increasingly sophisticated generating and distribution system, none of the reasons that I have mentioned is valid.

If one looks to America or nearer home to Finland or Socialist Sweden, one sees excellent examples of private, non state-owned generation and distribution companies providing a superbly reliable service to the customer. I remind Opposition Members that in both those Scandinavian countries even nuclear power generation is in private or non state hands and has a magnificent safety record. They should look at the relationship and shareholding structures of OKG and Forsmarks Kraftgrupp of Sweden and at Teollisuuden Voima Oy and Imatran Voima Oy of Finland. So much for the argument about whether the industry should be state-owned or private.

In welcoming the move to the private sector, I am relieved to see that efforts have been made to ensure that the progress which has been made by the CEGB on the sophistication of the national grid will not be lost in the division and transfer into private hands. I welcome the considerable emphasis on regulation and supervision when normally I would be suspicious of those things. I am

[Mr. Andrew Hargreaves]

relieved that the merit order dispatch system will be preserved, but I know that many hon. Members will want to question the Minister about contracts between generators. They will want to be sure that take or pay contracts, or contracts direct to customers or between supply companies and other generators, will not harm this system or make difficult the concept of a pool of generators. That is important and I am sure that hon. Members will elaborate on it in Committee.

I have already had discussions with one major consumer near my constituency who has been approached with a direct supply contract from EDF of France. The impact of this type of competition, while beneficial to customers in cost terms, should not be allowed to destroy a sophisticated system that benefits all customers, especially domestic customers, and which has taken a long time to evolve. It may place the new supply companies in a less than competitive position, and that might result in higher rather than lower costs to the domestic user.

I support my hon. Friend's contention that competition should be the best guarantee of customers' interests. I am pleased to see that the Bill lays a framework for the industry in which decisions about the industry's future and the supply of electricity should be driven by the needs of all customers and, above all, will give the industry's managers more scope to use their initiative in the interests of their customers. This is, of course, reinforced by the measures in the Bill for giving customers new rights rather than just safeguards. That is important and I hope that it will be expanded in Committee.

This is an exciting opportunity for those working in the industry and I am pleased that my right hon. Friend will ensure, when it comes to the flotation, that those who work in the industry as well as customers will be offered a direct stake in their industry. I hope that my right hon. Friend will make these proposals clear in Committee. Although the Bill leaves open some technical and operating questions which I spoke about earlier and which will need to be clarified in Committee, it is radical yet structured and deserves the support of the House.

8.19 pm

Mr. Harry Barnes (Derbyshire, North-East): When he opened today's debate, the Secretary of State for Scotland said that there is no such thing as perfect competition in the electricity supply industry. That is a simple truism. He should also have added that there is no such thing as what might be termed imperfect competition in the electricity supply industry, for the notion of imperfect competition is itself an economic theoretical concept. Very little competition is possible within the electricity supply industry. Neither perfect nor imperfect competition possible because masses of competing producers and competing consumers are required. The electricity supply industry's production is termed a natural monopoly. That term has been used by the Minister and it has been used in connection with the water privatisation Bill—that public utilities are natural monopolies. That means that they cannot help but be monopolies.

The idea of natural monopolies was introduced near the end of the 19th century by essentially Conservative theorists to explain certain changes that were occurring in society, so they said that utilities such as the railways were natural monopolies and therefore had to be regulated. That old-fashioned notion is now re-emerging in connection with how the electricity and water industry privatisations are to take place. It is not just that competition is impossible among electricity producers: it is difficult to have anything that amounts to competition among consumers. We cannot easily opt—except at great capital or consumer cost—for oil, gas, coal or electric heating, thereby turning away from the method that we previously used in the home or industry. Theoretically we can do so, and, sometimes, people will.

However, it is much less easy for consumers to opt for other utilities. We cannot have nuclear-powered microwaves—except in the sense that nuclear power can be fed into the electricity industry and used in microwaves. Nowadays, we do not opt for gas street lighting as distinct from electric lighting. We do not opt for oil-driven television sets as distinct from electrically powered ones. We do not opt for coal-fired computers. It is nonsense to claim that there is competition in those utilities.

As utilities are privatised, what is to happen to those who will control and own them? Are we to have special legislation to prevent interlocking directorships when the barons of the energy industry grow up to control what is being done? The little people might initially get their hands on a few shares that give them no control over the industry, apart from being able to ensure that it operates according to what are considered to be market principles, which means that the work force and others will suffer considerably.

In such circumstances, monopolies, duopolies, cartels, or whatever, display considerable similarities. They restrict output to raise prices, control their labour forces by their power, and manipulate demand by advertising. The Government are privatising and doctrinaire. They solidly believe in controlling people by advertising. That is exactly the technique that they use to persuade the electorate to co-operate and to sell off public assets and hand them over to small groups in society.

The only answer to natural monopolies in public utilities is public ownership, but, by itself, public ownership is not sufficient. We also require public regulation to control how the public industry is run. That means that restraint should be exercised upon any monopoly. The only possible restraints that can be operated upon the monopolies that we are talking about —natural monopolies—are those of a democratic nature. That means producer democracy in which workers operate self-management techniques, and it means consumer democracy in which consumers operate, influence and control.

One aspect of consumer democracy should be parliamentary democracy. It should be possible, through the operation of parliamentary democracy, civil liberties and rights, and parliamentary and council elections in this country, to influence what takes place. We have an elected dictatorship, rather than a democratic system. The Government are destroying the possibility of producer democracy and consumer democracy, which are the answers to any problems that have emerged.

The use of private monopoly, duopoly, cartels or whatever we like to call them in the electricity supply industry will lead to massive coal imports from South Africa and Colombia, and the destruction of the remnants of most of the remaining coal industry in this country, especially in north Derbyshire. The north Derbyshire

coalfield will be under considerable threat. To try to defend its interest, the Coal Board will react by closures and the development of super-pits and opencast mining techniques. The heart of the constituency of Derbyshire, North-East can be ripped out by opencast mining techniques.

I have a map from the Opencast Executive, which shows that in the rural and Conservative areas of my constituency, which are considerable, there is massive opencast potential. In the working-class areas, where there was a great number of pits, even existing pits will be closed and coal will be mined by opencast methods. That is the approach that the Government will take.

There will also be an attack upon supply industries that have many export markets. They will be destroyed by the import of coal into this country. Shops and services and the local business rateable values will collapse. There are also social implications. In Derbyshire, for instance, 9,700 jobs are estimated by the Coalfield Communities Campaign to be put at risk because the measures that are associated with this development will produce problems. There is also the development of nuclear power and the nuclear nonsense, and the considerable environmental and social dangers that will be created by it. The Government are introducing a dangerous system of private monopoly power to be used against the interests of people.

8.27 pm

Mr. Michael Jack (Fylde): I am most grateful for your calling me to speak in this debate, Madam Deputy Speaker. I shall try to limit my remarks.

The Bill is an exciting concept. It opens the electricity industry to a new dynamic. It sets the management of the electricity industry free from Government control for the first time in its life. I can remember, during my days at university, studying economics and, time after time, realising that investment plans for the electricity supply industry had been sacrificed by various post-war Governments on the altar of economic efficiency. That is why we have some of the problems with our electricity supply industry today. The Bill removes obstacles to investment in that vital industry.

In the document "The Generating Game", published by the Central Electricity Generating Board, there are three statements. They are, that electricity is the power behind modern civilised life; that convenient electricity binds together the fabric of 20th century society; and that with this comes the responsibility to ensure reliable electricity supplies. The Bill responds to those three statements.

I shall address the main part of my remarks to the point about reliable supplies. From the conversations that I have had with the chairman of the North-Western electricity board, NORWEB, I sense that he and his staff are excited about how the Bill will open up new forms and new sources of electricity generation in the north-west. New sources of energy will be available from the industrial sector, the proponents of combined heat and light production. New sources of nuclear electricity will also be possible. All those opportunities will be available, as well as giving that management the ability to run its company in the interests of its consumers.

The hon. Member for Banff and Buchan (Mr. Salmond) is unclear about the powers of consumers who are shareholders. Many of those people will beat a path to the annual general meetings of electricity supply companies that fail to deliver.

Some 3,500 of my constituents are, however, concerned about the provisions of the Bill. They work for British Nuclear Fuels plc and make the fuel rods for all our existing nuclear power stations. They want to make the fuel pellets for the PWRs. They strongly believe that what they contribute to the electricity supply of this country is concentrated, reliable energy.

In my hand I have the equivalent of 1½ tonnes of coal. It is a small pellet from an advanced gas-cooled reactor. It provides a vivid picture of the nature of nuclear electricity. *[Interruption.]* The hon. Member for Cardiff, West (Mr. Morgan), who has just pretended to faint, demonstrates one of the problems we face—the total irrationality about, and lack of understanding of, the intrinsic safety of nuclear electricity.

Those 3,500 workers strongly believe that they made the contribution that kept the lights burning when the miners deserted those who needed electricity supplies. They want to be given the chance to make their contribution to our supply of electricity through a newer, slimmed-down, more efficient BNFL.

When the Bill is considered in Committee, I hope that Ministers will remember the obligations we have to those workers in the nuclear industry in my constituency, at Sellafield and at the other power stations. They must ensure that those parts of the Bill that refer to continuity in the supply of electricity reflect the contribution that nuclear power makes.

On 20 April 1988, the Under-Secretary of State for Energy, my hon. Friend the Member for Worcestershire, South (Mr. Spicer), spoke at the annual luncheon of the British Nuclear Forum. He said:

> "Nuclear power makes a valuable, indeed vital, contribution to diversity in electricity generation and so to the security of supply. It would be folly to rely on a closely related narrow group of fuels for electricity generation. Fossil fuels historically have shown that they are all, in one way or another, highly volatile in both price and availability."

Mr. Morgan *rose*——

Mr. Jack: I will decline the offer of further information as I still have some to give and little time in which to do so.

In 1972 there were rota disconnections to the electricity supply. None of us needs reminding of the events during the miners' strike. To put our dependence on nuclear sources of energy into perspective, it should be noted that only 5 per cent. of the total energy usage in this country —not electricity usage—comes from nuclear sources. I believe that that is almost too low a percentage in a world where our hydrocarbon fuel supplies are always at risk.

I am attempting to advocate the part that nuclear electricity can play in the future of our energy supplies. I am concerned about the Bill because, although, quite rightly, in its later clauses, it reflects the problems of decommissioning our existing Magnox and other nuclear power stations, as drafted, it does not give the same strength of commitment to addressing some of the technical problems particularly associated with the AGRs.

In Committee, it would be good if Ministers could give some consideration to the cost legacy that will be passed on to the large power generating company that tries to bring the Magnox stations and the older AGRs up to

[Mr. Jack]

power. If we intend to cater for problems at the back end of the industry, it is logical to cater for the problems at the front end of the industry.

In early December on "This Week", a programme on ITV, it was pointed out that Hinkley Point power station generated electricity at 2·64 per kilowatt hour; Drax power station generates electricity at 2·46p. That is a narrow difference, but it does not take into account the environmental consequences of fossil fuel burning to which my hon. Friend the Member for Wyre (Mr. Mans) ably referred.

On 11 December an article in the *Sunday Telegraph* magazine contained the sentence:

"The lessons for Earth are frightening. Unless we switch radically from the burning of fossil fuels to nuclear power, temperatures on Earth could double by the 22nd century."

We will not be around then, but we have an important responsibility to lay the foundations for an energy policy that is environmentally safe. Nuclear electricity is a safe form of power generation.

My constituents who work for British Nuclear Fuels plc want a chance to play their part. Their company has shown a willingness to modify its procedures and to become efficient. It can also tackle the problems of reprocessing, which is vital to maintaining the security of supply of our uranium assets. It can tackle the problem of decommissioning power stations in an efficient way. It is on record as saying that it welcomes electricity privatisation as it will sharpen up its act. British Nuclear Fuels even has the potential to become a nuclear generator in its own right. That is an exciting prospect, and the Bill affords that chance.

It has been estimated that the cost of removing the oil platforms from the North sea when the oil runs out—nuclear energy can delay that inevitable occurrence—is £6 billion, which is twice the estimated cost of decommissioning our Magnox power stations.

In making a commitment to the role that nuclear power can play in producing electricity for our country, I plead with Ministers to ensure, for the sake of the public, that there is no compromise on safety within the nuclear industry. That would be a folly for which the public would not easily forgive us.

I wholeheartedly support the Bill and the role that nuclear power can play in its objectives.

8.37 pm

Mr. George J. Buckley (Hemsworth): I am grateful for this opportunity to contribute to this debate.

We have had two days' debate on the problems contained in the Bill. It appears that Conservative Members talk about everything but the electricity industry and the consequences for the economy. I have listened intently to find out what is behind the privatisation proposals. The hon. Member for Fylde (Mr. Jack) spoke of the environmental consequences of using nuclear power, and that is the only point the Prime Minister has made about privatising electricity. She has said that it will provide environmental benefits for the world. No mention has been made of the economic benefits to the nation of privatising the generating boards.

The Secretary of State has stated four principles to support the Bill. He says that the supply of electricity should be driven by the needs of the customer. That implies that the customer would have a direct input on the supply of electricity. There is no suggestion in the Bill, however, that the customer would have any such influence. Therefore, that reason does not represent a major pillar of principle to justify the privatisation.

The Secretary of State has also said that competition is the best guarantee of customers' interest. Once again, the Government seem to take the view that anything publicly owned is more efficient and better able to meet the best interests of the customer if it is privatised. Nothing in the Bill says that that will be so. I suspect that the Minister had a great deal of difficulty grappling with the complexity of the national grid. His best effort was to come forward with two generating companies, one to generate 30 per cent. and the other 70 per cent.

Such percentages have been proposed more to deal with the nuclear side of generation than for anything else. If the percentages were more equally divided between the two companies, the problems of dealing with the liabilities of the nuclear industry that are beginning to develop would face the companies. National Power has been made as big as it is—70 per cent.—as an inducement to people in the private sector to take on the difficult generating capacity of the nuclear industry.

The Bill outlines a regulatory framework to promote competition, oversee prices and protect customers under the national monopolies that remain. The Government, who are exponents of the theory of the private market, accept in the legislation that it will create monopolies. So regulations will be imposed to protect customers from those monopolies. One of the main points made by Conservative Members is that the public monopoly of the CEGB does not serve the nation efficiently. The Bill provides for monopolies of supply companies in the geographical areas for which they are responsible. There will be no competition in those areas, and no option for customers to choose between different sources of supply. That is a complete contradiction of the Government's philosophy, which is to break up the monopoly of the CEGB.

Another technical dilemma that the Minister must have faced when considering this legislation was that of how to deal with the national grid, a unique technical apparatus that could not be broken down into smaller companies. So the Minister has come up with a mechanism of two, rather than several, companies.

One of the most appalling aspects of the legislation is the demanding commitment that 20 per cent. of the electricity supply be drawn from nuclear power. That is almost to impose on the privatised supply industry a commitment to take 20 per cent. of its power generation from nuclear energy, even though it is now proving to be one of the most expensive sources of energy produced by the CEGB. The signs are that the private monopolies—that is what they will be—will be only too pleased to invest in nuclear energy; but the experience of development of nuclear energy leaves much to be desired. The Magnox stations, the first nuclear power stations, were built with an overrun of two and a half years. The AGR at Dungeness B had an overrun of 10 years. Private industry would be reluctant to invest capital in nuclear projects with such large overruns.

The Government's position accords more with their philosophy of privatisation than with improving the nation's electricity supply. The Government's fourth principle is that security of supply must be maintained, but

such security depends more on diversity of supply—by coal, oil, gas and nuclear power—than on the privatisation of the CEGB. The Bill owes more to dogma than to any desire to improve the efficiency of the supply system, and I feel sure that the Committee will amend many of the proposals in the Bill to make it comply with the industry's needs. Some of its clauses are ill thought out.

Another thing that disturbs me about the legislation is that the privatised supply industry will not be committed to complying with the EEC regulations on environmental standards. Numerous hon. Members have expressed their concern about the environmental effects of coal and oil —the problems of acid rain, and so on. The regulations on refurbishing and replacing existing plant require no investment in ensuring that that is done in accordance with EEC standards. So, while the nation—and even Conservative Members—express concern about the consequences of coal burning for the environment, the legislation does not commit the private companies to doing anything about them.

The CEGB has been a major innovator and has conducted much research into the development of electricity. Its technology has been at the forefront of power generation. The suggested private companies that will take over from the CEGB will be more reluctant to invest in research and development for the nation's future generating capacity.

The new private monopolies will be more likely to make domestic consumers pay high prices than to make major industrial consumers do so. I can foresee pressure being applied by the larger consumers to privately owned monopolies to reduce the costs to British industry.

The burden imposed by the Government with this Bill may be mainly offset by the importation of so-called cheap coal, which will put our indigenous mining industry in jeopardy. Any private enterprise worth its name is more concerned about its investors than its customers. It is a myth put about by Tory Members that the legislation is mainly designed for the consumer, who will have no influence on the privatised industry, and who will be given no safeguards in the legislation.

The major regulatory factor imposed by the Government was enacted recently by the Minister of State, who imposed 9 per cent. and 6 per cent. increases on CEGB supplies. That regulatory factor will be used by the Government under the Bill to impose higher prices on the industry.

8.48 pm

Mr. Quentin Davies (Stamford and Spalding): The most striking aspect of the Bill is the boldness and originality of the concept that it embodies. Until now, only two models for the organisation of electricity generation and distribution, or variations or combinations of them, have been practised in the Western world. The first is the model of the public or private sector vertically integrated utility company with an effective regional monopoly. That is the model which obtains in Germany and the United States and household names in those countries, such as RWE and Con-Edison, are excellent illustrations of it. The other model is the nationwide, vertically integrated, publicly owned monopoly, of which EDF in France and the CEGB in England and Wales are among the most distinguished examples.

My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State has launched today a completely new departure which represents a third option that has never been tried before. Its novelty and originality appeared to the hon. Member for Sedgefield (Mr. Blair) as a condemnation in themselves. That may be an interesting sidelight on the intellectual state of the modern Labour party, but it is a short-sighted view to take. I am convinced that, in a number of respects, the new model represents a real advance on previous thinking in this important area of industry.

I shall highlight three of the aspects in which the Bill represents such an advance. First, for the first time, we shall have real competition in power generation in this country. That means that for the first time the British public will have the assurance that resources in this area are being used efficiently, and they will be the first public in the world to have that assurance. The CEGB, unique among monopolies in world history, may have been able to avoid generating any monopoly costs of its own. It may be that it does not suffer from overmanning, from feather-bedding of any kind or from cosy relationships with particular suppliers: we shall see. There are two possibilities: either we shall have the evidence that, until now, electricity has indeed been generated as cheaply as possible, or we shall succeed in saving those monopoly costs.

The second important benefit that the Bill will bring is the assurance that all existing generating capacity in this country will be used efficiently, including that standby or surplus primary capacity that exists at present in British manufacturing industry. Under the present regime, there is no way that that existing capacity can be used efficiently, since, effectively, the electricity produced by it can be offered for sale only to the CEGB, which is itself the major competitor of these potential suppliers. That anomaly will be removed by the separation of the national grid from the generating industry.

The third great advance represented by the Bill, which has not been mentioned in the debate so far but is worthy of the attention of the House, is that, for the first time, we shall achieve real diversification among suppliers of electricity in this country. I do not just mean diversification between alternative sources of energy. Theoretically, we can achieve that even with a single monopoly producer. That has already been achieved under the CEGB regime, although arguably to a very inadequate degree. Diversification between suppliers does not just mean diversification between alternative sources of energy. It does not just mean the benefit of achieving the cost reductions through competition that I have already mentioned. It means that we shall also be diversifying those investment risks that are so crucial in the electricity generation business.

At present, only one body of men takes the key investment decisions about where and how new generating capacity will be constructed. In future, a whole range of companies will take those decisions. Precisely because the uncertainty of the assumptions that need to be made when investment decisions are taken in this sector is so high, particularly the uncertainty of the assumptions that must be made about the future costs of energy, and because the lead times in respect of construction and commissioning in this sector of industry are so long, those risks are inordinately high and anything that we can do to reduce those risks is well worth while.

[Mr. Quentin Davies]

I have no doubt that, left to itself under the present regime, the CEGB, if decided as it apparently has, that we shall need approximately 12,000 MW of additional power between now and the end of the century, it would proceed in its normal way to construct four or five conventional thermal or nuclear power stations. Perhaps we should invest more in alternative renewable sources of energy, or in gas turbine-generated energy which, as the House knows, has the highest thermal efficiency of all, about 56 per cent. Thermal efficiency, unlike energy prices, does not vary, except very slowly with improvements in technology.

However, it would be wrong for any individual or single body of men to reserve to himself or to themselves the decisions that will need to be taken in this area. It is important to diversify the source of those decisions. Diversification of risk in this area, as with diversification of risk in any area, means reduction of risk. Over time, reduction of risk means reduction of cost. Here again, we are scoring a real advance in the Bill.

Finally, I wish to say a few words about the distribution companies. It is utterly absurd for Opposition Members to hint, as they have done in the debate, that we should somehow attempt to break the natural monopoly in distribution. Surely they do not seriously mean to say that we should duplicate or triplicate the enormous fixed assets involved in a domestic distribution network.

In the Bill, we have gone over to a concept that has not been mentioned by Opposition Members, but which they would do well to contemplate. It is the concept of yardstick competition, the ability of both the market and regulators to assess the economic performance of a distribution company by reference to the performance of other comparable companies in the same sector of activity. It is an entirely new concept to be introduced into the electricity industry. It is full of promise and makes me confident that I can commend to the House as much the proposals on distribution as those on the generation of electricity.

I am convinced that, in years to come, the British public and the British media will give accolades of gratitude to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State both for the boldness with which he has conceived the structure of the electricity industry as enshrined in the Bill and for his courage in putting over, and, I believe, already successfully persuading a great part of the establishment in the generating and distribution sectors of the industry to accept, the merits of his new concept. I believe also that in the coming months we shall see his success in persuading the House of the merits of that concept also.

9 pm

Dr. Lewis Moonie (Kirkcaldy): When wind power becomes a commercial proposition, I shall be first in the queue to buy shares in Tory Back Benchers. We have just heard one of the most flatulent contributions from a Conservative Member during a debate in which the contributions from those on the Conservative Benches have rarely risen above the banal. They seem to think that we are talking about self-evident truths. They suggest that privatisation must mean competition and a better deal for consumers. No one has yet provided us with the slightest piece of information that might support that contention.

What are the United Kingdom's electricity needs? We need a cheap source of power, a secure supply, environmental safety and regard to the satisfaction of increased demands in future. After privatisation, however, the industry will have one aim only, and that will be to maximise profitability on behalf of shareholders. It will seek to maximise the return on the capital that is deployed. It will pursue that aim through minimal price competition, through the development of a cartel, as we see in so many industries that are dominated by a few producers. It will seek the cheapest source of supply. In doing so, it will have minimal regard to strategic issues such as future investment in plant. It will show minimal concern for the consumer and minimal regard for indigenous sources of supply. Unemployment and misery will be caused as a result.

The need for profitability will lead the industry to sell as much electricity as possible. There will be no incentive for it to save energy and it will use all that is produced. It will minimise the drive for the creation of new plant, as it will wish to maximise the return of capital. This may lead in future to under-development, gaps in provision and shortages for consumers. Consumers will face increasing prices, increasing insecurity and probably a reduction in safety.

The main problem is that the power requirement in future will increase, and all methods of generating it have environmentally deleterious effects. We have heard nuclear power described so glowingly by Conservative Members, but perhaps that is an inappropriate term. There is the problem of low-level emission radiation, which is generally accepted by my profession to be a bad thing. There is the more unlikely but finite possibility of catastrophic accidents at nuclear plants. In a crowded country such as ours, such accidents would sterilise a large section of our land.

There is the problem of storage of spent fuel and its processing. There is the problem of decommissioning power stations when they have reached the end of their useful life. There is the problem also—it has not been mentioned by Conservative Members—of difficulties in the supply of fuel. We do not produce our own fuel for nuclear power stations, and there is no guarantee of stability in price or in supply. The fuel comes from South Africa, Namibia, Zaire and Bolivia, for example. These are countries which have poor safety records for their workers, and the likelihood of stable future political conditions cannot be guaranteed.

At present, nuclear power is not a good option. We have that admission from the lips of the director of the South of Scotland electricity board, Mr. Miller. There is no doubt, however, that there are future possibilities for the supply of nuclear generated electricity. We have the fast breeder technology and the developments at Dounreay. There is also the possibility of nuclear fusion. I shall return briefly to these possibilities and developments at the end of my speech.

The other main source of supply is coal, of which we have vast indigenous supplies. At present, it is relatively cheap, and it is likely to remain so. Coal-fired power stations are cheaper to build than nuclear stations and are generally safer and more economical. Smaller coal-fired power stations are suitable for combined heat and power projects, especially when the fluidised bed method of burning the stuff is used, which offers a more efficient utilisation of fuel.

Of course there are problems with coal. Burning coal emits sulphur and nitrous oxides which can be removed by burning low-sulphur coal which ex-miners in my constituency, if they were given the chance, would be delighted to produce, because my constituency sits on about 12 ft of such coal. Alternatively, and more expensively, the emissions may be treated by scrubbing the noxious gases on a sluice.

Carbon dioxide is also a problem. Conservative Members have made much of that problem, but we must recognise that burning coal does not produce much carbon dioxide compared with the burning of fuel generally and the loss of the biomass in the tropical rain forest. It is interesting that an American company which is about to build a power station has agreed, as part of the deal, to replace a proportion of the biomass in the tropical area, thereby reducing the contribution of the emissions to the overall load of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere. We must surely consider that, but it has not been considered so far in this country. It is possible to diminish the effects of carbon dioxide release if we are prepared to take action.

Sadly, other alternatives like wave, wind, tidal power, geothermal or solar sources are not yet commercially viable. Bearing in mind cost and feasibility, such alternative power supplies can only be considered in future. What are the needs for a national strategy? We must consider the long-term need for cheap, secure and expanding supplies of energy. At present, coal is undoubtedly the cheapest option.

Nuclear power is currently too expensive and too risky, even if we consider the pressurised water reactor programme, which I believe should be abandoned. Perhaps, in future, nuclear energy will have a part to play. We should continue to invest very heavily in research into ways to make that a reality, particular in fast breeder technology and nuclear fusion. Sadly, the Government are reducing their investment in those areas. We must also study the safety aspects more carefully, particularly with regard to the decommissioning programme on the Magnox stations. Nuclear power may well have a role to play in future, but it has very little role to play at present other than in providing expensive electricity for a hapless consumer.

The main alternative must be to maximise the efficiency of utilisation of supplies. There will be no incentive for a privatised electricity industry to do that. Its incentive would be to sell as much as possible. As responsible politicians, our incentive should be to minimise consumption through better insulation and utilisation and through the use of energy-efficient appliances and storage systems like those used by the North of Scotland Hydro-Electric Board. We must consider the development of alternative sources and carry out feasibility studies on wind, wave and tidal power. If we do that, we can be certain of a secure supply of energy in future. The Government's proposals do not offer us that option.

9.7 pm

Mr. Frank Haynes (Ashfield): I have listened to this debate over the past two days, but I have not yet heard anyone raise the question of safety and nuclear power. I have heard many contributions, particularly from Conservative Members.

I am perhaps nearly the oldest member in the Chamber at the moment—and I am not speaking about you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I am not trying to drag you into this argument. I remember the days as a lad when we had candles and oil lamps. I was born in 1926 so I remember all that. We also had gas, but we did not have electricity. It was around but only if one could afford it. It was there, but what happened? The electricity suppliers were not bothered about expansion; they were concerned only about pouring money into their pockets through profits.

The Secretary of State for Energy wants to take us back to the Victorian era, and we ain't going. I will tell him that straight. The Secretary of State had better watch out when the Bill goes upstairs to Committee because I will be a member of that Committee. I will be whipping that Bill for the Opposition and I want to see the Secretary of State in his place every time we sit. I am sure that we shall have a good argument in Committee.

Competition has been mentioned time and time again, but it has not yet been proved to me where the competition will be. There will be one industry that provides electricity, as there is today. I welcomed the election of a Labour Government in 1945, and they were a marvellous Government. They saved the electricity industry and they expanded it nationwide, so that everyone who wanted electricity could have it.

The hon. Member for Stamford and Spalding (Mr. Davies) spoke about electricity. All he knew about it when he was a baby and had nappies on was that he put his hand on the wall and switched on the light. That was not the case when I was a kid. All he had to do was to switch on an electric heater, but we had to hug ourselves to keep warm. I remember the days of trams. When the track was being relaid, we would get the wooden blocks to burn for warmth. These lads do not know anything about that because they were not born then. The Secretary of State can take the grin off his face or I shall knock it off in Committee—by God, I shall.

I have had few moments to myself over the past two days because I have been busy on the Front Bench whipping the Bill. The House will hear the reports of the success that we shall have in the argument in Committee. We shall not win the vote, but we shall win the argument, and the Secretary of State and his team will see that what they have produced in the Bill is not what the British public wants.

9.12 pm

Mr. Kevin Barron (Rother Valley): It is good to follow such a stirring speech by my hon. Friend the Member for Ashfield (Mr. Haynes). His stirring contribution was short, but his contribution in Committee may be longer. It may be longer than the Secretary of State's contribution —but we shall have to wait and see.

First, I want to thank my hon. Friend the Member for Midlothian (Mr. Eadie) who, for 16 years, has given great service to the Labour party as my predecessor on the Front Bench energy team. With his customary elegance, he showed once again in his contribution yesterday his skill in highlighting the contradictions in Government policies. My hon. Friend said that the Government's blatant preference for the use of nuclear power cannot be argued on price. The Bill has certainly given up the ghost of arguing that. I, like him, resent the attempts to build up the case for nuclear power by attacking the coal industry—which he highlighted yesterday.

[Mr. Kevin Barron]

The real effect of the Bill will be felt in every shop, office, factory and home in Great Britain. That was pointed out by the right hon. Member for Selby (Mr. Alison) who is not in his place now—who said that the coal and electricity industries are inextricably linked. The issue is inseparable from the future of many industries such as the railways, power engineering and major industrial energy users such as the steel, glass and chemicals industries.

I have a briefing, which the Chemical Industries Association Ltd. sent to me. It comments on the effects of the Bill on the prices that those industries, as big consumers of energy in this country, will have to pay.

Under the heading "Prices and Price Control", the CIA explains that it does not accept the reasons given for increasing electricity prices by more than 8 per cent. this year, by a further 6 per cent. next April and possibly the same again in 1990. It goes on to say that it believes that any price control formula should take 1987 as its base year —excluding the privatisation sales booster increases that the Government imposed earlier this year.

The proposals have already affected electricity costs; there is no doubt about that. The price increases that the Government forced on the industry last April, together with next April's price hike amount to an increase of more than 15 per cent. Those added costs are all directly related to the substance of the Bill.

On 3 November 1987, the Secretary of State for Energy tried to dismiss the price increases by saying that they were to do with raising revenues in the industry. He said:

"In considering the targets for these years, the Government have had to take into account the fact that, although in the recent past the electricity supply industry has had surplus capacity, that position is now changing. On current forecasts, the Central Electricity Generating Board envisages that at least 13 GW of new capacity will be needed to meet demand by the end of the century."—[*Official Report*, 3 November 1987; Vol. 121, c. 801.]

The Government moved into funding privatisation of the electricity supply industry in November 1987.

For many years the medium-term development plan that was used by the CEGB was the one thing that set prices for the electricity supply industry that took into account all the costs of new build, and so on. The report dealing with the period from 1986 to 1993 said:

"On the assumptions upon which these forecasts are based, retail tariff increases over the plan period will be below the rate of general inflation."

I put it to the Secretary of State that that is certainly not what happened in April this year or what is planned for April next year.

Perhaps the Secretary of State can be forgiven. He has great difficulty in understanding the price implications. The House will recall that yesterday, when my hon. Friend the Member for Sedgefield (Mr. Blair) said that private sector electricity in comparable industrial countries was expensive, the Secretary of State said:

"Prices in Japan are almost twice ours, and prices in West Germany are about 50 per cent. higher."—[*Official Report*, 12 December 1988; Vol. 143, c. 689.]

That shows what a muddle the Government are in. It is obvious to most informed commentators that under private ownership the price of electricity will rise, although we shall have to wait and see whether prices will be as high as in Germany and Japan.

Dr. Michael Clark (Rochford): The hon. Gentleman has been talking about prices. Will he take into account the fact that, in the five years to October this year, electricity prices have risen by 2·8 per cent. per annum whereas during the five years of the last Labour Government they rose by 22 per cent. every year?

Mr. Barron: That may have had something to do with the cost of base fuels to the electricity supply industry, but I shall consider that question later in my speech.

I was referring to the position of the Secretary of State as regards the price of electricity and suggesting that it would rise under private ownership. This will happen mainly as a result of the Government's obsession with nuclear power—an obsession which, to be fair, was not entertained by the current Conservative Government alone, but an obsession that has failed the nation in its promise of fuel so cheap that it would eventually not be worth printing electricity bills requesting payment for it.

The reality of that obsession has been the failure to meet construction targets on costs, times and production levels. At their peak, Magnox stations have only ever produced 3·8 GW, compared with an expectation of 5 GW. The AGRs, which by 1975 were planned to provide some 8 GW, have a current output capacity of 2·7 GW. After many years we have learnt the truth about the economic cost of Britain's nuclear power programme.

Mr. Tony Marlow (Northampton, North): The hon. Gentleman says that the Conservative party has an obsession with nuclear power. He seems to think that, by definition, nuclear power is much more expensive than electricity generated in any other way. Why is it that in France, which has much more nuclear power than we have, electricity is much more cheaply produced than here?

Mr. Barron: Let me direct the hon. Gentleman's attention to the Library note on the cost of electricity generation in Britain compared with that in France. He will see from that independent assessment that the cost of electricity generated by privatised nuclear power in France is far higher than that generated in the public sector in Britain.

Mr. Quentin Davies *rose*——

Mr. Barron: May I continue?

In October 1987, in a television interview, Lord Marshall described the British nuclear power industry. For perhaps the first time since the nuclear industry had been set up in Britain, people who knew about it were beginning to tell the truth.

In "Brass Tacks" on BBC—I hope it is not too difficult for Conservative Members to accept that we still have a British Broadcasting Corporation—the interviewer referred to a letter that had been sent by the CEGB to the "Stop Sizewell B" campaign in December 1986 which said that Magnox stations had been saving consumers about £250 million a year. In answer to a question, Lord Marshall said:

"You are correct to say on the Magnox stations as a whole, whether or not Magnox has been an economic bargain or not in the narrow sense does depend on their performance in the future and the price of coal in the future, so in that sense it's jam tomorrow."

The interviewer then said:

"And that's also true of the AGRs?"

Lord Marshall replied:

"That is bound to be the case because we've only got some of them working just in the last few years."

If even the most ardent supporter of nuclear power accepts its failure, why will not the Government?

The Bill contains a nuclear levy and tax. Will the Secretary of State for "Nuclear" Energy tell us exactly what the nuclear levy in clause 31 is for? Is it to finance the expensive Magnox and AGR costs now and the PWR costs in future? Does it also include the cost of building the new family of PWRs? What is clause 31 for?

The Secretary of State for Energy (Mr. Cecil Parkinson): Clause 31 is straightforward. At the moment, a cost for nuclear energy is built into an electricity bill. It is being paid now. It has been paid for the past 30 years. We are isolating it and demonstrating exactly what it is. If there is a difference between that and fossil fuel prices, we shall spread it over all fossil fuels. It is not a new tax or anything invented; it identifies the expense.

Let me make one other point. The hon. Gentleman has probably forgotten that the AGR programme was imposed on Britain by a Labour Government.

Mr. Barron: I acknowledged that earlier. I am sure that the Secretary of State for "Nuclear" Energy did not miss it.

What the right hon. Gentleman has said is that this is to pay for a nuclear programme. It is to pay for the PWR programme that the CEGB has said in evidence is more expensive than British coal. It is the penalty that consumers will have to pay for the Government's obsession with nuclear power.

As the debate got nearer, the sound of the bugle of retreat was heard louder and louder. We are now led to believe that the nuclear levy is to pay for the nuclear programme. In *The Observer* on Sunday, the Department of Energy said:

"the levy would not, as expected, go to subsidise the multi-billion pound construction of a new family of nuclear reactors. A department spokesman said National Power, the new generating company responsible for nuclear energy, will be expected to raise the finance on the market like everybody else."

If that is so, why the levy?

We are led to believe that the reason for that decision is, according to the Secretary of State in his speech yesterday to maintain a strong nuclear industry. Yet the British nuclear industry has never been strong, either in security of supply or economics. It is not the diversity of supply that concentrates the minds of industrial and domestic consumers, but security of supply, and it is that which the Bill puts at risk.

The current forecast of demand by the year 2000 is 56·9 GW. Between now and then, over 5,000 MW of coal capacity is to be closed together with over 1,000 MW of oil and nearly 3,000 MW of nuclear power.

It is predicted that necessary capacity for the year 2000 will be between 12 or 15 GW. We are led to believe that nuclear power, if it comes on stream, will provide us with about one third of that need. We have heard from the Association of Independent Electricity Producers that the maximum capacity that could be supplied by private generators would be about 4 GW.

Another option that could be used to meet future demand—I do not know whether it is being considered—is the refurbishment, rather than retirement, of coal-fired power stations. A decision on that should be taken as soon as possible, since a programme of refurbishment would be carried out over years, not overnight.

Opposition Members would welcome the addition to our electricity supplies of the long overdue combined heat and power schemes. Their contribution will of necessity be small. Given that the applications for new generators, which are talked about but never named, are likely to be top-up stations rather than for baseload generation, there must be a major question about whether the short-termism of the newly privatised industry is adequate to ensure the efficient replacement of retiring stations.

Replacing baseload capacity that is being lost involves many "ifs". We cannot risk any shortfall in supply and, therefore, the building of a big coal-fired power station is imperative. That should not be on a green-field site because we have seen the problems at Fawley, but it could be built somewhere like West Burton. That is necessary if the Government are to show that they are concerned about security of supply. It would bridge the gap between the supply and demand forecast and would enable the CEGB to do what it is good at. No matter what its critics have said, it is good at using proven technology to guarantee security of supply in this country, and a new coal-fired power station in the midlands coalfields would be able to do that.

The Secretary of State has a problem in his reluctance to discuss the strategic role to be played by the British coal mining industry. The Government have chosen to ignore a major fuel supplier in electricity generation. My hon. Friend the Member for Barnsley, Central (Mr. Illsley) said in his contribution to yesterday's debate that British Coal's half-year operating profit was £119 million—the best half-yearly figure that it has reported in 20 years. Unfortunately, the press conference and the debate surrounding that result had an atmosphere more like that of a wake than a celebration, and talk by media pundits of a rundown in British coal mining on top of the 10,000 to 20,000 jobs that have already been lost was totally uncalled for—yet it was not contradicted by British Coal or the Secretary of State for Energy.

Instead, we must grow used to indifference and the perpetual stance taken by the Tory Government to the domestic coal mining industry. Of course the Secretary of State speaks of investing large sums of taxpayers' money, to ensure that we have a modern and competitive coal industry. However, the right hon. Gentleman gave evidence to the Select Committee, which commented that such observations avoided the real issue.

The issue is simple. Today, the British coal industry simultaneously faces two major problems: first, the need to establish a new commercial relationship with the electricity supply industry; secondly, the unprecedented low level of international seam coal prices. To ignore them, and to suffer more job losses while having increased dependency on imports, will be of no use to this country.

At the heart of the matter is the Government's involvement in the historic pledge argument. The Secretary of State for Energy made an historic pledge at this year's Conservative party conference. I have some experience of historic pledges, and I say to the right hon. Gentleman that there are few occasions on which they are worth the paper they are written on. In my experience, few historic pledges have ever come true. We shall have to wait to see whether that of the Secretary of State does.

[Mr. Barron]

The Select Committee on Energy, with its majority Conservative membership, clearly summed up the Government's attitude in its conclusions. The Select Committee said that it was disturbed at the uneven treatment being given by the Government to coal and nuclear power. The problems of nuclear power have been glossed over, while there has traditionally been emotional hostility towards coal mining. Such hostility does not go back just to my time in the industry but for generations; the Tory party's hostility to it is well known.

It must be difficult for the Secretary of State for Energy to accept that in the last few years the British coal industry has lowered prices by 20 per cent. in real terms, reduced costs by 30 per cent. in real terms, and increased productivity by 75 per cent. in real terms. All that has been done at some economic and social cost to mining communities, with every one of them still having an unhealthy share of the nation's unemployed—very much so. And in his speech yesterday, the right hon. Gentleman said that he did not know the projected likely fossil fuel costs for years to come.

The Electricity Bill is not born out of consumer needs, it does not argue the case for privatisation of the electricity supply, and its claims to introduce competition are fictitious. Most Conservative Members have had to apologise when, having trawled through the Bill, they failed to find where it introduces competition.

In his speech on 12 October to the Tory party conference in Brighton, the Secretary of State claimed that this was the first privatisation to be regionally based. He said:

> "In privatising the area boards, we shall be creating 12 powerful companies, each with its headquarters and decision-making in the region that it serves."

He gave the example, and I am pleased that he did, of the Yorkshire electricity board. He said that the decision that governs the quality and price of electricity supply to my home will be made in Yorkshire by Yorkshire men answerable to the people of Yorkshire, and that domination by London will be a thing of the past.

The Secretary of State obviously has plans to move his Department up to Yorkshire. He is obviously going to appoint a director-general and/or agent who comes from Yorkshire and has offices in Leeds, London and Edinburgh. That must be his master plan, because he knows as well as I do that any major decisions on electricity will be made by the Secretary of State for Energy and the director-general. They will decide the price of electricity; they will set the nuclear tax and levy; they will set the costs of transmission; they will issue the licences for generators and supply boards; they will be responsible for security and sufficiency of supply.

As has been pointed out by many hon. Members and highlighted by the hon. Member for Havant (Sir I. Lloyd), Chairman of the Select Committee on Energy, the Secretary of State will be involved in detailed obligations in no few than 67 distinct and separate parts of the Bill. The Bill does not offer consumer choice, but says, "Take it or leave it." It has not satisfied the concerns of industries whose energy costs are a major part of their expenditure. It has not satisfied the needs of consumers, nor has it quelled the doubts of the 55 per cent. of the British public who want the electricity industry to stay in the public sector. We shall speak for them tonight, and vote against the Bill.

9.36 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Energy (Mr. Michael Spicer): Let me begin by asking the hon. Member for Rother Valley (Mr. Barron) a question. In answer to an intervention by my hon. Friend the Member for Rochford (Dr. Clark), who asked why electricity prices had gone up by 180 per cent. under the last Labour Government, I believe that he said, "Fuel costs." Does that explain why postal charges went up by 147 per cent., rail charges by 171 per cent., bus fares by 150 per cent. and water charges by 150 per cent? He need not answer now; a letter will do.

The gist, as I have understood it, of what the hon. Member for Rother Valley was saying when he was not talking about coal—the gist, indeed, of much of what Opposition Members have said over the past two days—is that the British electricity supply industry operates in a state close to perfection. In the imagination of Opposition Members, electricity consumers, distributors and the one producer apparently pull together in almost perfect harmony. Investment decisions planned and executed by that one producer flow through with such precision as to ensure that costs are at a minimum, power stations work with total efficiency, electricity is priced as low as it can be and service can only be described as pastoral.

That imagery has only one flaw: it is not true, and many of my right hon. and hon. Friends have spoken eloquently to that effect over the past two days. Yesterday, particularly good speeches were made by my right hon. Friends for Selby (Mr. Alison) and for Guildford (Mr. Howell) and by my hon. Friend, the Member for Birmingham, Northfield (Mr. King). Today we heard from my hon. Friends the Members for Cambridgeshire, North-East (Mr. Moss), for Eastwood (Mr. Stewart), for Ipswich (Mr. Irvine), for Wyre (Mr. Mans), for Dorset, South (Mr. Bruce), for Thurrock (Mr. Janman), for Stamford and Spalding (Mr. Davies), for Romsey and Waterside (Mr. Colvin), for Fylde (Mr. Jack) and for Birmingham, Hall Green (Mr. Hargreaves). The first part of what my hon. Friend the Member for St. Ives (Mr. Harris) had to say was also eloquent and excellent. All those speeches were in favour of radical change in the industry.

Yardsticks in a monopolistic state-controlled industry are, of course, hard to find. But if efficiency is to be measured, for instance, by the rate of return on capital, it must be realised that this is so low in the electricity supply industry that it falls short even of the rate of return rules for new investment in the public sector laid down by the last Labour Government.

When the Government have insisted that rates of return are raised to a realistic level to prepare the industry for the massive new investment in plant and machinery that will be required over the next 10 years, the industry's main response has been not to cut costs but to raise prices. Nor should we be surprised that that should be so, because 80 per cent. of the costs of producing electricity in England and Wales are at present associated with a single producer which is allowed to pass its costs, whatever they are and however they are set, straight through to the customer. We

have no real way of judging whether those costs are defensible. It is intrinsic to the system that there are few benchmarks by which we can judge efficiency within the

Contrary to what has been said by the Opposition, the British electricity supply industry has been operating for several years with expensive excess capacity, with power stations which have not been built to time and cost, and several of which in England and Wales still do not produce electricity efficiently. The Opposition do not appreciate it, but we know that all that is paid for by the customer. The repeated bleat has gone up throughout the debate from the Opposition Benches asking us why we wish to restructure the industry and why we wish to privatise it. It is because, by a process of introducing competition where it most directly affects costs, of regulating the monopoly sectors in support of the consumer, of encouraging employees to own their own shares and of launching great new regional centres of power, we mean radically to improve the system. That is the answer to the question: "Why privatise?".

In a moment I shall answer some of the other questions raised on both sides of the House about how much competition and how much regulation. Let me deal first with some of the specific points which have been touched on in the debate. *[Interruption.]*

The hon. Member for Glasgow, Garscadden (Mr. Dewar) asked about special shares. Arrangements will be put in place to safeguard the independence of the area boards, National Power, Power Gen, the national grid and the two Scottish companies. The articles of the companies will restrict individuals and companies from building up a shareholding of more than 15 per cent. That will be reinforced by a special share to be held by the Government.

Questions have been asked, in particular by my hon. Friend the Member for Romsey and Waterside, about the effect of the Bill on the conservation of electricity and the environment. A number of hon. Members have raised that issue. The answer is that the Bill is likely to have a highly beneficial effect on conservation and the environment. That is partly because the Director General of Electricity Supply will have a specific statutory duty to promote energy efficiency, partly because access to the system will encourage on to it generators with smaller, less polluting, highly modernised stations—CHP has been mentioned several times in the debate, and of course that will be one source of energy that will be encouraged—and partly because a special arrangement for non-fossil fuel sources will benefit renewable energy such as the Mersey barrage which has been mentioned by the right hon. Member for Plymouth, Devonport (Dr. Owen), the other barrages, and wind power which has been mentioned on several occasions. I am informed that clause 30 is the first time that wind power has been mentioned specifically in any statute.

The effect of privatisation on prices was also raised. The Opposition quite falsely have suggested that the privatisation process will raise prices. Our judgment is the reverse. The presence of competition is bound to create greater efficiency in that part of the industry which currently comprises three quarters of its costs—in other words, generation.

Mr. Salmond: The Minister keeps referring to the British electricity supply industry, but how on earth can the argument he has just made be applied to the Scottish electricity industry, where there is no competition whatsoever in generation?

Mr. Spicer: Nine tenths of the industry is English and Welsh electricity. It is worth making that point in the context of all the barracking by Scottish Members. It is rubbish to say that there will be no competition in Scotland and, if the hon. Gentleman will allow me, I shall tell him precisely why.

It is true that the massive investment programme which lies ahead will have to be paid for. In the present circumstances, the bills for that can be shared only between the consumer and the taxpayer. Someone has to pay for this massive investment. In future, the shareholder will join in the risk and, of course, will expect to receive dividends in return for doing so. We shall certainly not permit the supply companies to pass through into prices all the cost increases that they incur. They will therefore have the incentive to contract as efficiently as possible for future generating capacity.

Several hon. Members have argued that we should not have made special provisions for nuclear power. *[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. Hon. Members should not carry on private conversations in the middle of an important speech.

Mr. Spicer: Some Opposition Members have simply been confused, but I am sure that others have been perverse. The provision that the Government have made for the making of grants, loans and guarantees relates in particular to future costs which the industry could not have been able to forsee, arising, for example, out of changes in Government policy or changes in the policy of the responsible regulator. This would be true, for instance, if a policy were introduced rapidly to speed up the process of decommissioning. The industry will certainly be expected to continue to make full and proper provision for all foreseen decommissioning, reprocessing and waste management costs. It does so at present for England and Wales at a cost of between £2 billion and £3 billion.

We have said that, while the consumer will pay, as he does now, for the benefits of diversity which nuclear-generated electricity provides, in future—the Opposition have consistently failed to understand this point—he will pay on a transparent basis and not, as now, on the basis of accounts which confuse nuclear and other fuel sources in such a way as to make them unidentifiable.

We expect—unlike the right hon. Member for Devonport—that the introduction of modern and highly efficient PWRs will lead in time to the need for special treatment for the nuclear industry falling away. It is certainly our desire that all forms of power generation should ultimately compete on the same footing. The argument that coal is being unfairly treated compared with nuclear—the theme of the speech of the hon. Member for Rother Valley—is absurd when one considers the £9 billion of taxpayers' money that has been spent in the past nine years and add to that the enormous amounts—currently running at £550 million a year—which consumers of electricity have been paying, over the odds, for British coal.

Mr. Barron: The basis of that figure has been widely disputed, even by the CEGB. How much money will be spent on the nuclear levy which the Bill introduces?

Mr. Spicer: The CEGB's estimate is much higher—the hon. Gentleman is right to say that the figure is disputed. We take a rather modest figure.

Since the war—this matter is not disputed—the equivalent of £19 billion in today's money has been paid by the taxpayer to the coal industry. To say that the coal industry is being unfairly treated in these circumstances is bizarre.

The question has been raised as to why Scotland is being treated differently from England and Wales in the Bill. The answer in part is that the vast majority of the Bill covers Scotland, England and Wales identically. The differences apply where the nature and structure of the two industries are different. In England and Wales, nuclear accounts for only 16 per cent. of the electricity produced——

Mr. Douglas: Come on.

Mr. Spicer: The hon. Gentleman may know this, but many people have asked this question.

Mr. Douglas: The Minister, who is a pleasant gentleman, should try to understand that the root of the objection is not that Scotland is being treated differently, but that because it is different it should have a separate Bill.

Mr. Spicer: My right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland spent a great deal of time explaining that, but perhaps the hon. Member for Dunfermline, West (Mr. Douglas) was not in the Chamber at the time. *[Interruption.]* I understand that he was. There are some differences. Proportionally, Scotland has four times as much nuclear power as England and Wales, has a vastly greater amount of hydro-electricity and is a different market place. It is clear that we had to cater for some differences north of the border.

The hon. Member for Ashfield (Mr. Haynes), who is sitting on the Opposition Front Bench, raised the question of safety. I can tell him categorically that the industry will be safe in private hands. All hon. Members accept that safety standards, especially in the nuclear industry, are excellent. They will remain precisely the same after privatisation and nuclear safety will continue to be policed after privatisation by the nuclear installations inspectorate. Some hon. Members have argued that in future the industry is to be too heavily regulated.

Mr. Orme : The Minister says that nuclear safety will remain in future as it is at present. Will the commission be answerable to Parliament in the way that it is presently answerable?

Mr. Spicer: Yes, of course it will. I am glad that the right hon. Gentleman reminded me about that specific question.

As I say, some hon. Members have argued that we are to regulate the industry too heavily and other hon. Members have argued just as vehemently that we have put the industry on too loose a rein. The House may therefore feel that we have got it about right. The principle that has guided us has been that those parts of the industry where it is most difficult to inject competition, for instance the grid company and the supply companies, should be the most rightly regulated. It is fairly natural for us to do that, but even here the role of regulation will be to bring as much competition into the industry as possible.

For instance, we expect that the Director General of Electricity Supply will particularly have in mind, in his approach for example to the grid company, the need to allow maximum access to new entrants commensurate with the well-being and safety of the system. On the other hand we think that there is little need for economic regulation at the generating end of the industry.

Contrary to what the Opposition have said, we think that we will achieve growing and genuine competition by splitting the CEGB into two companies, by allowing distribution companies up to a maximum of 15 per cent. own generation and by encouraging new companies to come in.

I now turn to the word that the Opposition dare not speak—renationalisation. In answer to questions yesterday from my hon. Friends the Members for Lewisham, West (Mr. Maples) and for Rochford, the hon. Member for Sedgefield (Mr. Blair) said of the electricity industry:

"When we come to power it will be reinstated as a public service for the people of this country, and will not be run for private profit."

Later, when pressed by my hon. Friend the Member for Rochford, he said:

"We will reinstate it as a proper public service under public control."—[*Official Report*, 12 December 1988; Vol. 143, c. 689-696.]

I must ask him what that means. If it is Socialist yuppy-speak for renationalisation, then one day I suspect that he will be bound to have to tell the electorate the terms on which he will buy out the shareholders, particularly those shareholders who are also employees of the industry. If he does not mean renationalisation and is just putting up token opposition, I must tell him that we understand—it is what he is there to do—but I fear that it will not exactly improve his credibility.

I refer next to what has perhaps been the essential thrust of the Opposition's Front Bench attack on the Bill in the past few days. Opposition Members have argued that, under the terms of the Bill, there will be insufficient competition. At least, that is what I understood the hon. Member for Sedgefield to imply. In bringing competition into the forefront of the debate, Opposition Members have taken the debate on to our territory, and for that we must be grateful.

I am not sure what the Labour party knows about competition. Yesterday, the hon. Member for Sedgefield said:

"The truth is that there is no competitive pressure in this structure at the point of consumption, which is the only competitive pressure that matters."—[*Official Report*, 12 December 1988; Vol. 143, c. 692.]

When, as in the case of electricity, three quarters of costs are at the point of production, that is manifest nonsense, and the hon. Gentleman knows it. He does not believe it himself—he is grinning. Of course he cannot believe that competition in three quarters of the industry has no effect on the consumer—*[Interruption.]*

The hon. Member for Sedgefield says that the consumer does not pay. The consumer ultimately pays the costs. He is saying that, because we cannot have 100 per cent. perfect competition, we should have no competition. That is precisely what he and other Opposition Members have said throughout the debate. The hon. Member for Rother Valley is nodding his head.

Mr. Barron: The Opposition simply say that, in 1983, the Government brought in an Energy Act that was to introduce the same competition, and it singularly failed, and we are arguing about that here tonight.

Mr. Spicer: Conservative Members would go some way with the hon. Gentleman. It is interesting that we are having this discussion about whether we have given enough competition. That is a perfectly reasonable debating ground, and we are delighted to have it. The 1983 Act, for various reasons—notably that the CEGB was left as a monopoly—did not work. That is why we are bringing in this replacement. I am glad that the hon. Gentleman mentioned the 1983 Act. Of course we were not pleased with it. It was a step in the right direction, but it was not far enough. It left a monopoly in place, and that monopoly, in effect, was able to control the rules.

We say that where we cannot have perfect competition, we should regulate to protect the interests of the consumer. The truth is that, philosophically, a member of the Labour party—whether or not he is a member of the new yuppy Labour party—would not know a consumer if he saw one. The Labour party owes its very existence to producer interests. One never hears about common ownership of the means of consumption. Socialism was founded on the unholy alliance between producers and trade unions. The market place simply does not feature in Opposition Members' thinking. The truth is that the interests of the consumer are the essence of the Bill which, for the first time, imposes an obligation on the industry to supply all consumers, unless it is technically impractical to do so.

The consumer will not only benefit directly if some three quarters of his costs are subject to the force of competition, but he will have the chance, if that is what he wishes, to buy his electricity from an alternative supply company. The hon. Member for Rother Valley was wrong about that.

It has been said that the Bill is radical. That is precisely right. It is extremely radical. To change the whole emphasis of an immense utility away from one that is dominated by a single producer towards one that reflects the interests of the customer is an enormously ambitious undertaking. We are under no illusions about that. For the time being it may not appeal to the myopic imagination of the Opposition, bent on driving this country back into the past, but I am sure that it will receive the support of the mass of the country.

Question put, That the amendment be made:

The House divided: Ayes 239, Noes 316.

Division No. 12] **[10 pm**

AYES

Abbott, Ms Diane
Adams, Allen *(Paisley N)*
Allen, Graham
Alton, David
Anderson, Donald
Archer, Rt Hon Peter
Armstrong, Hilary
Ashdown, Paddy
Ashley, Rt Hon Jack
Ashton, Joe
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnes, Harry *(Derbyshire NE)*
Barron, Kevin
Beckett, Margaret
Beggs, Roy
Beith, A. J.
Bell, Stuart
Bennett, A. F. *(D'nt'n & R'dish)*
Bermingham, Gerald
Bidwell, Sydney
Blair, Tony
Blunkett, David
Boyes, Roland
Bradley, Keith
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, Gordon *(D'mline E)*
Brown, Nicholas *(Newcastle E)*
Brown, Ron *(Edinburgh Leith)*
Bruce, Malcolm *(Gordon)*
Buchan, Norman
Buckley, George J.
Caborn, Richard
Callaghan, Jim
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Campbell, Ron *(Blyth Valley)*
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Canavan, Dennis
Carlile, Alex *(Mont'g)*
Clark, Dr David *(S Shields)*
Clarke, Tom *(Monklands W)*
Clay, Bob
Clelland, David
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Cohen, Harry
Coleman, Donald
Cook, Frank *(Stockton N)*
Cook, Robin *(Livingston)*
Corbett, Robin
Corbyn, Jeremy
Cousins, Jim
Cox, Tom
Crowther, Stan
Cryer, Bob
Cummings, John
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Cunningham, Dr John
Dalyell, Tam
Darling, Alistair
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(Llanelli)*
Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham Hodge H'l)*
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Don
Dobson, Frank
Doran, Frank
Douglas, Dick
Duffy, A. E. P.
Dunnachie, Jimmy
Dunwoody, Hon Mrs Gwyneth
Eadie, Alexander
Eastham, Ken
Evans, John *(St Helens N)*
Ewing, Harry *(Falkirk E)*
Fatchett, Derek
Fearn, Ronald
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fields, Terry *(L'pool B G'n)*
Flannery, Martin
Flynn, Paul
Foot, Rt Hon Michael
Forsythe, Clifford *(Antrim S)*
Foster, Derek
Foulkes, George
Fraser, John
Fyfe, Maria
Galbraith, Sam
Galloway, George
Garrett, John *(Norwich South)*
Garrett, Ted *(Wallsend)*
George, Bruce
Gilbert, Rt Hon Dr John
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Golding, Mrs Llin
Gordon, Mildred
Gould, Bryan
Graham, Thomas
Grant, Bernie *(Tottenham)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Grocott, Bruce
Hardy, Peter
Hattersley, Rt Hon Roy
Haynes, Frank
Healey, Rt Hon Denis
Heffer, Eric S.
Henderson, Doug
Hinchliffe, David
Hogg, N. *(C'nauld & Kilsyth)*
Holland, Stuart
Home Robertson, John
Hood, Jimmy
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Howell, Rt Hon D. *(S'heath)*
Hoyle, Doug
Hughes, John *(Coventry NE)*
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport E)*
Hughes, Sean *(Knowsley S)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Illsley, Eric
Ingram, Adam
Johnston, Sir Russell
Jones, Barry *(Alyn & Deeside)*
Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd S W)*
Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Kennedy, Charles
Kilfedder, James
Kinnock, Rt Hon Neil
Kirkwood, Archy
Lambie, David
Lamond, James
Leadbitter, Ted
Leighton, Ron
Lestor, Joan *(Eccles)*
Lewis, Terry
Litherland, Robert
Livingstone, Ken
Livsey, Richard
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Lofthouse, Geoffrey
Loyden, Eddie
McAllion, John
McAvoy, Thomas
Macdonald, Calum A.
McFall, John
McKay, Allen *(Barnsley West)*
McKelvey, William
McLeish, Henry
Maclennan, Robert
McNamara, Kevin
McTaggart, Bob
McWilliam, John
Madden, Max
Mahon, Mrs Alice
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Marshall, Jim *(Leicester S)*
Martin, Michael J. *(Springburn)*
Martlew, Eric
Maxton, John
Meacher, Michael
Meale, Alan
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Michie, Mrs Ray *(Arg'l & Bute)*
Mitchell, Austin *(G't Grimsby)*
Molyneaux, Rt Hon James
Moonie, Dr Lewis
Morgan, Rhodri
Morley, Elliott
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(W'shawe)*
Morris, Rt Hon J. *(Aberavon)*
Mowlam, Marjorie
Mullin, Chris
Murphy, Paul
Nellist, Dave
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Brien, William
O'Neill, Martin
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Patchett, Terry
Pendry, Tom
Pike, Peter L.
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Prescott, John
Primarolo, Dawn
Quin, Ms Joyce
Radice, Giles
Randall, Stuart
Redmond, Martin
Rees, Rt Hon Merlyn
Reid, Dr John
Richardson, Jo
Roberts, Allan *(Bootle)*
Robertson, George

Robinson, Geoffrey
Rogers, Allan
Rooker, Jeff
Ross, Ernie *(Dundee W)*
Rowlands, Ted
Ruddock, Joan
Salmond, Alex
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheerman, Barry
Sheldon, Rt Hon Robert
Short, Clare
Sillars, Jim
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton & F'bury)*
Smyth, Rev Martin *(Belfast S)*
Snape, Peter
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Steel, Rt Hon David
Steinberg, Gerry
Stott, Roger
Strang, Gavin
Straw, Jack
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
Thomas, Dr Dafydd Elis
Thompson, Jack *(Wansbeck)*
Turner, Dennis
Walker, A. Cecil *(Belfast N)*
Wall, Pat
Wallace, James
Walley, Joan
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wareing, Robert N.
Welsh, Michael *(Doncaster N)*
Wigley, Dafydd
Williams, Rt Hon Alan
Williams, Alan W. *(Carm'then)*
Wilson, Brian
Winnick, David
Wise, Mrs Audrey
Worthington, Tony
Wray, Jimmy
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mrs. Margaret Ewing and
Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones.

NOES

Adley, Robert
Aitken, Jonathan
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael
Allason, Rupert
Amery, Rt Hon Julian
Amess, David
Amos, Alan
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Tom *(Hazel Grove)*
Ashby, David
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkins, Robert
Atkinson, David
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Valley)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Barnes, Mrs Rosie *(Greenwich)*
Batiste, Spencer
Beaumont-Dark, Anthony
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Bennett, Nicholas *(Pembroke)*
Benyon, W.
Bevan, David Gilroy
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Body, Sir Richard
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Boscawen, Hon Robert
Bottomley, Mrs Virginia
Bowden, A *(Brighton K'pto'n)*
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Bowis, John
Boyson, Rt Hon Dr Sir Rhodes
Braine, Rt Hon Sir Bernard
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brittan, Rt Hon Leon
Brooke, Rt Hon Peter
Brown, Michael *(Brigg & Cl't's)*
Browne, John *(Winchester)*
Bruce, Ian *(Dorset South)*
Buck, Sir Antony
Budgen, Nicholas
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butcher, John
Butler, Chris
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, John, *(Luton N)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Cartwright, John
Cash, William
Chalker, Rt Hon Mrs Lynda
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chapman, Sydney
Chope, Christopher
Churchill, Mr
Clark, Hon Alan *(Plym'th S'n)*
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clark, Sir W. *(Croydon S)*
Clarke, Rt Hon K. *(Rushcliffe)*
Colvin, Michael
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre F'rest)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, Rt Hon John
Cormack, Patrick
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Critchley, Julian
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Davies, Q. *(Stamf'd & Spald'g)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Devlin, Tim
Dickens, Geoffrey
Dicks, Terry
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Tony
Dykes, Hugh
Eggar, Tim
Emery, Sir Peter
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatf'd)*
Evennett, David
Favell, Tony
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Finsberg, Sir Geoffrey
Fishburn, John Dudley
Fookes, Miss Janet
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fowler, Rt Hon Norman
Fox, Sir Marcus
Franks, Cecil
Freeman, Roger
French, Douglas
Fry, Peter
Gale, Roger
Gardiner, George
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Gill, Christopher
Glyn, Dr Alan
Goodhart, Sir Philip
Goodlad, Alastair
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Gorst, John
Gow, Ian
Gower, Sir Raymond
Grant, Sir Anthony *(CambsSW)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, Sir Eldon *(Bury St E')*
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth N)*
Grist, Ian
Grylls, Michael
Gummer, Rt Hon John Selwyn
Hamilton, Hon Archie *(Epsom)*
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, John
Hargreaves, A. *(B'ham H'll Gr')*
Hargreaves, Ken *(Hyndburn)*
Harris, David
Hawkins, Christopher
Hayes, Jerry
Hayhoe, Rt Hon Sir Barney
Hayward, Robert
Heddle, John
Heseltine, Rt Hon Michael
Hicks, Mrs Maureen *(Wolv' NE)*
Hicks, Robert *(Cornwall SE)*
Higgins, Rt Hon Terence L.
Hill, James
Hind, Kenneth
Hogg, Hon Douglas *(Gr'th'm)*
Holt, Richard
Hordern, Sir Peter
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'd-on-A)*
Howarth, G. *(Cannock & B'wd)*
Howe, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Howell, Rt Hon David *(G'dford)*
Howell, Ralph *(North Norfolk)*
Hughes, Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, David *(Wirral W)*
Hunter, Andrew
Hurd, Rt Hon Douglas
Irvine, Michael
Irving, Charles
Jack, Michael
Jackson, Robert
Janman, Tim
Jessel, Toby
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert B *(Herts W)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Key, Robert
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Greg *(Derby North)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Edgbaston)*
Knowles, Michael
Knox, David
Lamont, Rt Hon Norman
Lang, Ian
Latham, Michael
Lawrence, Ivan
Lawson, Rt Hon Nigel
Leigh, Edward *(Gainsbor'gh)*
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Peter
Lloyd, Sir Ian *(Havant)*
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Luce, Rt Hon Richard
Lyell, Sir Nicholas
McCrindle, Robert
Macfarlane, Sir Neil
MacKay, Andrew *(E Berkshire)*
Maclean, David
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, Sir Michael
McNair-Wilson, P. *(New Forest)*
Madel, David
Major, Rt Hon John
Malins, Humfrey
Mans, Keith
Maples, John
Marland, Paul
Marlow, Tony
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Marshall, Michael *(Arundel)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Mates, Michael
Maude, Hon Francis
Mawhinney, Dr Brian
Maxwell-Hyslop, Robin
Mayhew, Rt Hon Sir Patrick
Mellor, David
Meyer, Sir Anthony
Mills, Iain
Miscampbell, Norman
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, Sir David
Moate, Roger
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Morris, M *(N'hampton S)*
Morrison, Sir Charles
Morrison, Rt Hon P *(Chester)*
Moss, Malcolm
Moynihan, Hon Colin
Mudd, David
Neale, Gerrard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Michael
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Onslow, Rt Hon Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Owen, Rt Hon Dr David
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Parkinson, Rt Hon Cecil
Patnick, Irvine
Patten, John *(Oxford W)*
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Porter, Barry *(Wirral S)*
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Price, Sir David
Raffan, Keith
Redwood, John
Renton, Tim
Rhodes James, Robert
Rifkind, Rt Hon Malcolm
Roberts, Wyn *(Conwy)*
Rowe, Andrew
Sackville, Hon Tom
Sainsbury, Hon Tim
Scott, Nicholas
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shersby, Michael
Sims, Roger

Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Hon Nicholas
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Stevens, Lewis
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Stradling Thomas, Sir John
Summerson, Hugo
Taylor, John M *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Teddy *(S'end E)*
Thatcher, Rt Hon Margaret
Thompson, D. *(Calder Valley)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thorne, Neil
Thornton, Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Townsend, Cyril D. *(B'heath)*
Tracey, Richard
Tredinnick, David
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Viggers, Peter
Waddington, Rt Hon David
Wakeham, Rt Hon John
Waldegrave, Hon William
Walden, George
Walker, Bill *(T'side North)*
Walker, Rt Hon P. *(W'cester)*
Waller, Gary
Walters, Sir Dennis
Ward, John
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Warren, Kenneth
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Wheeler, John
Whitney, Ray
Widdecombe, Ann
Wiggin, Jerry
Wilkinson, John
Winterton, Mrs Ann
Winterton, Nicholas
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Woodcock, Mike
Yeo, Tim
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*
Younger, Rt Hon George

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Michael Fallon and
Mr. David Heathcoat-Amory.

Question accordingly negatived.

Main Question put forthwith, pursuant to Standing Order No. 60 (Amendment on Second or Third Reading):—

The House divided: Ayes 304, Noes 238.

Division No. 13] **[10.16 pm**

AYES

Adley, Robert
Aitken, Jonathan
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael
Allason, Rupert
Amery, Rt Hon Julian
Amess, David
Amos, Alan
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Tom *(Hazel Grove)*
Ashby, David
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkins, Robert
Atkinson, David
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Valley)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Barnes, Mrs Rosie *(Greenwich)*
Batiste, Spencer
Beaumont-Dark, Anthony
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Bennett, Nicholas *(Pembroke)*
Benyon, W.
Bevan, David Gilroy
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Body, Sir Richard
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Boscawen, Hon Robert
Bottomley, Peter
Bottomley, Mrs Virginia
Bowden, A *(Brighton K'pto'n)*
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Bowis, John
Boyson, Rt Hon Dr Sir Rhodes
Braine, Rt Hon Sir Bernard
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brittan, Rt Hon Leon
Brooke, Rt Hon Peter
Brown, Michael *(Brigg & Cl't's)*
Browne, John *(Winchester)*
Bruce, Ian *(Dorset South)*
Buck, Sir Antony
Budgen, Nicholas
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butcher, John
Butler, Chris
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, John, *(Luton N)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Cartwright, John
Cash, William
Chalker, Rt Hon Mrs Lynda
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chapman, Sydney
Chope, Christopher
Churchill, Mr
Clark, Hon Alan *(Plym'th S'n)*
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clark, Sir W. *(Croydon S)*
Clarke, Rt Hon K. *(Rushcliffe)*
Colvin, Michael
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre F'rest)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, Rt Hon John
Cormack, Patrick
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Critchley, Julian
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Davies, Q. *(Stamf'd & Spald'g)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Devlin, Tim
Dickens, Geoffrey
Dicks, Terry
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Tony
Dykes, Hugh
Eggar, Tim
Emery, Sir Peter
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatf'd)*
Evennett, David
Favell, Tony
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Finsberg, Sir Geoffrey
Fishburn, John Dudley
Fookes, Miss Janet
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fowler, Rt Hon Norman
Fox, Sir Marcus
Franks, Cecil
Freeman, Roger
French, Douglas
Fry, Peter
Gale, Roger
Gardiner, George
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Gill, Christopher
Glyn, Dr Alan
Goodhart, Sir Philip
Goodlad, Alastair
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Gorst, John
Gow, Ian
Gower, Sir Raymond
Grant, Sir Anthony *(CambsSW)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, Sir Eldon *(Bury St E')*
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth N)*
Grist, Ian
Grylls, Michael
Gummer, Rt Hon John Selwyn
Hamilton, Hon Archie *(Epsom)*
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, John
Hargreaves, A. *(B'ham H'll Gr')*
Hargreaves, Ken *(Hyndburn)*
Harris, David
Hawkins, Christopher
Hayes, Jerry
Hayhoe, Rt Hon Sir Barney
Hayward, Robert
Heddle, John
Heseltine, Rt Hon Michael
Hicks, Mrs Maureen *(Wolv' NE)*
Hicks, Robert *(Cornwall SE)*
Higgins, Rt Hon Terence L.
Hill, James
Hind, Kenneth
Hogg, Hon Douglas *(Gr'th'm)*
Holt, Richard
Hordern, Sir Peter
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'd-on-A)*
Howarth, G. *(Cannock & B'wd)*
Howe, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Howell, Rt Hon David *(G'dford)*
Howell, Ralph *(North Norfolk)*
Hughes, Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, David *(Wirral W)*
Hunter, Andrew
Hurd, Rt Hon Douglas
Irvine, Michael
Irving, Charles
Jack, Michael
Jackson, Robert
Janman, Tim
Jessel, Toby
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert B *(Herts W)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Key, Robert
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Greg *(Derby North)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Edgbaston)*
Knowles, Michael
Knox, David
Lamont, Rt Hon Norman
Lang, Ian
Latham, Michael
Lawrence, Ivan
Lawson, Rt Hon Nigel
Leigh, Edward *(Gainsbor'gh)*
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Peter
Lloyd, Sir Ian *(Havant)*
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Luce, Rt Hon Richard
Lyell, Sir Nicholas
McCrindle, Robert
Macfarlane, Sir Neil
MacKay, Andrew *(E Berkshire)*
Maclean, David
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, Sir Michael
McNair-Wilson, P. *(New Forest)*
Madel, David
Major, Rt Hon John
Malins, Humfrey
Mans, Keith
Maples, John
Marland, Paul
Marlow, Tony
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Marshall, Michael *(Arundel)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Maude, Hon Francis
Mawhinney, Dr Brian
Maxwell-Hyslop, Robin
Mayhew, Rt Hon Sir Patrick
Mellor, David
Meyer, Sir Anthony
Mills, Iain
Miscampbell, Norman
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, Sir David
Moate, Roger
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Morris, M *(N'hampton S)*
Morrison, Sir Charles
Morrison, Rt Hon P *(Chester)*
Moss, Malcolm
Moynihan, Hon Colin
Mudd, David
Neale, Gerrard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Michael
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Onslow, Rt Hon Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Owen, Rt Hon Dr David
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Parkinson, Rt Hon Cecil
Patnick, Irvine
Patten, John *(Oxford W)*
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Porter, Barry *(Wirral S)*
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Michael

Powell, William *(Corby)*
Price, Sir David
Raffan, Keith
Redwood, John
Renton, Tim
Rhodes James, Robert
Rifkind, Rt Hon Malcolm
Roberts, Wyn *(Conwy)*
Rowe, Andrew
Sackville, Hon Tom
Sainsbury, Hon Tim
Scott, Nicholas
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shersby, Michael
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Hon Nicholas
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Stevens, Lewis
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Stradling Thomas, Sir John
Summerson, Hugo
Taylor, John M *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Teddy *(S'end E)*
Thatcher, Rt Hon Margaret
Thompson, D. *(Calder Valley)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thorne, Neil
Thornton, Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Townsend, Cyril D. *(B'heath)*
Tracey, Richard
Tredinnick, David
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Viggers, Peter
Waddington, Rt Hon David
Wakeham, Rt Hon John
Waldegrave, Hon William
Walden, George
Walker, Bill *(T'side North)*
Waller, Gary
Walters, Sir Dennis
Ward, John
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Warren, Kenneth
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Wheeler, John
Whitney, Ray
Widdecombe, Ann
Wiggin, Jerry
Wilkinson, John
Winterton, Mrs Ann
Winterton, Nicholas
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Woodcock, Mike
Yeo, Tim
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*
Younger, Rt Hon George

Tellers for the Ayes:

Mr. David Heathcoat-Amory and
Mr. Michael Fallon.

NOES

Abbott, Ms Diane
Adams, Allen *(Paisley N)*
Allen, Graham
Alton, David
Anderson, Donald
Archer, Rt Hon Peter
Armstrong, Hilary
Ashdown, Paddy
Ashley, Rt Hon Jack
Ashton, Joe
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnes, Harry *(Derbyshire NE)*
Barron, Kevin
Beckett, Margaret
Beggs, Roy
Beith, A. J.
Bell, Stuart
Bennett, A. F. *(D'nt'n & R'dish)*
Bermingham, Gerald
Bidwell, Sydney
Blair, Tony
Blunkett, David
Boyes, Roland
Bradley, Keith
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, Gordon *(D'mline E)*
Brown, Nicholas *(Newcastle E)*
Brown, Ron *(Edinburgh Leith)*
Bruce, Malcolm *(Gordon)*
Buchan, Norman
Buckley, George J.
Caborn, Richard
Callaghan, Jim
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Campbell, Ron *(Blyth Valley)*
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Canavan, Dennis
Carlile, Alex *(Mont'g)*
Clark, Dr David *(S Shields)*
Clarke, Tom *(Monklands W)*
Clay, Bob
Clelland, David
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Cohen, Harry
Coleman, Donald
Cook, Frank *(Stockton N)*
Cook, Robin *(Livingston)*
Corbett, Robin
Corbyn, Jeremy
Cousins, Jim
Cox, Tom
Crowther, Stan
Cryer, Bob
Cummings, John
Cunningham, Dr John
Dalyell, Tam
Darling, Alistair
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(Llanelli)*
Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham Hodge H'l)*
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Don
Dobson, Frank
Doran, Frank
Douglas, Dick
Duffy, A. E. P.
Dunnachie, Jimmy
Dunwoody, Hon Mrs Gwyneth
Eadie, Alexander
Eastham, Ken
Evans, John *(St Helens N)*
Ewing, Harry *(Falkirk E)*
Ewing, Mrs Margaret *(Moray)*
Fatchett, Derek
Fearn, Ronald
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fields, Terry *(L'pool B G'n)*
Flannery, Martin
Flynn, Paul
Foot, Rt Hon Michael
Forsythe, Clifford *(Antrim S)*
Foster, Derek
Foulkes, George
Fraser, John
Fyfe, Maria
Galbraith, Sam
Galloway, George
Garrett, John *(Norwich South)*
Garrett, Ted *(Wallsend)*
George, Bruce
Gilbert, Rt Hon Dr John
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Golding, Mrs Llin
Gordon, Mildred
Gould, Bryan
Graham, Thomas
Grant, Bernie *(Tottenham)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Grocott, Bruce
Hardy, Peter
Hattersley, Rt Hon Roy
Haynes, Frank
Healey, Rt Hon Denis
Heffer, Eric S.
Henderson, Doug
Hinchliffe, David
Hogg, N. *(C'nauld & Kilsyth)*
Holland, Stuart
Home Robertson, John
Hood, Jimmy
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Howell, Rt Hon D. *(S'heath)*
Hoyle, Doug
Hughes, John *(Coventry NE)*
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport E)*
Hughes, Sean *(Knowsley S)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Illsley, Eric
Ingram, Adam
Johnston, Sir Russell
Jones, Barry *(Alyn & Deeside)*
Jones, Ieuan *(Ynys Môn)*
Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd S W)*
Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Kennedy, Charles
Kilfedder, James
Kinnock, Rt Hon Neil
Kirkwood, Archy
Lambie, David
Lamond, James
Leadbitter, Ted
Leighton, Ron
Lestor, Joan *(Eccles)*
Lewis, Terry
Litherland, Robert
Livingstone, Ken
Livsey, Richard
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Lofthouse, Geoffrey
Loyden, Eddie
McAllion, John
McAvoy, Thomas
Macdonald, Calum A.
McFall, John
McKelvey, William
McLeish, Henry
Maclennan, Robert
McNamara, Kevin
McTaggart, Bob
McWilliam, John
Madden, Max
Mahon, Mrs Alice
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Marshall, Jim *(Leicester S)*
Martin, Michael J. *(Springburn)*
Martlew, Eric
Maxton, John
Meacher, Michael
Meale, Alan
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Michie, Mrs Ray *(Arg'l & Bute)*
Mitchell, Austin *(G't Grimsby)*
Molyneaux, Rt Hon James
Moonie, Dr Lewis
Morgan, Rhodri
Morley, Elliott
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(W'shawe)*
Morris, Rt Hon J. *(Aberavon)*
Mowlam, Marjorie
Mullin, Chris
Murphy, Paul
Nellist, Dave
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Brien, William
O'Neill, Martin
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Patchett, Terry
Pendry, Tom
Pike, Peter L.
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Prescott, John
Primarolo, Dawn
Quin, Ms Joyce
Radice, Giles
Randall, Stuart
Redmond, Martin
Rees, Rt Hon Merlyn
Reid, Dr John
Richardson, Jo
Roberts, Allan *(Bootle)*
Robertson, George
Robinson, Geoffrey
Rogers, Allan
Rooker, Jeff
Ross, Ernie *(Dundee W)*
Rowlands, Ted
Ruddock, Joan
Salmond, Alex
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheerman, Barry
Sheldon, Rt Hon Robert
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Short, Clare
Sillars, Jim
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton & F'bury)*
Smyth, Rev Martin *(Belfast S)*
Snape, Peter
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Steel, Rt Hon David
Steinberg, Gerry
Stott, Roger
Strang, Gavin
Straw, Jack
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
Thomas, Dr Dafydd Elis
Thompson, Jack *(Wansbeck)*
Turner, Dennis
Walker, A. Cecil *(Belfast N)*
Wall, Pat
Wallace, James
Walley, Joan
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Welsh, Michael *(Doncaster N)*
Wigley, Dafydd
Williams, Rt Hon Alan
Williams, Alan W. *(Carm'then)*
Wilson, Brian
Winnick, David
Wise, Mrs Audrey
Worthington, Tony
Wray, Jimmy
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Allen McKay and
Mr. Robert Wareing.

Question accordingly agreed to.

Bill read a Second time.

Motion made—[Mr. Lofthouse]—and Question put, That the Bill be committed to a Special Standing Committee.

The House divided: Ayes 234, Noes 299.

Division No. 14] **[10.31 pm**

AYES

Abbott, Ms Diane
Adams, Allen *(Paisley N)*
Allen, Graham
Alton, David
Anderson, Donald
Archer, Rt Hon Peter
Armstrong, Hilary
Ashdown, Paddy
Ashton, Joe
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnes, Harry *(Derbyshire NE)*
Barron, Kevin
Beckett, Margaret
Beggs, Roy
Beith, A. J.
Bell, Stuart
Bennett, A. F. *(D'nt'n & R'dish)*
Bermingham, Gerald
Bidwell, Sydney
Blair, Tony
Blunkett, David
Boyes, Roland
Bradley, Keith
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, Gordon *(D'mline E)*
Brown, Nicholas *(Newcastle E)*
Brown, Ron *(Edinburgh Leith)*
Bruce, Malcolm *(Gordon)*
Buchan, Norman
Buckley, George J.
Caborn, Richard
Callaghan, Jim
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Campbell, Ron *(Blyth Valley)*
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Canavan, Dennis
Carlile, Alex *(Mont'g)*
Clark, Dr David *(S Shields)*
Clarke, Tom *(Monklands W)*
Clay, Bob
Clelland, David
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Cohen, Harry
Coleman, Donald
Cook, Frank *(Stockton N)*
Cook, Robin *(Livingston)*
Corbett, Robin
Corbyn, Jeremy
Cousins, Jim
Cox, Tom
Crowther, Stan
Cryer, Bob
Cummings, John
Cunningham, Dr John
Dalyell, Tam
Darling, Alistair
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(Llanelli)*
Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham Hodge H'l)*
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Don
Dobson, Frank
Doran, Frank
Douglas, Dick
Duffy, A. E. P.
Dunnachie, Jimmy
Dunwoody, Hon Mrs Gwyneth
Eadie, Alexander
Eastham, Ken
Evans, John *(St Helens N)*
Ewing, Harry *(Falkirk E)*
Ewing, Mrs Margaret *(Moray)*
Fatchett, Derek
Fearn, Ronald
Fields, Terry *(L'pool B G'n)*
Flannery, Martin
Flynn, Paul
Foot, Rt Hon Michael
Forsythe, Clifford *(Antrim S)*
Foster, Derek
Foulkes, George
Fraser, John
Fyfe, Maria
Galbraith, Sam
Galloway, George
Garrett, John *(Norwich South)*
Garrett, Ted *(Wallsend)*
George, Bruce
Gilbert, Rt Hon Dr John
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Golding, Mrs Llin
Gordon, Mildred
Gould, Bryan
Grant, Bernie *(Tottenham)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Grocott, Bruce
Hardy, Peter
Hattersley, Rt Hon Roy
Haynes, Frank
Healey, Rt Hon Denis
Heffer, Eric S.
Henderson, Doug
Hinchliffe, David
Hogg, N. *(C'nauld & Kilsyth)*
Holland, Stuart
Home Robertson, John
Hood, Jimmy
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Howell, Rt Hon D. *(S'heath)*
Hoyle, Doug
Hughes, John *(Coventry NE)*
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport E)*
Hughes, Sean *(Knowsley S)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Illsley, Eric
Ingram, Adam
Johnston, Sir Russell
Jones, Barry *(Alyn & Deeside)*
Jones, Ieuan *(Ynys Môn)*
Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd S W)*
Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Kennedy, Charles
Kilfedder, James
Kinnock, Rt Hon Neil
Kirkwood, Archy
Lambie, David
Lamond, James
Leadbitter, Ted
Leighton, Ron
Lestor, Joan *(Eccles)*
Lewis, Terry
Litherland, Robert
Livingstone, Ken
Livsey, Richard
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Lofthouse, Geoffrey
Loyden, Eddie
McAllion, John
McAvoy, Thomas
Macdonald, Calum A.
McFall, John
McKelvey, William
McLeish, Henry
McNamara, Kevin
McTaggart, Bob
McWilliam, John
Madden, Max
Mahon, Mrs Alice
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Marshall, Jim *(Leicester S)*
Martin, Michael J. *(Springburn)*
Martlew, Eric
Maxton, John
Meacher, Michael
Meale, Alan
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Michie, Mrs Ray *(Arg'l & Bute)*
Mitchell, Austin *(G't Grimsby)*
Moonie, Dr Lewis
Morgan, Rhodri
Morley, Elliott
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(W'shawe)*
Morris, Rt Hon J. *(Aberavon)*
Mowlam, Marjorie
Mullin, Chris
Murphy, Paul
Nellist, Dave
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Brien, William
O'Neill, Martin
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Patchett, Terry
Pendry, Tom
Pike, Peter L.
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Prescott, John
Primarolo, Dawn
Quin, Ms Joyce
Radice, Giles
Randall, Stuart
Redmond, Martin
Rees, Rt Hon Merlyn
Reid, Dr John
Richardson, Jo
Roberts, Allan *(Bootle)*
Robertson, George
Robinson, Geoffrey
Rogers, Allan
Rooker, Jeff
Ross, Ernie *(Dundee W)*
Rowlands, Ted
Ruddock, Joan
Salmond, Alex
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheerman, Barry
Sheldon, Rt Hon Robert
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Short, Clare
Sillars, Jim
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton & F'bury)*
Smyth, Rev Martin *(Belfast S)*
Snape, Peter
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Steel, Rt Hon David
Steinberg, Gerry
Stott, Roger
Strang, Gavin
Straw, Jack
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
Thomas, Dr Dafydd Elis
Thompson, Jack *(Wansbeck)*
Turner, Dennis
Walker, A. Cecil *(Belfast N)*
Wall, Pat
Wallace, James
Walley, Joan
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Welsh, Michael *(Doncaster N)*
Wigley, Dafydd
Williams, Rt Hon Alan
Williams, Alan W. *(Carm'then)*
Wilson, Brian
Winnick, David
Wise, Mrs Audrey
Worthington, Tony
Wray, Jimmy
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr Allen McKay and
Mr. Robert N. Wareing.

NOES

Adley, Robert
Aitken, Jonathan
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael
Allason, Rupert
Amery, Rt Hon Julian
Amess, David
Amos, Alan
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Tom *(Hazel Grove)*
Ashby, David
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkins, Robert
Atkinson, David
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Valley)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Barnes, Mrs Rosie *(Greenwich)*
Batiste, Spencer
Beaumont-Dark, Anthony
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Bennett, Nicholas *(Pembroke)*
Bevan, David Gilroy
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Body, Sir Richard
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Boscawen, Hon Robert
Bottomley, Mrs Virginia
Bowden, A *(Brighton K'pto'n)*
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Bowis, John
Boyson, Rt Hon Dr Sir Rhodes
Braine, Rt Hon Sir Bernard
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brittan, Rt Hon Leon
Brooke, Rt Hon Peter
Brown, Michael *(Brigg & Cl't's)*
Browne, John *(Winchester)*
Bruce, Ian *(Dorset South)*
Buck, Sir Antony
Budgen, Nicholas
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butcher, John
Butler, Chris
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, John, *(Luton N)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William

Chapman, Sydney
Chope, Christopher
Churchill, Mr
Clark, Hon Alan *(Plym'th S'n)*
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clark, Sir W. *(Croydon S)*
Clarke, Rt Hon K. *(Rushcliffe)*
Colvin, Michael
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre F'rest)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, Rt Hon John
Cormack, Patrick
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Davies, Q. *(Stamf'd & Spald'g)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Devlin, Tim
Dickens, Geoffrey
Dicks, Terry
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Tony
Dykes, Hugh
Eggar, Tim
Emery, Sir Peter
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatf'd)*
Evennett, David
Favell, Tony
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Finsberg, Sir Geoffrey
Fishburn, John Dudley
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fowler, Rt Hon Norman
Fox, Sir Marcus
Franks, Cecil
Freeman, Roger
French, Douglas
Fry, Peter
Gale, Roger
Gardiner, George
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Gill, Christopher
Glyn, Dr Alan
Goodhart, Sir Philip
Goodlad, Alastair
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Gorst, John
Gow, Ian
Gower, Sir Raymond
Grant, Sir Anthony *(CambsSW)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, Sir Eldon *(Bury St E')*
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth N)*
Grist, Ian
Grylls, Michael
Gummer, Rt Hon John Selwyn
Hamilton, Hon Archie *(Epsom)*
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, John
Hargreaves, A. *(B'ham H'll Gr')*
Hargreaves, Ken *(Hyndburn)*
Harris, David
Hawkins, Christopher
Hayes, Jerry
Hayhoe, Rt Hon Sir Barney
Hayward, Robert
Heddle, John
Heseltine, Rt Hon Michael
Hicks, Mrs Maureen *(Wolv' NE)*
Hicks, Robert *(Cornwall SE)*
Higgins, Rt Hon Terence L.
Hill, James
Hind, Kenneth
Hogg, Hon Douglas *(Gr'th'm)*
Holt, Richard
Hordern, Sir Peter
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'd-on-A)*
Howarth, G. *(Cannock & B'wd)*
Howe, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Howell, Ralph *(North Norfolk)*
Hughes, Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, David *(Wirral W)*
Hunter, Andrew
Hurd, Rt Hon Douglas
Irvine, Michael
Jack, Michael
Jackson, Robert
Janman, Tim
Jessel, Toby
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert B *(Herts W)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Key, Robert
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Greg *(Derby North)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Edgbaston)*
Knowles, Michael
Knox, David
Lamont, Rt Hon Norman
Lang, Ian
Latham, Michael
Lawrence, Ivan
Lawson, Rt Hon Nigel
Leigh, Edward *(Gainsbor'gh)*
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Peter
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Luce, Rt Hon Richard
Lyell, Sir Nicholas
McCrindle, Robert
Macfarlane, Sir Neil
MacKay, Andrew *(E Berkshire)*
Maclean, David
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, Sir Michael
McNair-Wilson, P. *(New Forest)*
Madel, David
Major, Rt Hon John
Malins, Humfrey
Mans, Keith
Maples, John
Marland, Paul
Marlow, Tony
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Marshall, Michael *(Arundel)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Maude, Hon Francis
Mawhinney, Dr Brian
Maxwell-Hyslop, Robin
Mayhew, Rt Hon Sir Patrick
Mellor, David
Meyer, Sir Anthony
Mills, Iain
Miscampbell, Norman
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, Sir David
Moate, Roger
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Morris, M *(N'hampton S)*
Morrison, Sir Charles
Morrison, Rt Hon P *(Chester)*
Moss, Malcolm
Moynihan, Hon Colin
Mudd, David
Neale, Gerrard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Michael
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Onslow, Rt Hon Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Parkinson, Rt Hon Cecil
Patnick, Irvine
Patten, John *(Oxford W)*
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Porter, Barry *(Wirral S)*
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Price, Sir David
Raffan, Keith
Redwood, John
Renton, Tim
Rhodes James, Robert
Rifkind, Rt Hon Malcolm
Roberts, Wyn *(Conwy)*
Rowe, Andrew
Sackville, Hon Tom
Sainsbury, Hon Tim
Scott, Nicholas
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Stevens, Lewis
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Stradling Thomas, Sir John
Summerson, Hugo
Taylor, John M *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Teddy *(S'end E)*
Thatcher, Rt Hon Margaret
Thompson, D. *(Calder Valley)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thorne, Neil
Thornton, Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Tracey, Richard
Tredinnick, David
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Viggers, Peter
Waddington, Rt Hon David
Wakeham, Rt Hon John
Waldegrave, Hon William
Walden, George
Walker, Bill *(T'side North)*
Waller, Gary
Walters, Sir Dennis
Ward, John
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Warren, Kenneth
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Wheeler, John
Whitney, Ray
Widdecombe, Ann
Wiggin, Jerry
Wilkinson, John
Winterton, Mrs Ann
Winterton, Nicholas
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Woodcock, Mike
Yeo, Tim
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*
Younger, Rt Hon George

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Michael Fallon and
Mr. David Heathcoat-Amory.

Question accordingly negatived.

Bill committed to a Standing Committee pursuant to Standing Order No. 61 (Committal of Bills).

It being after Ten o'clock, MR. SPEAKER *proceeded to put forthwith the Questions which he was directed by paragraph (1) of Standing Order No. 53 (Questions on voting of estimates &c.) to put at that hour.*

SUPPLEMENTARY ESTIMATES 1988-89

Resolved,

That a supplementary sum, not exceeding £1,042,249,000, be granted to her Majesty out of the Consolidated Fund to defray charges for Civil Services which will come in course of payment during the year ending on 31st March 1989, as set out in House of Commons Paper No. 690 of Session 1987-88.

ESTIMATES 1989-90 (VOTE ON ACCOUNT)

Resolved,

That a sum, not exceeding £50,987,976,000, be granted to Her Majesty out of the Consolidated Fund, on account, for or towards defraying the charges for defence and Civil Services for the year ending on 31st March 1990, as set out in House of Commons Papers Nos. 691, 692 and 661 of Session 1987-88.

Bill ordered to be brought in upon the foregoing Resolutions by the Chairman of Ways and Means, the Chancellor of the Exchequer, Mr. John Major, Mr. Norman Lamont, Mr. Peter Brooke and Mr. Peter Lilley.

CONSOLIDATED FUND BILL

Mr. Norman Lamont accordingly presented a Bill to apply certain sums out of the Consolidated Fund to the

service of the years ending on 31 March 1989 and 1990; And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time tomorrow and to be printed. [Bill 12.]

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Ordered,

That, at this day's sitting, the Ways and Means Motion may be proceeded with, though opposed, until any hour.—*[Mr. Maclean.]*

Electricity Bill *[Money]*

Queen's recommendation having been signified—
Motion made, and Question proposed,

That, for the purpose of any Act resulting from the Electricity Bill ("the Act"), it is expedient to authorise—

(1) the payment out of money provided by Parliament of the following, namely—

(a) the remuneration of, and any travelling or other allowances payable under the Act to, the Director General of Electricity Supply and any staff of the Director, any other sums payable under the Act to or in respect of a person who holds or has held office as the Director and any expenses duly incurred by the Director or by any of his staff in consequence of the provisions of the Act;

(b) the remuneration of the chairman of a consumers' committee, any travelling or other allowances payable under the Act to such a chairman or to other members of such a committee, any other sums so payable to or in respect of a person who holds or has held office as such a chairman, any sums so payable to members of a sub-committee of such a committee and any expenses incurred by such a committee;

(c) sums payable under the Act to persons who, immediately before the Electricity Consumers' Council and the Consultative Councils established under section 7 or 7A of the Electricity Act 1947 cease to exist by virtue of the Act, are the chairman or other officers of those Councils;

(d) expenses incurred by the Treasury or the Secretary of State in acquiring securities of a successor company or rights to subscribe for any such securities;

(e) sums required by the Secretary of State for paying remuneration and travelling or other allowances to persons on whom duties with respect to the preparation and auditing of statements of accounts are imposed by order under the Act;

(f) sums payable under the Act to or in respect of persons who immediately before the transfer date are the chairman or other members or are employees of the existing bodies;

(g) sums required by the Secretary of State for paying grants to the existing bodies;

(h) the remuneration of, and any other allowances payable under the Act to, meter examiners and any other sums payable under the Act to or in respect of such examiners;

(i) expenses reasonably incurred by the Fisheries Committee appointed under section 5(2) of the Electricity (Scotland) Act 1979 and continued in existence by the Act;

(j) sums required by the Secretary of State for making grants or loans towards nuclear expenditure, or for fulfilling guarantees given by the Secretary of State in respect of sums borrowed from a person other than the Secretary of State for the purpose of meeting such expenditure, so long as the aggregate of any grants so made and of any amounts outstanding by way of principal in respect of loans so made and of sums paid in fulfilment of guarantees so given shall not exceed £1,000 million or such greater sum, not exceeding £2,500 million, as the Secretary of State may by order specify;

(k) administrative expenses incurred by the Secretary of State or the Treasury in consequence of the provisions of the Act;

(l) increases attributable to the Act in the sums payable out of money so provided under any other Act;

(2) the payment out of the National Loans Fund of—

(a) any sums required by the Secretary of State for making loans to successor companies in England and Wales which are for the time being wholly owned by the Crown, so long as the aggregate of any amounts outstanding by way of principal in respect of such loans shall not exceed £400 million or such greater sum, not exceeding £600 million, as the Secretary of State may by order specify;

(b) any sums required by the Secretary of State for making loans to successor companies in Scotland which are for the time being wholly owned by the Crown, so long as the aggregate of any amounts outstanding by way of principal in respect of relevant loans and sums issued out of the Consolidated Fund for fulfilling guarantees given by the Treasury in respect of sums borrowed by such companies from persons other than the Secretary of State shall not exceed £3,000 million;

(c) any sums which, by virtue of the Act, are payable under section 5 of the Miscellaneous Financial Provisions Act 1955 in respect of unclaimed interest of redemption money on British Electricity Stock or North of Scotland Electricity Stock;

(3) the reduction of the assets of the National Loans Fund by amounts corresponding to such liabilities of a successor company in Scotland in respect of relevant loans as the Secretary of State may by order extinguish;

(4) the payment out of the Consolidated Fund of any sums required by the Treasury for fulfilling guarantees given by them in respect of sums borrowed from persons other than the Secretary of State by successor companies in Scotland which are for the time being wholly owned by the Crown;

(5) the transfer to the Treasury of all rights and liabilities of the Electricity Council in respect of British Electricity Stock and all rights and liabilities of the North of Scotland Hydro-Electric Board in respect of North of Scotland Electricity Stock.

In this Resolution—

"existing body", "successor company" and "transfer date" have the same meanings as in Part II of the Act;

"nuclear expenditure" means expenditure incurred by any person in connection with the storage or reprocessing of nuclear fuel, the treatment, storage or disposal of nuclear waste or the decommissioning of any nuclear installation;

"relevant loan", in relation to a successor company in Scotland, means—

(a) any loan made, or deemed to have been made, by the Secretary of State or from the National Loans Fund the liability to repay which vests in that company by virtue of the Act;

(b) any loan made to that company by the Secretary of State; and

(c) any sums payable under debentures issued as a consequence of the making of an order under the Act extinguishing any liabilities of that company.

—[Mr. Maclean.]

10.45 pm

Mr. Malcolm Bruce (Gordon): This money resolution is something to which the House should give serious attention, because it is being asked to vote through a sum in excess of £6 billion, and it will not be appropriate to let such a major item pass without raising a number of questions.

A high proportion of the sum required of the taxpayer will be used to obviate nuclear power costs. It is difficult to establish precisely how much, but a figure of £2·5 billion is specifically identified in relation to nuclear power, with another £3 billion for the Scottish electricity debt conversion—most of which is due to Scotland's substantial nuclear capacity and its associated debt. It means that the taxpayer is being asked substantially to underwrite both debts incurred and yet to be incurred, to that level.

One or two other matters should be covered by the Bill, and one is bound to ask whether the money resolution is adequate, given that large sums of money are specifically earmarked.

Concern has been expressed about the Bill's implications for low income groups and the threat of disconnections. Schedule 6 deals with disconnections but

does not make it clear that protection will be provided in cases of hardship. It states that an electricity company may disconnect a customer whose bill has not been paid within 15 days of receipt of a demand for payment. That provision is unqualified, and the House will want to ensure that the protection against disconnection in cases of hardship that exists in the present regime will be continued in the Bill, and that provision for that will be made by the taxpayer—which seems not inappropriate—or that a clear indication is given that such protection will be given by the electricity companies.

Another matter of considerable concern in many quarters is the lack of any obligation under the proposed legislation to provide a supply. That means that, if the social clause observed by the Hydro Board in areas such as the north of Scotland is removed, new developments in the Highlands may be placed at risk. Although the board may say that 99·9 per cent. of existing customers are connected, many will not have been. Under existing legislation, there is an obligation to supply them, too. There could be new developments in remote locations which, under the new legislation, may be denied the rights of access that currently exist.

One is entitled to ask what provision will be made either to require the companies taking over from the existing boards to provide such a guarantee, and, if necessary, for public funding to underwrite it. If public funding can be provided on such a lavish scale to underwrite the Government's political objectives, and their strategic objectives in terms of nuclear power, one would like to think that the interests of low income groups and of developments in remote areas will be similarly protected. It is worth reminding the House that people on low incomes spend on average between 15 to 25 per cent. of their incomes on heating and lighting, compared with the national average of 6 to 7 per cent.

A number of complaints have been expressed to me by industries that are high users of energy. I freely admit that the paper industry is very important to my constituency, and it has suffered badly from the privatisation of British Gas: in its own words, the industry in the last four years has been ripped of shamefully by a monopoly that has now been properly called to account, as we said it would have to be. Having suffered that, the industry now fears that it will face a similar problem with the privatisation of electricity.

Many companies are committed at present to investing in combined heat and power systems, but fear that the changed circumstances could prevent that from being viable. After all, as the Minister has told us, the Scottish electricity industry has 100 per cent. over-capacity, and appears to be prepared to undercut any other competitive supplier to any level to try to ensure that the maximum connection is maintained—although that is not in the wider national interest in terms of energy efficiency, competitiveness or indeed conservation. Such factors should either be explained in the Bill or provided for in the money resolution.

Given that the Bill is likely to become law, and privatisation is likely to go ahead, I make a plea on behalf of companies in my constituency—which I know have applied to be put on the shortlist before—that they be given the opportunity to supply the paper for the prospectuses. That might help to mollify them after the way they have suffered through increased energy costs in both the past and the proposed legislation.

The Bill fails on two counts, and the money resolution does not provide for any adequate coverage. First, contrary to what the Minister has said, the Bill substantially reduces the industry's commitment to promote energy conservation. Clause 3(3)(b) lays down a requirement for the director general and the Secretary of State

"to promote efficiency and economy on the part of such persons and the efficient use of electricity supplied by them".

That is far from a strong commitment to promote energy conservation. Energy conservation and the interests of the environment will not be served by the market; they are the Government's responsibility. We need from the Government a clear indication of how they will ensure that the privatised industry will genuinely attend to such matters, and the money resolution should have made provision for any associated costs.

The regulator proposed in the Bill is funded and staffed entirely inadequately, given the job that he is expected to do in an industry that has been completely reorganised and is extremely complex. The money resolution should have provided more money for the director general, who should have additional powers which would certainly require extra funds. He should have the power to set tariffs, or at least the company should have to apply to him for their approval. He should also have the power to approve major capital investment. He should have the power to direct companies in a way that is beneficial to the environment, and also to direct them to take action to promote energy efficiency and conservation. In pursuit of those aims, he should have the power to set up public hearings at which interested bodies could question the protagonists. All that requires considerably more money and staff than the Bill provides for.

But the most offensive thing about the money resolution is that the House is being asked to vote through at least £6 billion of taxpayers' money to finance a flotation for which the Government have totally failed to make a case. The real motivation is to secure, at the expense of £6 billion of taxpayers' money, the £20 billion proceeds that the Government expect to get to bribe their way through the next election. The House should not allow that blatant misuse of taxpayers' money to pass unchallenged. The money resolution is the biggest that I have known to come before the House. I find it quite extraordinary that the Government can expect it to pass without debate and without proper attention being drawn to those important matters.

10.54 pm

Mr. Alex Salmond (Banff and Buchan): Before allowing the money resolution to pass, given the vast sums involved, we should pursue the Government's financial intentions as to the future of the Bill. I particularly want to know whether they will have the brass neck to ask electricity consumers to purchase shares in the new privatised organisations.

The array of assets owned by the electricity companies have been financed out of the bills paid by electricity consumers. Although the industry has substantial capital debt, nothing in the money resolution states that that debt definitely will be offset. Therefore, if that is the Government's intention it seems unreasonable to charge people to buy the assets to which they have already contributed as electricity consumers.

[Mr. Alex Salmond]

The Government do not have to charge people for the distribution of shares. They have a precedent in that the TSB effectively was stolen from its depositors. The industry was privatised and the money was put back into the industry instead of going to the Treasury. Have the Government considered that course? More reasonably, have they considered giving a free distribution of shares to electricity consumers? If the aim and intention of the Bill was to encourage share ownership, the Government might actively be considering a free distribution of shares to electricity consumers who have financed the assets which they will be asked to buy.

If the Government show no sign of taking any such action, I shall be led to the unworthy conclusion that the money resolution will provide two slush finds—a slush fund for the nuclear industry, which has been mentioned in the debate, and a slush fund for the Government to use the money taken from electricity consumers for the assets for which they have already paid through their electricity bills, for the Government's own political purposes in their attempts to win future elections.

10.56 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Energy (Mr. Michael Spicer): The hon. Member for Gordon (Mr. Bruce) finally got yesterday's speech off his chest. Although he kept mentioning the money resolution and asked some questions, most of the questions he raised are not covered by the money resolution. In his final peroration he mentioned the staffing for the director general. We believe that £10 million is certainly adequate to cover his various statutory obligations, in particular the two that the hon. Gentleman mentioned.

I am not sure that the hon. Gentleman understood the Bill sufficiently when he raised the question of energy efficiency. The Bill places a statutory obligation on the director general to further the interests of energy efficiency. He specifically mentioned CHP. Again, the Bill gives the director general specific powers to ensure that there is full and fair access of all forms of electricity to the system. We believe that we have adequately staffed for those items.

The obligation to supply is quite clear. Whereas at the moment there is no absolute obligation to supply outside the 50 yd from the mains limit, under the Bill every single consumer in Scotland, or anywhere else in Britain will have the right to be connected, unless there is a very specific technical reason why he cannot be connected.

Mr. A. J. Beith (Berwick-upon-Tweed): On that very point, is the charge to consumers provided for in the Bill likely to be as it is now under the nationalised boards, when consumers are asked to pay as much as £10,000 to be connected to the mains supply?

Mr. Spicer: That is a very good question. The costs must be reasonable. The director general will act in an arbitration role. If a company could charge arbitrary high costs and thus discriminate against certain consumers, that would be wrong. There are ways in which such matters can be arbitrated.

The final point made by the hon. Member for Gordon in his finishing-up of yesterday's speech was about disconnection. The Bill makes it clear that, where a right to disconnect exists, the supplier must give 15 working days for payment and two days' notice before disconnection. Once the cause of the disconnection has been removed, the supplier will have to reconnect within two working days. Therefore, there will be a tightening up.

The hon. Member for Banff and Buchan (Mr. Salmond) raised an almost incomprehensible question. I think he asked whether we were going to exclude electricity consumers as buyers of shares. I have said that the obligation will be upon companies to sell electricity to all domestic customers, so the answer must be no.

Mr. Salmond: Perhaps I can explain my point to the Minister. The question is not whether shares will be sold to consumers but whether they will be charged for shares in assets for which they have already paid through their electricity bills. I argue that the Government are asking people to pay twice for the same thing. I gave the example of the Trustee Savings bank, which was privatised, when another course was taken.

Mr. Spicer: As everyone will be a consumer, it would be crazy to give special discounts to everyone. That would be an extraordinary proposition. I thought that I had understood the hon. Gentleman correctly, and I find that I did. I hope that I have answered hon. Members' specific questions.

Question put:—

The House divided: Ayes 191, Noes 19.

Division No. 15] **[11.2 pm**

AYES

Aitken, Jonathan	Cope, Rt Hon John
Alexander, Richard	Cran, James
Alison, Rt Hon Michael	Currie, Mrs Edwina
Amess, David	Davies, Q. *(Stamf'd & Spald'g)*
Amos, Alan	Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Arbuthnot, James	Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*	Dover, Den
Ashby, David	Dunn, Bob
Aspinwall, Jack	Durant, Tony
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Valley)*	Favell, Tony
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*	Fenner, Dame Peggy
Baldry, Tony	Finsberg, Sir Geoffrey
Barnes, Mrs Rosie *(Greenwich)*	Fishburn, John Dudley
Batiste, Spencer	Forman, Nigel
Beaumont-Dark, Anthony	Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Bellingham, Henry	Forth, Eric
Bendall, Vivian	Fowler, Rt Hon Norman
Bennett, Nicholas *(Pembroke)*	Fox, Sir Marcus
Bevan, David Gilroy	Franks, Cecil
Boscawen, Hon Robert	Freeman, Roger
Bowis, John	French, Douglas
Brandon-Bravo, Martin	Gale, Roger
Brazier, Julian	Garel-Jones, Tristan
Bright, Graham	Gill, Christopher
Brittan, Rt Hon Leon	Goodhart, Sir Philip
Brooke, Rt Hon Peter	Goodlad, Alastair
Browne, John *(Winchester)*	Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Buck, Sir Antony	Gorst, John
Budgen, Nicholas	Gow, Ian
Burns, Simon	Gower, Sir Raymond
Burt, Alistair	Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Butcher, John	Gregory, Conal
Butterfill, John	Griffiths, Sir Eldon *(Bury St E')*
Carlisle, John, *(Luton N)*	Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth N)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*	Grist, Ian
Carrington, Matthew	Hamilton, Hon Archie *(Epsom)*
Carttiss, Michael	Hampson, Dr Keith
Cash, William	Hanley, Jeremy
Chapman, Sydney	Hargreaves, A. *(B'ham H'll Gr')*
Chope, Christopher	Harris, David
Clarke, Rt Hon K. *(Rushcliffe)*	Hawkins, Christopher
Conway, Derek	Heathcoat-Amory, David
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre F'rest)*	Heddle, John
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*	Hicks, Mrs Maureen *(Wolv' NE)*

Holt, Richard
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'd-on-A)*
Howarth, G. *(Cannock & B'wd)*
Howell, Ralph *(North Norfolk)*
Hughes, Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, David *(Wirral W)*
Hunter, Andrew
Hurd, Rt Hon Douglas
Irvine, Michael
Jack, Michael
Jones, Robert B *(Herts W)*
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Greg *(Derby North)*
Knowles, Michael
Knox, David
Lamont, Rt Hon Norman
Lang, Ian
Latham, Michael
Lawrence, Ivan
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Peter
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Lyell, Sir Nicholas
Maclean, David
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, Sir Michael
McNair-Wilson, P. *(New Forest)*
Malins, Humfrey
Mans, Keith
Mariand, Paul
Marlow, Tony
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Marshall, Michael *(Arundel)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Maude, Hon Francis
Mawhinney, Dr Brian
Maxwell-Hyslop, Robin
Mayhew, Rt Hon Sir Patrick
Meyer, Sir Anthony
Mills, Iain
Miscampbell, Norman
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, Sir David
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Morris, M *(N'hampton S)*
Morrison, Sir Charles
Morrison, Rt Hon P *(Chester)*
Moss, Malcolm
Moynihan, Hon Colin
Neale, Gerrard
Neubert, Michael
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Oppenheim, Phillip
Paice, James
Parkinson, Rt Hon Cecil
Patten, John *(Oxford W)*
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Price, Sir David
Raffan, Keith
Redwood, John
Renton, Tim
Rhodes James, Robert
Rifkind, Rt Hon Malcolm
Roberts, Wyn *(Conwy)*
Rowe, Andrew
Sackville, Hon Tom
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Stradling Thomas, Sir John
Taylor, John M *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Teddy *(S'end E)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thorne, Neil
Thurnham, Peter
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Viggers, Peter
Waddington, Rt Hon David
Wakeham, Rt Hon John
Waller, Gary
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Warren, Kenneth
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Wheeler, John
Widdecombe, Ann
Wiggin, Jerry
Wilkinson, John
Winterton, Mrs Ann
Winterton, Nicholas
Wood, Timothy
Yeo, Tim

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Stephen Dorrell and
Mr. Michael Fallon.

NOES

Alton, David
Ashdown, Paddy
Beith, A. J.
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Carlile, Alex *(Mont'g)*
Cryer, Bob
Ewing, Mrs Margaret *(Moray)*
Fearn, Ronald
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Jones, Ieuan *(Ynys Môn)*
Kennedy, Charles
Livsey, Richard
Salmond, Alex
Skinner, Dennis
Steel, Rt Hon David
Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
Thomas, Dr Dafydd Elis
Wallace, James
Wigley, Dafydd

Tellers for the Noes: Mr. Andy Kirkwood, and
Mr. Malcolm Bruce

Question accordingly agreed to.

ELECTRICITY BILL [WAYS AND MEANS]

Resolved,

That, for the purpose of any Act resulting from the Electricity Bill, it is expedient to authorise—

(1) the inclusion in licences granted under that Act of conditions requiring the rendering of payments to the Secretary of State or the Director General of Electricity Supply;

(2) the imposition of charges to corporation tax by provisions relating to the taxation of successor companies within the meaning of Part II of that Act;

(3) the payment of sums into the Consolidated Fund or the National Loans Fund.—*[Mr. John M. Taylor.]*

STATUTORY INSTRUMENTS, &c.

Motion made, and Question put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 101(5) (Standing Committees on Statutory Instruments, &c.)

INDUSTRIAL ORGANISATION AND DEVELOPMENT

That the draft Iron Casting (Scientific Research Levy) (Abolition) Order 1988, which was laid before this House on 24th October 1988, in the last Session of Parliament, be approved.—*[Mr. John M. Taylor.]*

Question agreed to.

TERMS AND CONDITIONS OF EMPLOYMENT

That the draft Employment Subsidies Act 1978 (Renewal) (Great Britain) Order 1988, which was laid before this House on 9th November 1988, in the last Session of Parliament, be approved.—*[Mr. John M. Taylor.]*

Question agreed to.

SOCIAL SERVICES

Ordered,

That Mrs. Gillian Shephard and Mr. Tim Yeo be discharged from the Social Services Committee and Mrs. Marion Roe and Ann Widdecombe be added to the Committee.—*[Sir Marcus Fox, on behalf of the Committee of Selection.]*

No-fault Compensation

Motion made and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. John M. Taylor.]*

11.13 pm

Mr. Elliot Morley (Glanford and Scunthorpe): I am grateful for the opportunity to raise several issues in tonight's Adjournment debate, in particular an issue relating to one of my constituents, Mrs. MacIntyre.

For over 20 years, Mrs. MacIntyre has been suffering from what was diagnosed as a psychiatric problem. In that period, she twice attempted suicide. It was a difficult and traumatic time for her, her husband and her family. In 1983, Mrs. MacIntyre saw another doctor, who diagnosed her as suffering from a form of thyroid disorder. He prescribed another form of drug. During the same year, however, Mrs. MacIntyre decided to stop taking all the medication that she had been prescribed, and she recovered almost immediately. Since 1983, she has not suffered from the depression that had afflicted her during the previous 20 years.

Mr. and Mrs. MacIntyre have tried to pursue this matter through the courts as a case for compensation because of wrongful diagnosis. The court case took more than five years, and at the end of it, Mrs. MacIntyre had not progressed much further. The independent medical opinion and legal advice that she received concluded that she would be unable to prove her case in the courts. Therefore, she would be unable to receive compensation even though it was recognised by her independent advisers that it was quite likely that, "for an indeterminate period", as one specialist put it, she had been prescribed a drug for which there was no need. It was also suggested that there was a possible case on the grounds that her doctors did not know exactly what she was being treated for, or when the illnesses from which it was claimed she was suffering were resolved. One doctor said that those illnesses had resolved themselves.

Mr. and Mrs. MacIntyre and their barrister believe that it is a remarkable coincidence that all the symptoms from which she was suffering ended when she stopped taking the drugs prescribed. At one time, Mrs. MacIntyre went from becoming obese to becoming extremely thin because of rapid weight gain and loss brought on by her drugs.

Under our present law, the only way in which Mrs. MacIntyre can receive compensation is to prove that there was negligence on the part of the doctors who treated her, in particular Dr. Harding-Price, who diagnosed the thyroid problem and who specified the prescription of certain drugs. It is most unlikely that such negligence could be proved in court, so a stalemate has been reached because Mrs. MacIntyre can no longer receive legal aid after five years and therefore the case cannot proceed.

That lady has suffered an injustice, but there is no further way in which she can pursue her case or claim. Some countries, such as Sweden and New Zealand, have a fund that would resolve that problem, known as a no-fault compensation fund. The idea is that people who can prove that they are victims of wrongful diagnosis, wrongful medical treatment or treatment that accidentally went wrong, can apply to the fund and receive compensation on a fixed scale depending upon the amount of inconvenience suffered or damage caused.

There are many advantages attached to such a scheme. For example, it cuts the lengthy time that people must spend attempting to receive compensation. Mrs. MacIntyre is not alone in having to go through lengthy, drawn-out legal battles. Those battles are extremely expensive because of lawyers' fees. The fund also removes the confrontational nature of such claims, in which where the victim must prove the criminal negligence of the doctor who may have treated him. We need a system under which people can receive compensation quickly and efficiently.

That scheme could also apply to the case of another constituent of mine, a district nurse. That lady was injured when she restrained a patient who was having a fit. That patient cannot, of course, be held responsible for the injuries she suffered. She will receive the minimum compensation, and sick and invalidity benefits as laid down by the state, but she will not receive the compensation to which she believes she is entitled, a belief I wholeheartedly endorse.

If we had a system of no-fault compensation, this lady could also apply to the fund, and because she would only have to demonstrate the injuries that she had received, she could get compensation without going through lengthy court proceedings and without proving who was directly responsible.

The Swedish system is confined to cases of medical negligence. The New Zealand system goes further and includes compensation for the victims of road traffic accidents, for example. I ask the Minister to consider such issues carefully. Many victims of road accidents—and sometimes of hit-and-run accidents for which it has not been possible to find the culprits—have found that it has taken years to settle their claims for compensation. Their cases have been dragged through the courts at great expense and with great delay, and in the end the only ones to suffer have been the victims themselves.

It would be to the advantage not only of individuals but of the insurance companies to co-operate with the Government in finding the money for such a scheme. I do not pretend that it would be cheap, but there are advantages in cutting down the legal fees that result from going through solicitors.

I understand that part of the problem in cases of medical compensation, such as that of Mrs. MacIntyre, is that there are only about 50 or 60 firms of solicitors in the country with the detailed experience to pursue such claims through the courts. That has caused some people to have great difficulty in pursuing their cases through the courts —they have argued that they got far less compensation than they were entitled to because of their solicitors' inexperience.

One such case is that of a gentleman who suffered brain damage in a hospital because the respirator was blocked. He was advised to accept a £2,000 settlement, but his family pursued the matter through the courts and received an award of £490,000 after many years of expense and much suffering.

I put these points to the Minister in a positive way because I am trying to be helpful. Mrs. MacIntyre's problem is that there is no solution to her case under our law. There is no way in which she can take her case further, even though there is considerable evidence that she and her family suffered a great deal for 20 years. With a no-fault compensation fund, she could receive some compensation for her suffering without going through lengthy legal proceedings, and many thousands like her could get

compensation without pointing the finger at individual doctors and holding them responsible for what may have been genuine accidents.

As I said, perhaps the fund could be extended to cover many other groups. It would work more efficiently; it would deal with deserving cases more quickly; and in the long run it would be a much more civilised way of dealing with tragic cases.

11.23 pm

The Solicitor-General (Sir Nicholas Lyell): First, I congratulate the hon. Member for Glanford and Scunthorpe (Mr. Morley) on raising once again, in the form of the cases of the constituents that he mentioned, part of the subject which was so carefully addressed more than 10 years ago in the Pearson report.

On behalf of his constituent, Mrs. MacIntyre, the hon. Gentleman told a tale of frustration based on a perceived and no doubt much-felt injury or suffering for which no fault can be established against any individual, and for which a no-fault scheme of compensation is seen by some people, and urged by the hon. Gentleman, as a possible answer.

It is believed by the hon. Gentleman and others that a scheme such as applies in Sweden or New Zealand might serve his constituents and other people in this country better than our present system, but it is not entirely clear that it would do so, as I shall explain in some detail. It may help to explain the current state of the law in this field and to look back at the Pearson report and what it recommended, and to look forward—this will be helpful to the hon. Gentleman's constituents and the nation at large—to some of the recommendations of the civil justice review which reported last year and is likely to be implemented in the comparatively near future.

I should tell the House first that the Pearson commission drew attention to a number of popular misconceptions about the concept of no-fault schemes. It commented that it had found a widespread ignorance of the fact that in this country we already have a considerable element of no-fault provision and that there has been no-fault provision on quite a considerable scale since the Workmen's Compensation Act 1897.

A person who has been injured may look immediately to the medical benefits provided by the National Health Service, whether medical care is needed in the short term only or for an extended period. If the injury is sufficiently serious to prevent an immediate return to normal life, a large range of benfits and services may be available to him or her, including social security allowances and benefits such as mobility and attendance allowances, industrial disablement benefit for people injured at work, severe disablement allowance for disabled people who are unable to work, as well as invalidity benefit for sick people unable to work and local authority social service provision of a number of kinds.

However, I wish to turn specifically, as did the hon. Gentleman, to the question of medical accident and injuries that have been sustained, or are perceived to have been sustained, in the course of an illness or the medical treatment that accompanied that illness. The Pearson commission carefully considered the case for alternative methods of compensating those who suffer medical accidents. Two of its recommendations were to the effect that, with one exception, the basis of liability in tort for medical injuries should continue to be negligence and that a no-fault scheme for medical accidents should not be introduced. The report also said that the progress of the two different no-fault schemes in operation in Sweden and New Zealand, to which the hon. Gentleman referred, should also be studied and assessed.

These issues have been kept under review, as have the overseas schemes. It is notable that, at the time of the Pearson report, the view of the medical profession, as expressed by the British Medical Association, was firmly opposed to a no-fault scheme, on the grounds that such a scheme might undermine the independence of the profession, particularly by obliging doctors and surgeons to defer to their employers, the health authorities.

However, there has been some shift in the view of the profession since then and it may therefore first be helpful to summarise the arguments considered by the Pearson commission when it decided not to recommend the introduction of a no-fault system for medical accidents.

The commission looked first at the cost of a no-fault system. The costs involved are inherently difficult to assess precisely, but, if the scale of the compensation envisaged were to be anything like that applicable when negligence is established under our present scheme, the costs would undoubtedly be higher.

The commission considered that the second main difficulty in the way of the scheme was how to establish causation—this is highly relevant to the case of Mrs. MacIntyre which has been raised by the hon. Gentleman—because it is by no means always possible to identify the cause of an injury. There will frequently be difficulty in distinguishing medical accident from either the natural progress of a disease or from a possible side effect of treatment. A no-fault scheme might seem to effect an improvement by achieving equal treatment of all parties suffering injury as a result of accident, but, in a significant number of cases, it would be seen to operate no less unfairly than a fault-based scheme in making a new distinction between accident cases and natural progression cases.

One of the features of the Swedish experience seemed to call for a precise definition of what is meant by medical accident. Lawyers among us will remember the great degree of attention which was given under the Workmen's Compensation Acts to the meaning of

"in the course of employment."

It is that sort of question, when related to medical accidents, which necessarily has to be asked unless we are to introduce a scheme which compensates everyone for any degree of suffering howsoever caused, and no one has proposed that.

The Pearson commission noted in its review of foreign practice that the Swedish experience at that time was that one claim failed for every two that succeeded. High cost has always been an important factor in the operation of the New Zealand no-fault accident compensation scheme. The scheme, which came into existence in 1974, provides rehabilitation and income-related benefits. These are financed largely by levies on employers, the self-employed and the owners of motor cars, for disabilities resulting from accidents. The scheme is not limited to medical injuries and covers all accidents. However, the New Zealand Law Commission has recently referred to

"unexpected and considerable increases in costs in real terms."

[The Solicitor-General]

The New Zealand scheme applies only to disabilities that are the result of accidents, and the very definition of that term appears to have caused frequent litigation on its application in certain cases. Disabilities caused by accident in New Zealand in the course of medical, surgical and dental procedures are expressly included within the definition of personal injury by accident, but compensation is generally refused when the disability results from the known risks of the medical procedure in question. To many patients, however, such disabilities must seem to be no less the product of an accident.

The Swedish scheme is a voluntary one that is operated by a consortium of health companies under an agreement with the health care authorities and health professions, which pay the premiums. The scheme does not compensate for injuries that are the normal outcome of a disease. There is no compensation for injuries that are unavoidable complications of treatment selected for proper medical reasons, unless it can be shown that the patient could have been treated effectively in another way. It is notable that the average level of awards under the scheme is just over £2,000.

I am sorry that I must present a somewhat depressing catalogue of comments on the Swedish and New Zealand schemes. They have been carefully studied, and we shall continue to study them. I am not sure that they offer as much practical satisfaction to those who find themselves in the categories which have been outlined by the hon. Member for Glanford and Scunthorpe as might first have been thought.

Sir Michael McNair-Wilson (Newbury): My hon. and learned Friend may remember that, on 17 December 1987, my right hon. and learned Friend the Attorney-General answered a debate which I initiated on the Pearson commission's report. My right hon. and learned Friend suggested that a working party might be set up, consisting of members of the British Medical Association and the Department of Health and Social Security, as it then was, to consider another form of compensation scheme. Has any progress been made with the working party?

The Solicitor-General: I do not think that I can answer my hon. Friend's question. I am sorry that I am not immediately aware of the answer, though I did re-read my right hon. and learned Friend's answer to the debate which was initiated by my hon. Friend, as my hon. Friend has been a leading proponent of further study of these matters. I undertake to ascertain what the position is and to write to him.

I hope that what I go on to say provides slightly more hope in respect of dealing with the final matters dealt with by the hon. Member for Glanford and Scunthorpe, which were the difficulties of carrying forward litigation.

The principal criticism of the tort-based system in this country has been the delay, cost and complexity of civil proceedings. I know something about medical negligence cases, because I used to act in them. There have been many real improvements in many respects over the past 10 years, but we believe that we could go further. In early 1985, the civil justice review was set up to improve the machinery of justice in England and Wales by means of reforming jurisdiction procedure in court administration and in particular to reduce delay, cost and complexity. The review body's report was published in the summer and it contained many recommendations offering the possibility of improvements throughout civil justice for the benefit of all litigants. Some of the recommendations relate exclusively to personal injury claims. The report has been put out to consultation and has received urgent consideration in Government Departments, and the Government have given the proposals a high priority.

Several procedural reforms are recommended in the report as a means of reducing delay. In particular, the review recommends a new system of court control of case progress which would impose time limits on litigants and their solicitors from the stage at which an action becomes defended. Measures would also be taken to cut down delay before proceedings are commenced. For cases going to full trial, the review recommends further steps to speed up the hearing; compulsory pre-trial exchange of witness statements; and greater reliance on written rather than oral evidence, with an opportunity for the judge to read relevant material before the trial.

Further proposals designed to reduce delays, specifically in personal injury cases generally, include early release of accident reports by police and of medical reports by hospitals. As a means of making progress in protracted cases, it is recommended that the court should have power of its own motion to order a split trial in which the issue of liability is tried separately and in advance of the issue of damages.

The review recommends that smaller personal injury cases—up to £1,000—should be referred to arbitration by a county court registrar under the simplified small claims procedure. That would cut out legal costs in such cases and ensure that they were speedily disposed of.

Among the further recommendations of the review body was a recommendation relating to further exploration of no-fault compensation possibilities in a specific context which is different from that referred to by the hon. Member for Glanford and Scunthorpe and by my hon. Friend the Member for Newbury (Sir M. McNair-Wilson), but it may nevertheless be of interest. It proposed that further consideration should be given by my right hon. and noble Friend the Lord Chancellor in consultation with the insurance industry to the feasibility of a no-fault scheme for less serious road accidents funded by private insurance. The review recognised a number of advantages of setting up such a scheme which would reduce pressure on the court system.

The Lord Chancellor is carefully considering that and other aspects of the civil justice review report and expects to make an announcement soon. Although he cannot give a precise date, he hopes to do so early in the new year.

Question put and agreed to.

Adjourned accordingly at twenty-two minutes to Twelve o'clock.

House of Commons

Wednesday 14 December 1988

The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

DEATH OF A MEMBER

Mr. Speaker: I regret to have to inform the House of the death of Brynmor Thomas John, esquire, Member for Pontypridd, and I desire, on behalf of the House, to express our sense of the loss we have sustained and our sympathy with the relatives of the hon. Member.

Oral Answers to Questions

ENVIRONMENT

District Authority Committees

1. **Mr. Atkinson:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he has received any representations on day-time meetings of district authority committees.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Environment (Mrs. Virginia Bottomley): No, Sir.

Mr. Atkinson: Does my hon. Friend agree that district councils which choose to hold their committee meetings during the day preclude many good people, from all political parties, from standing as local council candidates? Will she consider including in the forthcoming legislation on the conduct of local authority business a provision that such meetings should be held after normal working hours whenever practicable?

Mrs. Bottomley: Before answering my hon. Friend, I wish to inform the House that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State is undertaking an official visit to China to demonstrate the Government's support for China's efforts in tackling pollution problems and other matters. He cannot, therefore, be here today.

My hon. Friend the Member for Bournemouth, East (Mr. Atkinson) made an important point. However, it is for local councils to decide when to hold council meetings. The desire to encourage all people possible to serve on local councils is clearly vital to the future of local government. There are often special factors in rural areas, such as people having to travel long distances. We do not propose to legislate to cover that matter, but we hope that councils will have regard not only for serving councillors but for those who might otherwise be excluded.

Rating Reform

2. **Mr. Marlow:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make it his policy to inform people of the effects on the community charge of profligate local authorities.

The Minister for Local Government (Mr. John Selwyn Gummer): I shall take every opportunity to inform voters that profligate spending by local authorities will lead to high community charges.

Mr. Marlow: My right hon. Friend is a considerate man; he is also a very intelligent man. He understands about gearing—in other words, that for every £1 that a local authority increases its expenditure the community charge payer will have to cough up an extra £4. If we look around the country at Labour local authorities and assume that they spend a little over 10 per cent. more than Conservative local authorities, which is highly likely, that will increase the community charge by just over 40 per cent. or almost £100. We know that my right hon. Friend would not want to indulge in low politics as he is a fair man and a Christian, but will he make everyone in this country aware that, although we agree that everybody who is entitled to vote should vote, the cost of voting Labour at next year's local authority elections could be £100 per vote?

Mr. Gummer: My hon. Friend is kind in his remarks, but the facts are clear. If there were a community charge this year, the average in Conservative-controlled authorities would be £196·40 per year and in Labour-controlled authorities £294·40, so there is almost £100 difference.

Mr. Mullin: Has the Minister seen recent reports that the poll tax will result in the transfer of about £800 million from the north to the south? Can he, as a Christian, tell us how it is possible to justify the poorer parts of the country having to transfer wealth to the richer parts?

Mr. Gummer: The hon. Gentleman has misunderstood the reports. The revaluation of the business rate will have the effect of transferring almost £900 million from the south to the north.

Mr. Cormack: Will my right hon. Friend ensure that any expenditure on protecting egg farmers is not counted as profligacy?

Mr. Gummer: Sometimes when one is moved from one Department to another one has much for which to thank the Almighty.

Mr. Blunkett: Will the Minister be good enough today to answer the question that he declined to answer on Monday and say how much money he intends to spend on profligate propaganda publicising the Government's case on the poll tax, including the leaflet published yesterday? How much does he intend to spend on telling the voters of Westminster what was said in the Audit Commission's report, published on 6 December, about the way in which the scandalous sale of cemeteries for 15p has resulted in the electorate of Westminster being faced with a £5·5 million bill to repurchase them?

Does the right hon. Gentleman intend to take action against Lady Porter in the same way that he took action against Labour councils during recent years? If so, will he couple that with surcharging his hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Health for the £500,000 that she has cost the country by opening her mouth once too often?

Mr. Gummer: I welcome the hon. Gentleman to his new job on the Opposition Front Bench. I assure him that the Government will spend no money on propaganda.

3. **Sir Geoffrey Finsberg:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what information he has as to what a typical ward sister would pay in *(a)* rates, *(b)* community charge and *(c)* a system of capital value rates plus local income tax paid in the proportions of 80:20, respectively, if she lived in a typical one-bedroomed flat in the London borough of Camden.

Mr. Gummer: A ward sister earning £15,000, living in a flat in Camden worth £70,000 with a rateable value of £300, would pay a rates bill of £635, a community charge of £639, disregarding the transitional safety net, and £2,030 under a system of capital value rates plus local income tax.

Sir Geoffrey Finsberg: Can I assume that my right hon. Friend will take every opportunity to produce, for the benefit of those citizens unlucky enough to live in boroughs such as Camden, factual information about the effects of the policies of the Labour party if it were ever given the chance to put them into effect?

Mr. Gummer: Yes, the double tax that Labour proposes would cost a ward sister more than £2,000 per year, but it is particularly bad in Camden because Camden's overspending is £637 per adult. If it brought its overspending down to what it needs to spend, it could have a reasonable community charge. The effect on the community charge is serious in a borough which does not seem to be able to bring its spending under control.

Dr. Cunningham: How does the Minister expect us to believe that rigged question and fiddled answer when he has completely disregarded the loss to Camden ratepayers of £151 million as a result of the Government's national business tax—a cost to each person in Camden of £824? As he is concentrating on nurses in Camden, perhaps he will tell the House how a nurse earning £15,000 or £20,000 per year can possibly afford the average one-bedroomed flat in Camden which costs more than £100,000. Is he not aware that at the royal free hospital Portakabins are being installed in the car parks because nurses cannot afford to rent or buy homes in the borough as a result of the Government's policies? After their treatment at the hands of the Government and this farrago of fiddled figures and dishonest replies nurses in Camden will treat the Government's answer with nothing but contempt.

Mr. Gummer *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I think that "dishonest" in the context of replies made by a Minister is not a parliamentary expression. Will the hon. Gentleman withdraw that?

Dr. Cunningham: I will certainly withdraw the word "dishonest", and use the phrase "grossly inaccurate" instead.

Mr. Gummer: I am extremely pleased that the hon. Gentleman has now confirmed that the Labour scheme would produce a figure of £2,000 because he has failed to reply to my letter asking for the information, as has the right hon. Member for Birmingham, Sparkbrook (Mr. Hattersley). It is barefaced cheek for him to come to the House and complain about a reply when he has refused to give the public the facts. He knows perfectly well that any loss that may be thought to come from the business rate will be made up in the needs grant. Perhaps the hon. Gentleman does not understand the principle, but the fact is true that the hon. Gentleman has produced a plan in place of rates and community charge which he knows would not work and if put into operation it would saddle every nurse with a bill of £2,000.

Mr. Robert G. Hughes: Does my right hon. Friend agree that the Labour party has shown, by its questions today and its plans for local income tax and the double tax, that it has entirely abandoned the south of England and wants to spread the disastrous policies of Camden to the rest of London and devastate people's lives there, too?

Mr. Gummer: My hon. Friend will have noticed that the hon. Member for Copeland (Dr. Cunningham) tried to deflect the question because he knows that in every case, when the figures come out, the scheme proposed by the Labour party would be demonstrably devastating to Labour-controlled areas because overspending makes them impossible for people to live in.

Housing Act 1988

4. **Mr. Flannery:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will give *(a)* the number of bids for transfer of local authority property to another landlord registered under parts IV and V of the Housing Act 1988 and *(b)* the names and locations of the prospective landlords.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Environment (Mr. David Trippier): Part IV of the Housing Act 1988 is not yet in force. Powers for the Housing Corporation to approve landlords will be commenced in the new year. Voluntary transfers by local authorities take place under powers in the Housing Act 1985, not part V of the 1988 Act. There are a considerable number of such transfers each year, some of which take place under general consents and are therefore not notified to the Department.

Mr. Flannery: Do we understand that the Conservative party not merely openly and publicly advocates vote rigging but will continue to enshrine it in law? What would the Minister say if other organisations even dreamed of such a thing, as they never would, or if the trade unions carried on in the way the Conservative party does? Why does an abstention mean a yes vote?

Mr. Trippier: If a campaign has been waged and different approaches and different appeals made by housing associations and private landlords put to the tenants as opposed to the local authority, people can vote yes for the move to the housing association, for example. If they say no, they will vote under the tenants' choice to stay with the local authority. That is enshrined in the Act. If by the time campaigning has gone ahead they cannot make up their minds, it would be wrong for those people to destroy the chances of tenants who desperately want and seek that change. The hon. Gentleman's point is an extension of the Labour party's campaign of misinformation, which is similar to the campaign that it ran against the right to buy. It failed then and it will fail again.

Mr. Wilshire: Does my hon. Friend agree that if certain councils spent less time churning out propaganda aimed at undermining the Government's housing policies and

legislation, and more time dealing with the empty houses that they own, repairing houses and collecting rent, local people would get a far better deal and far better houses?

Mr. Trippier: I agree with all that. If local authorities spent more time turning round the number of empty properties that they have, there would be a net increase of 20,000 houses brought on to the market. It is not only local authorities but certain trade unions, certain members of the Socialist Workers party and certain members of Militant who are peddling this misinformation.

Mr. Matthew Taylor: The Minister has correctly told the House that the present transfers are not going ahead under the 1988 Act. He then said that, nevertheless, tenants who vote against transfers will be able to stay with a local authority. That is not the case with transfers that are happening now, and certainly not the case in Torbay, where well over 20 per cent. tenants voted against but if the Minister allows the transfer to go ahead all those tenants, irrespective of how they voted, will be involved in the scheme. How do the Government intend to protect those people's democratic rights?

Mr. Trippier: The hon. Gentleman would not expect me to prejudge the decisions of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State. All that I can say today is that we shall shortly be in touch with Torbay council about the matter.

Mr. Patrick Thompson: While Labour Members talk about the rights of council tenants, the Government have given council tenants new incentives and opportunities. Can my hon. Friend confirm that we shall continue to do that?

Mr. Trippier: That is the whole point. The Opposition parties—I use the plural advisedly—spend a great deal of time talking about extending benefits to tenants but do nothing, whereas the Government have extended the freedom of choice to those tenants. It has been exercised through the right to buy, which the Opposition do not like to mention because it has been enormously successful. That same freedom will be extended to more and more tenants as the 1988 Act becomes effective.

Mr. Soley: The Minister's propaganda might be more convincing if he could tell the House that he is prepared to extend that right to the tenants of non-resident private landlords, because we shall do that.

I give the Minister this opportunity to do what he undertook in the House to do—to correct the misleading information that he published by joining me at a joint press conference after the National Consumer Council, which is chaired by a former Conservative Member, and the Institute of Housing have analysed the leaflet that he distributed, and which I have described as grossly misleading propaganda. If that is done, we shall then know who is telling the truth—and it will be our side that wins, not the Minister's.

Mr. Trippier: I welcome a debate on those issues at a place and time of the hon. Gentleman's choosing. There has already been one major debate on the subject, when we debated the Lords amendment. The hon. Gentleman will recall that I extracted from him confirmation that he would publicly denounce leaflets or information classified as misleading or misinformation. He will be pleased to learn that I shall be writing to him this week giving examples of leaflets sent to tenants which are clearly misleading. I hope to extract from the hon. Gentleman the public denouncement of them that he promised just a few weeks ago.

Mr. Harry Greenway: Will my hon. Friend draw the attention of the hon. Member for Hammersmith (Mr. Soley) to the highly misleading and downright dishonest document on the Housing Act 1988 published by Ealing council and the meetings at which tenants were told that if they voted to join a housing association their rents would be doubled and they would have no rights? The BBC did not correct that misinformation in its "Panorama" programme and has not made it clear that any secure tenant wishing to remain with the council can always do so. Will my hon. Friend make that clear?

Mr. Trippier: I confess that I have not incorporated in the package that I am sending to the hon. Member for Hammersmith (Mr. Soley) this week the Ealing propaganda to which my hon. Friend refers. Perhaps I will save that for next week. We could keep up the campaign on a weekly basis.

EEC (Regional Problems Index)

5. **Mr. Morley:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment where the south-east region is placed in the synthetic index of regional problems in the EEC.

Mr. Trippier: The synthetic index of regional problems in the European Community, attached to the Commission's third periodic report, ranks areas of England on a county basis. Counties within the south-east region of England lie between 66th and 127th position on the index.

Mr. Morley: It may come as no surprise that because the Government have engineered a north-south divide our northern regions do not favourably compare with others in the index. Will the Minister explain why the so-called prosperous south of England also does not favourably compare in the synthetic index of regional problems? For example, 16 German regions are ahead of the English south-east region, and the highest placed in the index is the Greater London region. Will the Minister explain why that is so? Is our country's economic recovery less good than the Government would have us believe?

Mr. Trippier: The hon. Gentleman will welcome, as I do, the fact that his own county ranks high in the order of priorities and will be covered. At the Department, we have strenuously supported the case for that. The index to which the hon. Gentleman referred in his substantive question will not be used after 1 January 1989. It appears that the European Commission accepts that the statistical basis is flawed. No doubt the hon. Gentleman and I can continue this discussion in correspondence or he can visit the Department. However, we maintain that the basis of the index is flawed, and we have pointed that out to the Commission.

North Sea Pollution

6. **Mr. Paice:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what proportion of pollution into the North sea from rivers and estuaries comes from Great Britain.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: In the order of 20 per cent., according to the quality status report prepared for the second North sea conference held in November last year.

Mr. Paice: The House will be grateful to my hon. Friend for that figure. Does not her answer disprove once and for all the allegation that Britain is the dirty man of Europe? Is it not true that German rivers contribute 50 per cent. of known pollution? Will my hon. Friend tell the House what further plans there are to reduce Great Britain's proportion even below 20 per cent.?

Mrs. Bottomley: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for pointing out the clear contrast. I agree that 50 per cent. of the riverborne contaminants found in the North sea are borne from rivers at the eastern end of the North sea. Nevertheless, following on from the North sea conference in London least year, which was hosted by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State, we are bringing forward a clear plan of action for continuing to improve the North sea. We have produced a "red list" of the 26 substances most damaging to our waterways and in addition to our participation in the scientific task force we are moving towards ending incineration and dumping at sea.

Mr. Malcolm Bruce: The Minister has made some valuable contributions in terms of the Government's concern, but will she acknowledge that 20 per cent. is no cause for complacency and that the reason why the Germans, in particular, have such a high rate of pollution is that they have a river which taps the whole continent rather than just these islands? The Government's record on the North sea will be worth defending only when specific regulations are brought before the House to ban the substances that the Minister has in mind and action is taken on them.

Mrs. Bottomley: The hon. Gentleman makes some reasonable points. At last week's meeting of the North sea scientific task force Britain was the only country in the North sea to bring forward specific programmes for monitoring, regulating and providing models of the North sea. Similarly, with the "red list", Britain is the first country to have published a list of substances that we hope to see reduced by 50 per cent. by 1995.

Mr. Bowis: Will my hon. Friend confirm that the Thames estuary is the cleanest metropolitan estuary in the world? Will she also confirm that she will not rest on those laurels but will continue to pursue the polluters of the Thames and other rivers, particularly through the courts?

Mrs. Bottomley: The Thames is probably the cleanest metropolitan waterway in the world. About £300 million has been spent on cleaning it up and more than 100 different species are to be found there. However, there is no room for complacency and it is essential that we continue with our programmes to clean up waterways and to protect the North sea. That is why we are committed to a precautionary approach and to a rigorous approach to the implementation of these policies.

Mr. Allan Roberts: Once again, the Minister and Conservative Members have proved that they are wholly complacent about the pollution that this country puts into the North sea. Of course, river discharges into the North sea from Britain are only 20 per cent. But the river Mersey, which is the most polluted river basin in Western Europe, goes into the Irish sea, which they have not mentioned. Three hundred million gallons of sewage are discharged every day into Britain's coastal waters. Twenty per cent. of the flow from sewage pipelines is composed of contamined industrial effluent. We dump 200,000 tonnes of liquid industrial contaminated——

Mr. Speaker: Order. The North sea, please.

Mr. Roberts: It is the North sea. Two hundred thousand tonnes go into the North sea. Will the Minister confirm that Britain is the only country dumping massive amounts of sewage sludge into the North sea? Thirty per cent. of Britain's contaminated, poisonous sewage sludge is dumped into the North sea. When will the Government stop that? The Minister will go down in history as one of Britain's great poisoners.

Mrs. Bottomley: I fear that that was an example of air pollution. As a party, we believe in action not words and we believe in action based on sound, scientific evidence. The hon. Gentleman mentioned sewage sludge. It is important to point out that sewage sludge is what remains after the treatment of sewage. One has to find the best practical environmental option. Perhaps the hon. Gentleman would prefer to have the sewage sludge spread over the land around his constituency. Our view, is that, where it is the best practical environmental option, it is permissible to dump it, so long as it is strictly licensed and strictly monitored.

Mr. Cran: Does my hon. Friend agree that the Government's commitment to cleaning up the five great estuaries in the North sea is evidenced by the fact that by 1990 £600 million will have been committed in capital works by various water authorities? Does she further agree that in the river Humber oxygen concentration has increased in the past few years from under 45 per cent. to more than 65 per cent.? Does she also agree that the situation will improve because £70 million has been committed by the water authority there to further improvements? Is that not progress and, if not, what is?

Mrs. Bottomley: I most appreciate the fact that my hon. Friend is so well informed on this matter and about the very good progress that we have made, which means that 90 per cent. of our rivers and waterways are of good or fair quality, as compared with a European average of 75 per cent. We have further to go and we are committed to do all that we can to ensure that we maintain the standards of our rivers and waterways.

Thames Water Authority

7. **Mr. Corbyn:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he last met the chairman of the Thames water authority; and what matters were discussed.

The Minister for Water and Planning (Mr. Michael Howard): I met the chairman of Thames and other water authority chairmen on Monday 5 December. We discussed the excellent progress that the water authorities are making towards privatisation.

Mr. Corbyn: Will the Minister arrange to meet the chairman of the Thames water authority again to discuss with him the authority's considerable land holdings? Will he ask the chairman to investigate why a number of completions of land sales that were imminent were withdrawn by the authority and the land subsequently sold

to Wimpey and other developers? Will he also consider whether it is right for a public undertaking such as Thames water authority to be involved in exclusive private discussions with individual developers to whom it then decides to sell a particular piece of land? Does not the Minister think that we need a public statement on all the land holdings of the Thames water authority, their valuation and the method of their disposal?

Mr. Howard: In common with all other public bodies, the water authorities are required to obtain the best market price for any land holdings of which they dispose. If the hon. Gentleman has any information to suggest that the best market price has not been obtained, I should be grateful if he would draw it to my attention. All assets, including land holdings, will be fully valued in the prospectuses of the companies when they are offered for sale.

Mr. Hayes: When my hon. and learned Friend met the chairman of Thames water authority, did he congratulate him on improving customer services and reducing debt and operating costs?

Mr. Howard: Not, I confess, on 5 December, but I have done so on previous occasions.

Mrs. Ann Taylor: Will the Minister acknowledge, as his advisers Professor Littlechild and Mr. Kinnersley have acknowledged, that it will be developers who will be most interested in buying into the privatised water industry and that, because they will control the water and sewerage infrastructure, the planning process is bound to be weakened?

Mr. Howard: I do not accept that for one moment. The planning process will continue to apply in its full rigour to land disposed of by the authorities.

Sir Anthony Grant: Rather than waste too much time discussing all this rubbish with the Thames water authority, will my hon. and learned Friend find a little time to discuss with the Anglian water authority, where he will find the greatest possible enthusiasm——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I am sure that it is true of lots of authorities, but the question is about Thames water authority.

Mr. Howard: I shall certainly do that, and I am sure that my hon. Friend's assessment is absolutely accurate.

Housing and Local Government Bill

8. **Ms. Primarolo:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he expects to publish the Housing and Local Government Bill.

Mr. Gummer: Early in the new year.

Ms. Primarolo: In drafting the new Bill, will the Minister take the opportunity to ensure that the voting procedure for the transfer of council houses in the Housing Act 1988 is amended to ensure that the dead do not count in the vote? In the vote in Torbay a woman who had been dead for two years but whose name was still on the electoral register was counted as being in favour of the transfer of the council property. Will the Minister also take the opportunity today to inform us that, because of such irregularities, the transfer of the Torbay housing stock will not be allowed to go ahead?

Mr. Gummer: My hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State referred to the decision on the transfer, and that decision will be made known. As regards the hon. Lady's second request, I shall make no such proposals.

Mr. McLoughlin: In considering the conduct of local authorities, which we expect to be included in the Housing and Local Government Bill, will my right hon. Friend seek to ensure that in appointing people to statutory planning boards, such as the national park boards, district or county councils should pick people who live in the area? Is my right hon. Friend aware that people who are subject to the planning controls of the Peak national park are fed up with the appointment of people from the city of Derby, who have no contact whatever with the national parks? Might not one way round that be to include a clause providing that at least 50 per cent. of those appointed to a planning board must live in the area?

Mr. Gummer: I know that that problem arises. I have not yet considered the matter, but now that the hon. Gentleman has brought it to my attention I shall certainly do so in view of the Bill.

Mr. O'Brien: Before the Government publish the Housing and Local Government Bill, will the Minister ensure that information about the proposed housing subsidies will be published so that local authorities can make their calculations? Without the details it is difficult for them to assess how the arrangements will work, particularly in relation to rent levels.

Will the Minister also tell us what is the future of urban development, which appears to have fallen off the Government's agenda? Will we have information on that as well before the Bill is published?

Mr. Gummer: I think that in the second part of his question the hon. Gentleman was referring to the economic development powers, as they are what is discussed in the Bill. It will certainly be on the agenda, and I shall ensure that the hon. Gentleman is able to obtain all the necessary information when the Bill is published.

I very much hope that we shall have as much information as possible about housing subsidies, but the purpose of the Bill is for us to discuss a number of important principles—which I am sure that the hon. Gentleman, too, will be able to discuss—and to apply to them particular figures at different times. I do not think the hon. Gentleman need worry about not having the information that he needs when we discuss this important Bill, which will come before us very soon.

Statutory Local Plans

9. **Mr. Chapman:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement on progress by local planning authorities in drawing up, entering into public consultation and implementing statutory local plans *(a)* generally and *(b)* in the outer London boroughs.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Environment (Mr. Christopher Chope): In terms of

population, about 65 per cent. of London and about 20 per cent of the rest of England are covered by adopted local plans, with a further 10 to 15 per cent covered by draft plans. Thirteen of the 19 outer London boroughs have complete coverage of adopted or deposited local plans. I hope that the planning policy guidance note published on 30 November will accelerate the preparation and adoption of local plans elsewhere.

Mr. Chapman: I thank my hon. Friend for his detailed reply. I accept that the borough of Barnet has published its draft local plan and is now conducting the statutory six months of public consultation, but can my hon. Friend give an assurance that local planning authorities can turn down planning applications that they deem out of scale and character with neighbouring buildings?

More important, can my hon. Friend assure us that if there are appeals on such planning applications, while the Secretary of State must, of course, look at each appeal individually, there will be some recognition that he will uphold planning authorities that turn down applications because they are out of scale and character?

Mr. Chope: I am happy to give my hon. Friend the assurances that he seeks. Those matters are set out in detail in paragraph 22 of the planning policy guidance note.

Mr. Cousins: Will the Minister take up urgently with his colleagues at the Department of Transport key issues such as the motorway proposals now overshadowing much of outer west London? Adequate performance of the fine-grain detail of planning in statutory local plans is being completely overshadowed by major proposals for capital infrastructure investment affecting the lives of entire communities.

Mr. Chope: Obviously some matters—the hon. Gentleman has referred to them—must be dealt with by means of a national or regional strategy, but many others must be dealt with locally. There is considerable demand from local residents that their own local councils resolve such matters.

Mr. Jessel: On local plans for outer London, will my hon. Friend take careful note that it is against the wishes of the public that their leafy roads in outer London should gradually be turned into blocks of six, eight and 12 flats? Will such public feeling be reflected in decisions on planning appeals?

Mr. Chope: My hon. Friend has made a valid point. It is one of the reasons why the new planning policy guidance note contains express reference to allowing local authorities to include in their local plans references to policies on densities for new housing.

Leicester (Housing Waiting List)

10. **Mr. Vaz:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he next plans to visit Leicester to discuss with the local council the housing waiting list.

Mr. Trippier: My right hon. Friend has no plans to visit Leicester. However, I was there on 6 December and I discussed a number of housing topics with the council.

Mr. Vaz: As the Minister was in Leicester so recently, he will know that there are currently 10,500 people on the housing waiting list in Leicester and that last year the city council did not build a single new council house. That contrasts with the position 10 years ago when it used to build an average of 1,000 new houses a year. Does the Minister realise that the appalling statistics are a direct result of the Government's miserable housing policies? When will the Minister return to the people of Leicester the £15,274,000·18 stolen by the Government from the council's housing allocation grant? Will the Minister confirm that if the money was given to the city council —it is its rightful property—it would considerably ease the housing crisis in Leicester?

Mr. Trippier: The hon. Gentleman's point was not specifically touched on by the Labour councillors I met on my official visit. Perhaps I told them rather too quickly that the amount of money they had received in capital receipts had ensured that there was a gradual increase in the total spend in the public sector housing market. Perhaps that is why the matter was not raised. I am glad to have the opportunity to remind the hon. Gentleman of that fact. I also made the point that, wherever possible, the Department had given additional resources over and above the council's allocation at the beginning of the year. That is especially appropriate for estate action. I was asking the council to spend a darn sight more money from its resources, together with ours, to deliver new building through housing assocations, which, as the hon. Gentleman knows, form the thrust of the Government's new housing policy.

Mr. Ashby: Does my hon. Friend agree that waiting lists are often fiction, based on expectations rather than need? Does he agree that the hon. Member for Leicester, East (Mr. Vaz) would do better trying to persuade Leicester council to use its resources more efficiently rather than indulge in political posturing?

Mr. Trippier: I agree with my hon. Friend. The local authority in Leicester could do more in turning round its empty properties on various estates. It acknowledged that it has taken far too long in the past, and that process has speeded up. I am glad to see that, but there is still considerable room for improvement.

Unleaded Petrol

11. **Mr. Gill:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what further measures he is proposing to ensure that unleaded petrol is made more widely available.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The number of petrol stations selling unleaded petrol is increasing rapidly. By the end of the year, it is expected that one in four refuellings will take place at a petrol station at which unleaded petrol is available. Further measures to promote the availability and use of unleaded petrol are co-ordinated by the unleaded petrol group, which I chair.

Mr. Gill: I thank my hon. Friend for her reply. May I exhort her not to spare any effort to encourage petroleum companies to make unleaded petrol available as widely as possible? That holds out the greatest scope for individual citizens to make worthwhile and valuable contributions to solving the problem of pollution. Does she agree that the role and responsibility of individual citizens in the battle against pollution cannot be underestimated?

Mrs. Bottomley: I agree with my hon. Friend. In his area, taking Shropshire, Hereford and Worcester together, the number of petrol stations selling unleaded petrol has risen from four to 43 in the past year. What matters is that individual citizens should realise that lack of availability and financial disadvantage are no longer excuses. Two thirds of cars can use unleaded petrol, possibly with a small alteration, and it is up to citizens to take steps to help the environment and their wallet.

Mr. Eastham: Is it not a fact that a Government Department has been monitoring lead pollution near motorways and busy roads in built-up areas? Is it not also a fact that there is great concern about damage to children? When will the Department publish figures showing the level of lead pollution, which would heighten awareness and encourage people to buy unleaded petrol?

Mrs. Bottomley: The amount of lead in the air has dropped by half since the maximum amount of lead in petrol was reduced by two thirds in 1985. Although the amount has been reduced, we need to tackle the remaining 80 per cent. of lead in the air that comes from petrol. It is essential for people to realise the damage that lead can cause to children. We are making every effort to spell that out. The information is readily available and the amount of lead in the air is monitored by a number of sources.

Miss Emma Nicholson: I congratulate the Minister on her splendid efforts to encourage companies as well as individuals to alter cars and company vehicles to run on unleaded petrol. I am delighted that this week my hon. Friend has written to all the major companies encouraging them to make that alteration. Will she confirm that the tax differential between leaded and unleaded petrol is among the highest in the European Community?

Mrs. Bottomley: I thank my hon. Friend for her kind remarks. I have written to the top 100 companies asking what steps they can take to change their fleets. Our differential is the second highest in the European Community. However, it is important for people to realise that there is already a 6p advantage over four-star petrol. Together with the Department of Trade and Industry we intend to alter the Petrol Marking Order so that the motorist is made immediately aware—because it will be highlighted at the roadside—of the saving he can make if he buys unleaded petrol and of the help that that will provide for the environment.

Ms. Walley: The use of unleaded fuel is most important if we are to have a healthy environment. It is much too important to leave to market forces. If the Government's boasted uptake of 15 per cent. in all petrol stations is to be achieved by the end of the year, it will still compare unfavourably with the uptake in most other European countries. In West Germany it is 75 per cent. When do the Government intend to make as much money available to deal with this problem as they have made available, through the Department of Health, to overcome the problems that have arisen in the egg market? The Government ought to provide funds immediately for a Government-sponsored national information programme so that citizens are encouraged to buy unleaded petrol.

Mrs. Bottomley: The uptake of unleaded petrol has increased tenfold in the last year. If we can achieve the same tenfold increase next year, we shall have made good progress. It is essential to work with the petrol industry, the motor manufacturers, the consumers and the motoring organisations and encourage them to spell out in detail the advantages of changing to unleaded petrol. There is already a substantial financial advantage, but it is important that each person should realise what the advantages are. That is why, through the Campaign for Lead Free Air, with which we have worked for many years and have helped to fund, we are determined to ensure that every step is taken to promote the important action that each individual can take.

Mr. Mans: Does my hon. Friend agree that, far from increasing the differential, the best way forward is to encourage more car manufacturers to tune cars to run on unleaded petrol, particularly car manufacturers in countries such as Italy and France that refuse to do so because their attitude towards unleaded fuel is way behind ours?

Mrs. Bottomley: I congratulate my hon. Friend on the important contribution he has made to this subject and the steps that I know he has taken to encourage motor manufacturers to take action in this important area. By 1990, all cars will have to be able to take unleaded petrol; we shall all be using it. I have also discussed with manufacturers whether they have been able clearly to identify those cars that are able to take unleaded fuel. Four out of five new cars are able to take unleaded fuel, and 2 million people are driving cars that could run on unleaded fuel. We want to encourage them to take that step.

Smith Houses

12. **Mr. Janner:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he will make a statement concerning the availability of further funds for the repurchase of Smith houses by Leicester city council.

Mr. Trippier: Leicester city council received additional housing investment programme allocations of £584,000 in 1987-88 and £235,000 in 1988-89, specifically to help it meet its housing defects obligations. For 1989-90 we have set aside £15 million nationally for housing defects, for which individual authorities will be able to make bids. These will, of course, be considered on their merits.

Mr. Janner: Is the Minister aware that these amounts are totally inadequate? Leicester city council is fulfilling its obligations to protect people who bought their council houses in accordance with Government policy, but the Government are doing precious little to help them. Those who live in the remaining Smith houses in my constituency will share a wretched Christmas along with the thousands of families who cannot get council houses because the Government have taken money away from Leicester city council, which means that it cannot do its job in other respects.

Mr. Trippier: The hon. and learned Gentleman is being uncharacteristically unfair, and I think that he may have prepared his supplementary question before hearing my answer to his substantive question. Only last month the Department of the Environment gave Leicester city council additional funds to meet the problem of housing defects that the hon. and learned Gentleman has outlined.

Mr. Janner: It is not enough.

Mr. Trippier: It never is for the hon. and learned Gentleman. He will continue to say that it is not enough. All I can say is that there was a redistribution of resources in his region and we responded positively to the case put to us by Leicester city council. The additional HIP allocation, with the council's normal resources, means that the council will be able to help owners who are still awaiting assistance.

Dorset (Planning)

13. **Mr. Adley:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he next plans to visit Dorset to discuss public opinion on planning matters.

Mr. Chope: Neither I nor my right hon. Friend have any plans to do so.

Mr. Adley: That is a pity. Will my hon. Friend please accept from me that overdevelopment in Dorset is now the overriding concern of many of my constituents and those of my neighbours? Is he aware that there is widespread disillusionment and even a feeling of helplessness at what seems to be an alliance between certain developers, land owners and even certain county councils who favour the seemingly inexorable creep of development? Will he accept, on behalf of our right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment, my constituents' thanks for the decision to throw out the Carroll group proposals? Will he reconfirm the answer given to me by his fellow Under-Secretary of State on 20 July that it is definitely not the Government's policy to encourage the development of new towns on existing green belt land?

Mr. Chope: I am very happy to confirm the last point and I am grateful for my hon. Friend's comments about the Carroll decision. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State upheld green belt policy by overturning a recommendation from the inspector. He was challenged in the High Court but won the case.

Mr. Nicholas Baker: Will my hon. Friend do everything that he can to protect the green belt in Dorset and elsewhere in the south of England? When any changes are made to structure plans, will my hon. Friend ensure that control of local planning authorities over planning matters is in no way diminished?

Mr. Chope: Yes, certainly. Indeed, we want to go further than that. We want to encourage more local planning authorities to draw up their local plans and thereby to have greater control over their own environment.

Clay Pigeon Shooting

14. **Mr. Bellingham:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he proposes to issue a consultation paper on the permitted days for clay pigeon shooting under the General Development Order 1988.

Mr. Howard: Before Christmas.

Mr. Bellingham: Is my hon. and learned Friend aware that, if the order goes through, hundreds of small clay pigeon clubs will go out of business? If he further aware that they were not consulted and are outraged? Surely this is no way in which to treat a responsible and law-abiding sector of the community. The Government are trying to encourage alternative land uses, so surely it makes no sense to push this policy through in contradiction of that aim.

Mr. Howard: I am fully aware of the points that my hon. Friend makes and they will be given full weight in the consultation process to which his original question referred.

Sir Hector Monro: Does my hon. and learned Friend accept that, if consultations are to go through quickly, he must try to bring in an amending order by, say, 1 March? If he does not, clay pigeon shooting clubs cannot plan their season and many individuals will not be able to use clay pigeon traps to practise in fields. Is he aware that there is a voluntary code of practice, which is approved by his Department, to reduce noise and any form of local inconvenience? He must act very speedily indeed.

Mr. Howard: I am aware of the code of practice to which my hon. Friend refers. We shall do what we can to reach a speedy conclusion of this matter.

Bathing Water

15. **Mr. Fearn:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what action he is taking to ensure that all beaches meet the standards set by the European Community bathing water directive.

Mr. Howard: Some 60 per cent. of our bathing waters now meet the mandatory EC standards. Spending programmes for improving the remaining waters are running at £70 million a year, and we are considering the implication of accelerating these programmes to achieve general compliance by 1995.

Mr. Fearn: As one third of bathing waters still do not comply with the EEC directive, what action is the Minister taking about raw sewage which is being pumped into seas and which affects tourism, fishing and local people?

Mr. Howard: I thought that I had answered that question. We are considering ways of accelerating the programme to achieve general compliance with European Community standards by 1995.

Mr. Oppenheim: Is it not true that all the pollution has occurred while the water authorities have been in the public sector? Will not any price rises in water after privatisation be largely because of the need to clean up that pollution?

Mr. Howard: My hon. Friend is quite right. The Select Committee reported that the problems which we now face are largely due to the cuts in investment by water authorities between the mid-1970s and the early-1980s when the Labour party was in power.

Nirex

16. **Mrs. Margaret Ewing:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he next expects to meet the chairman of United Kingdom Nirex; and what matter will be discussed.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: My right hon. Friend has no plans at present to meet the chairman of Nirex.

Mrs. Ewing: In the light of that reply, will the Under-Secretary tell us when she expects Nirex to announce the sites that have been selected and the exact method of disposal of the waste? What is her Department doing to ensure that there will be a full debate in the House to enable all hon. Members to express their views on the selected sites and the proposals by Nirex?

Mrs. Bottomley: We understand that Nirex hopes to bring forward its proposals based on the results of its consultation exercise and technical and geological studies early next year. The Government will then make a final decision after a full public debate.

Mr. Ian Bruce: Does my hon. Friend agree that we should accelerate the Nirex programme? She will be well aware that for decades we have been storing the waste that Nirex wishes to over-engineer in its disposal and storage, in nuclear power stations throughout the country. We have to get across to the general public the message that there are many places——

Ms. Short: Does the hon. Gentleman want it in his constituency?

Mr. Bruce: I have it in my constituency. There are many places where it can be safely stored. Unless we bite the bullet we shall never keep nuclear energy progressing as it ought to be for the good of the environment.

Mrs. Bottomley: I appreciate my hon. Friend's point of view. He is absolutely right, but uncertainty can cause greater difficulty and problems. The Government are satisfied that safe disposal facilities can be developed, but any facility would have to meet the stringent safety requirements of the authorising and regulatory bodies. I know that my hon. Friend would not want to accelerate those procedures.

Dr. Cunningham: In addition to the commitment to a necessary debate in the House, will the Minister confirm that if there are any proposals for new methods of monitored storage of nuclear waste, there will be a wide-ranging public inquiry before any decisions are taken?

Mrs. Bottomley: My right hon. Friend has given a commitment that when Nirex comes forward with its proposals there will be a public inquiry and widespread public debate. It has been agreed by the Environment Select Committee and the House of Lords European Communities Select Committee that on-site storage is unacceptable because of the higher risk, that disposal is the right approach and it is time that the Government proceeded to deal with the problem.

Mr. Bill Walker: When my right hon. Friend meets the chairman of Nirex, will he bring to his attention the fact that the Scottish National party in Scotland has been distributing leaflets which give completely misleading information or lies about the proposals that may or may not be made, and that has been causing much unnecessary concern?

Mrs. Bottomley: Nirex has made efforts to consult very widely and put forward responsible and reasonable information. I shall certainly draw my hon. Friend's point to my right hon. Friend's attention.

Association of District Councils (Report)

17. **Mr. Archer:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he will make a statement on the report of the Association of District Councils called, "Social Rented Housing: Supply and Need", issued in September, a copy of which has been sent to him.

Mr. Trippier: This is an interesting report which we have read carefully.

Mr. Archer: In view of the revelation that there are now 1·3 million families on council waiting lists, is the Minister at last persuaded of the need for increased provision in the public sector, as urged in the report, or will he emulate the Prime Minister's reaction and dismiss the Association of District Councils as one more institution which has become infected by Socialism?

Mr. Trippier: I am convinced of the need to provide houses at affordable rents, and the Housing Act 1988 is designed to meet that need. This will happen through extension and expansion of the housing association movement. That is precisely why we have been fortunate in securing substantial resources from the Treasury to expand that policy and give a great increase to the Housing Corporation, which eventually will find its way to the housing associations.

Environmental Protection

19. **Mr. Stern:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list the major areas of opportunity for protection of the national environment which he expects his Department to pursue over the next 12 months.

Mrs. Bottomley: We will be taking action both nationally and internationally to protect all aspects of the environment. We are moving forward our policies to revise and refine our waste disposal legislation, to establish an integrated pollution control system, to tacke air pollution by cleaning up power station emissions and promoting lead-free petrol, to invest in research into greenhouse gases and to take a lead on protecting the ozone layer.

Mr. Stern: On my hon. Friend's final point, would she care to comment on the efforts being made by the major companies in the chemical industry to assist the Government in that endeavour.

Mrs. Bottomley: The major chemical companies have been investing heavily in research into alternatives to damaging CFCs and halons. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State announced that he is to host a conference here in March to encourage other countries to sign the Montreal protocol and to raise the limits so that we can look for a reduction of 85 per cent.

Patrick Ryan

3.31 pm

Mr. John Fraser (Norwood) *(by private notice)*: To ask the Attorney-General if he will make a statement on the decision of the Irish Attorney-General in relation to the extradition of Patrick Ryan.

The Attorney-General (Sir Patrick Mayhew): In my answer to a private notice question on 1 December, I told the House that the Irish Attorney-General was still considering the warrants that the Metropolitan police had sent to Dublin—first, by facsimile on 25 November and then by hand on 26 November—and the additional documentation which I had sent to him on 25 November. I had at that time not heard from Mr. Murray about them other than the telephone conversation on Monday 28 November, the content of which I reported to the House.

At about 5.30 on the evening of 1 December, Mr. Murray transmitted to me a total of 20 questions relating to the statements of law and fact that I had sent to him on 25 November. The information requested was supplied the following day. Yesterday, 13 December, Mr. Murray announced that he had on the previous day advised the Commissioner of Garda Siochana not to endorse the warrants for execution. He also announced that, in respect of the charges in two of the warrants, he had formed the opinion that there was, on the part of the relevant prosecuting authority, a clear intention to prosecute and that such intention was founded on the existence of sufficient evidence. These are the requirements specified in the Irish Extradition (Amendment) Act 1987.

In relation to the charges in the other two warrants, Mr. Murray had not found it necessary to reach any final conclusion, because he had concluded that, were Patrick Ryan to be extradited to Britain, it would not be possible for a jury to approach the issue of his guilt or innocence free from bias. This was by reason of what he described as the extreme nature and extent of the prejudicial material published. Additionally, he said:

"the charges which have been brought against Patrick Ryan are of a most serious kind and they should be investigated by a court. The Criminal Law (Jurisdiction) Act 1976 provides a means whereby certain serious offences committed outside this jurisdiction may be tried here. Such a trial may, under Irish law, take place before a court of three judges without a jury. Heavy penalties are prescribed by Irish law for those offences."

Mr. Murray had informed me personally of his decision a few hours earlier.

For my part, I find this outcome extremely disappointing and the reason given for it regrettably offensive. The reason is also singularly surprising, as speculation about the fairness of any resulting trial by a jury in England is not one of the functions which the Irish Attorney-General is directed by this very recent Act to undertake. I readily acknowledge that the question is one for Irish and not English law, but I also note the doubts in this regard expressed today in leading articles in *The Irish Times* and *Irish Independent*.

At all events, yesterday morning, I informed Mr. Murray that I rejected his thesis that Patrick Ryan would be denied a fair trial. Juries in England are invariably instructed that they must decide the case only on the evidence that they have heard and seen in the trial. In every appropriate case—that is to say, cases of any notoriety—they are directed to disregard whatever they may have heard or seen elsewhere. In my experience, juries heed those directions scrupulously, with the fairness that one expects in the ordinary men and women of our country. Whatever may have been published anywhere—and before yesterday, Mr. Murray had at no time raised with me any anxiety about any publication—I am entirely confident that, if and when Patrick Ryan were to come to trial in England, there would be no significant risk that such publicity would affect a jury's ability or will to try him fairly.

As to the possible trial of Patrick Ryan in the Republic of Ireland, as my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister said yesterday, we do not absolutely exclude that, but only two of the four charges seem to be covered by the Criminal Law (Jurisdiction) Act. Additionally, there would be grave anxieties over the security of witnesses whom we could not compel to go to the Republic and, if the case accordingly failed for insufficiency of evidence, we could not subsequently try Patrick Ryan in our own jurisdiction.

These are major disadvantages inherent in an option that we had every right not to prefer to that of extradition.

Mr. Fraser: It is a pity that some of the words used by the Attorney-General were not fortunate and have not helped the matter any further. Is it not one of the lessons of the affair that we could do without public, intemperate and hectoring manners, particularly those of the Prime Minister? Is it not much better for pre-trial processes not to be conducted under arc lights but dealt with as they would be in this country, quitely and without publicity?

Does the Attorney-General agree that matters have not been helped by the unexpected passing of the issue to the Irish Government by the Belgian Government? Does he further agree that the affair has not been helped either by trial by newspaper which has been fed by outbursts by the Prime Minister and by a grave error of language by the hon. Member for Hampshire, East (Mr. Mates), who used words which were adopted by the Prime Minister—I understand that he withdrew those words the following day, but the damage had been done by then—or by a press briefing by the Crown Prosecution Service? All this raises the problem of prejudice to a jury. Will the Attorney-General confirm that he has been advised by the Irish Attorney-General of his concern about the problem of prejudice to a jury as a result of these matters being canvassed in public and in rather strong language before any action has been taken?

Opposition Members certainly want to see a proper judicial investigation of alleged terrorist offences, and that depends on the co-operation and good sense of the Government. Will the Attorney-General now calmly and, if necessary, privately confer with Mr. Murray with a view to a trial in Ireland of the issues, as the Irish Attorney-General has decided that two prima facie cases should be investigated by the Irish courts?

In other recent notorious cases, the Government have not been afraid to use the jurisdiction of overseas courts. Surely the right thing to do now is to adopt the jurisdiction of the Irish courts and to have the matter brought to trial as speedily as possible.

The Attorney-General: I am sorry that the hon. Member for Norwood (Mr. Fraser) finds anything intemperate or otherwise unsatisfactory in the language that I used to respond to his question, but I do not think that he can apply that sobriquet to the word "offensive" in

the context in which I applied it. The reason why I suggest that is the reason that led the right hon. Member for Plymouth, Devonport (Dr. Owen) to make his intervention yesterday.

I agree with the hon. Gentleman that pre-trial issues are not helped when they are dealt with under arc lights. That is the principal reason why the British Government objected to the Irish Extradition (Amendment) Act 1987, which confers that jurisdiction upon the Irish Attorney-General and obliges him to come to conclusions on matters of English law. Inevitably, controversy is inherent in that procedure. I agree with what the hon. Member for Norwood said about the Belgian Government's contribution to the affair. I think that the British Government's opinion about that has already been made clear.

I reject the assertion of the hon. Member for Norwood that anything that my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister said would cause any prejudice to proceedings. She was entirely entitled to say what she did, no doubt expressing it with feelings that are widely shared throughout the country.

The hon. Member for Norwood referred rightly to the generous as well as immediate retraction that my hon. Friend the Member for Hampshire, East (Mr. Mates) made the next day. He made clear the context in which he used the words which he retracted. We all have an obligation to be careful in the House, and I believe that it is met.

It is plain from what the Attorney-General for Ireland said in his statement, and in a letter that he was good enough to send to me just beforehand, that he believes that prejudice has been incurred by matters that have been published. I have made it clear in what I have said in answer to the hon. Member for Norwood that I am confident that, if and when Patrick Ryan were to come to trial in this country, there would be no significant risk at all that any publication of any material would have any detrimental effect upon the ability or the will of a jury to give him a fair trial. That is required in this country and it is received. I agree that good sense is needed to try to get sensible extradition arrangements established, as they were under the reciprocal legislation of 1965 between our two countries.

The hon. Member for Norwood asked about the Criminal Law (Jurisdiction) Act 1976. I repeat that I have no objection to using that Act in a proper case. A fortnight or three weeks ago, I asked the Irish Attorney-General to prosecute under that Act in a case called Sloane. As I hope I made clear, there are serious difficulties in this case. I shall come to a conclusion upon them as soon as consultations with the Metropolitan police and others are completed.

Mr. Ivan Lawrence (Burton): When our anger has died down at the insult to the British system and at the absurdity of the suggestion that British juries, among which are often many Irish citizens, are incapable of coming to a fair decision when reaching a verdict, will we not be left with two questions: first, how determined are the Southern Irish Government to root out terrorism; secondly, how will this absurd gesture improve the prospects for the Anglo-Irish Agreement?

The Attorney-General: My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister has made it clear that we wish the Anglo-Irish Agreement to continue, and that it will continue. I note and share the opinions which my hon. and learned Friend has expressed about the reflections upon British juries in this case which are contained in the Irish Attorney-General's statement. It is right to say that, apart from English citizens, Irish citizens who are resident in this country frequently serve upon our juries.

I prefer to take at their face value the expressions of intent by the Irish Government, including the Irish Attorney-General, that it is their desire to take effective steps against terrorism. I must observe, however, that yesterday's decision is an obstacle rather than anything that facilitates a firm attack upon the terrorism that concerns us all.

Mr. Merlyn Rees (Morley and Leeds, South): Is it not the case that, as a result of a tragedy of errors on both sides of the Irish sea, reinforcing their attitudes about our justice and ours about the Irish system which have continued for about 500 years, a man against whom there are serious charges, as agreed by the Irish Attorney-General, is allowed to go free? Would it not be better now to stop posturing on both sides and use the Criminal Law (Jurisdiction) Act, which I piloted through the House with the agreement of both sides and which is now on the statute book, to give the Irish the chance to bring the man to trial? The Attorney-General should discuss the problem of witnesses and their safety in Dublin and give them a chance to bring the man to trial. We may get hot under the collar, but there are those on both sides of the border, and especially in the North, who have suffered from violence over 20 years. They are not amused by our attitude. They want something done about men of violence, and the appropriate legislation is there to use.

The Attorney-General: I have yet to find anyone who finds anything in this connection amusing. It is certainly very exercising and it causes great anxiety. I agree that it would be a tragedy if anyone who was sought to be charged with, in the words of the Irish Attorney-General, very serious offences were not brought to trial. However, it is not quite as simple as that. Obviously I must consider the security of witnesses. That is very important. I have made it clear that I see great advantage in using the Extradition (Amendment) Act 1987 in a proper case. Those matters must be considered carefully.

One consideration which might occur to all hon. Members is what might be said and how we would feel if, however tragically, a witness who was sent down there suffered serious injury or death in circumstances where we were left only with that option instead of extradition which we considered ourselves entitled to ask for. Those matters must be considered in a sensible and unbiased way, and that is the approach that I intend to adopt.

Mr. James Kilfedder (North Down): Will the Attorney-General refuse to accept the lesser option of a trial in the Irish Republic in this case because in the circumstances it would be regarded as acceptance of what the Attorney-General described as the offensive allegation that Patrick Ryan would not receive a fair trial in this country? Would it not be much better therefore to wait until he should come here for his perhaps terrorist activities and then he could be arrested and charged?

The Attorney-General: The hon. Gentleman is aware that we are referring to someone who is suspected of those

[The Attorney-General]

activities and whom it is sought to charge. I understand what lies behind the hon. Gentleman's question, but I do not think that it would be right to say that, simply because we have been denied extradition, we will give up any attempt to prosecute this man—having him prosecuted in Ireland. I do not think that that would meet the criterion of good sense that has been urged upon me. However, other matters must be considered and I hope that I have made them clear. For example, if at a trial in Dublin through any insufficiency of evidence this man was acquitted where otherwise he would have been convicted, we should be prevented from trying him here if ever he appeared in this jurisdiction.

Mr. Robert Maclennan (Caithness and Sutherland): Does the Attorney-General recognise that many of the people who will not accept the Irish Attorney-General's view that a fair trial is not possible in this country none the less regard the participation by Members of Parliament and the Prime Minister in a hue and cry while the Attorney-General was considering these matters as, to put it no higher, extremely unhelpful? They also recognise that, if he were making judgments of this kind in a similar situation, he would resent political utterances about a judicial matter. Will he therefore treat this matter in the way in which the Irish Attorney-General said it ought to be regarded—as unique and not something which is to be the foundation of our relations on extradition matters in future?

The Attorney-General: I very much hope that this case will be unique in certain important respects. Plainly it will not be allowed to affect relations between our two countries. That would be absurd. I reject any assertion that my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister took part in or led a hue and cry. Faced with some of the barracking to which she is so frequently exposed, perhaps she has to raise her voice and doubtless she expressed her views with feeling. However, in that regard I do not believe that she is to be criticised.

Mr. Alistair Burt (Bury, North): Does my right hon. and learned Friend agree that, whether or not Patrick Ryan is guilty of any offence, his reported statements make it clear that he cares little for this country or its well-being? Is it not essential that we prevent what would be his greatest victory—to drive such a wedge between London and Dublin that effective dialogue would stop? Without proper dialogue, there would be no opportunity to repair the misunderstanding and, above all, no opportunity for future extraditions.

The Attorney-General: The whole House shares my hon. Friend's constructive approach to this matter.

Mr. Eric S. Heffer (Liverpool, Walton): Does the Attorney-General agree that, by publishing the full statement by the Irish Attorney-General, *The Daily Telegraph* did a great service to the people of this country who had an opportunity to study the statement, which I believe to be both moderate and interesting?

Does the right hon. and learned Gentleman further agree that we must not assume that someone is guilty until he has been found guilty? Already today in the House the gentleman in question has been called a terrorist, yet the matter has not yet been brought before a court. On that basis, is not the Irish Attorney-General correct to ask how anyone of Irish origin can expect a fair trial in this country without first having the opportunity to come here and not be accused by the press and hon. Members of being a terrorist when there is no proof of that?

The Attorney-General: The hon. Gentleman is right to say that it is fundamental to our system of law that everybody is presumed to be innocent until he is found guilty. Every jury is instructed in that fundamental principle. The sad aspect of the Irish Attorney-General's statement is his supposition that a jury in the case of Patrick Ryan would not abide by that fundamental principle. That is why I found the statement offensive. It is a matter of extreme importance, and it is not in the faintest degree justifiable to say that no Irish person can come to this country and receive a fair trial.

Mr. Ivor Stanbrook (Orpington): Does my right hon. and learned Friend derive any wry satisfaction from knowing that in at least two cases the warrants were found to be impeccable, contrary to what was alleged by Opposition Members at the time? Does he think that the Irish Attorney-General acted properly within his own law in deciding the matter on grounds other than those laid down in the relevant law of the Republic?

The Attorney-General: I must correct my hon. Friend on one small matter: not two but all four of the warrants were without criticism. On the separate ground of whether there was sufficient evidence to warrant a prosecution, the Irish Attorney-General found that there was. He found it unnecessary to reach a conclusion on the other two cases because, in his view, on no charge could Patrick Ryan expect a fair trial. I have forgotten my hon. Friend's second point, so perhaps he would repeat it.

Mr. Stanbrook: I asked about the grounds on which the Irish Attorney-General refused our application.

The Attorney-General: I am grateful to my hon. Friend I have already said that I found it surprising that the Irish Attorney-General had denied the application on the ground of fair trial. Although the Extradition (Amendment) Act 1987 is a recent piece of legislation, it does not set out a ground that the Irish Attorney-General should be satisfied that there is a likelihood of a fair trial, but it does tell him the various matters to which he should put his mind.

That point was brought out in today's two leading articles to which I referred. The *Irish Independent* states:

> "For, in coming to his conclusion, the Attorney General has claimed as a basis something which is not in fact part of any of our laws on extradition—that extradition should not be carried out if a fair trial is in doubt. To that extent he has made an interpretation of our laws—a function which is, rightly, reserved to our courts.
>
> It should have been a more proper procedure to have endorsed at least one of the warrants, allowed the case to go to court and provide an opportunity for an Irish judge to decide if, in fact there was justification for refusing to extradite on the grounds of prejudice in Britain."

Mr. Peter Archer (Warley, West): Whether he agrees or disagrees with what Mr. Murray has said, will the Attorney-General confirm that Mr. Murray was not casting doubt on the fairness of United Kingdom courts but was saying that, after the extensive coverage and comment based on official sources in London and the

Prime Minister, no jury, however fair, could approach this matter with an open mind? Are there not lessons to be learnt from that?

The Attorney-General: I am happy to confirm that the Irish Attorney expressly made it clear that he was not casting doubts on the system but was giving his mind to the likely outcome of this case. He did not refer to the Prime Minister. I am not aware of the publication of any matter that is complained of as coming from official sources. Plainly there are lessons to be learnt, but the principal lesson is that there is a strong case for reviewing the Extradition (Amendment) Act 1987 and the procedures which it sets out. We have already made representations on that and we should renew them.

Mr. Ian Gow (Eastbourne): Since my right hon. and learned Friend has confirmed that the ground on which the Irish Attorney-General refused the request for extradition is not one of the grounds contained in the Extradition (Amendment) Act 1987, has he considered the possibility of taking action in the Irish courts for a judicial review of the decision of the Irish Attorney-General? Is he aware that the review for which he called is one which is most unlikely to take place by the Irish Government? Despite that, can he assure the House that at the meeting of the intergovernmental conference today such a request will have been made by our Secretary of State attending it? Finally——

Mr. Speaker: No.

The Attorney-General: I cannot give the assurance for which my hon. Friend just managed to ask before he was silenced. In my reply, I said that this was a matter for Irish, not English, law. I do not have any comment on my hon. Friend's initial suggestion.

Mr. Norman Buchan (Paisley, South): Is it not nonsense to believe that it is possible for any jury to be wholly insulated either from factual or apparently factual material circulated or from an atmosphere? In that situation, is it not proper that the person named should be tried under Irish legislation? Would it not be helpful for all of us if the Prime Minister would remember that she is a Prime Minister and would speak as a Prime Minister with restraint and propriety, not as some young skinhead representative of the young Tories?

The Attorney-General: I am not aware of anything improper that the Prime Minister has said in this regard. A reason why she has been Prime Minister for nearly 10 years is that she reflects so accurately the feelings of so many British people. I have noted the suggestion that there should be some intra-European court for deciding these matters, but I reject the premise that juries cannot be expected to be impartial and unbiased whenever there happens to be some political connotation in a criminal trial. The purpose of juries is to try crime, not politics, and that is what they succeed in doing.

Mr. William Cash (Stafford): Does my right hon. and learned Friend agree that this is not merely a question of English or, indeed, Irish law but to some extent may be a question of canon law? Although he may not be versed in matters of canon law, does he agree that those of us who are Catholic would personally like to see Mr. Ryan removed from his present residence and released to the appropriate authorities?

The Attorney-General: I am not sure which appropriate authority my hon. Friend has in mind, or quite how immediate that release is intended to be. As I have quite enough to contend with on my own patch, I shall leave these matters to my hon. Friend.

Mr. Stuart Bell (Middlesbrough): The Attorney-General has yet to direct his attention to the statement made by the Irish Attorney-General yesterday, in which the Irish Attorney-General said that he had called the right hon. and learned Gentleman on a previous occasion in relation to a previous warrant and had expressed his concern at the prejudicial effect of press statements. If that message were given by the Irish Attorney-General, was it taken to heart by the British Attorney-General, and did he so advise the Government before the Prime Minister came to the House with her inflammatory and prejudicial statements?

The Attorney-General: I do not propose to add to what I have already said about my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister's intervention. In the case of McVeigh in May this year, Mr. Murray telephoned me to express his anxiety about the activities of the media and in particular of a television crew outside Portlaoise gaol after McVeigh had been released in a case in which Mr. Murray had authorised the backing of the warrants. That was in marked contrast to this case. On no occasion over the 13, or however many, days that passed did Mr. Murray alert me to any anxiety that he had about any publication of any kind.

Mr. Henry Bellingham (Norfolk, North-West): Further to the question of my hon. Friend the Member for Eastbourne (Mr. Gow), does not the Taoiseach's claim that this matter should be decided purely on legal grounds look pretty hollow because it is obvious that the Irish Attorney-General's decision was political? If the EEC is serious about combating terrorism, is not what we need a new harmonised extradition system covering the whole of the EEC?

The Attorney-General: I believe that I have sufficiently expressed my response to the decision of the Irish Attorney-General. I do not claim that it was a political decision. It is sufficient to say that it was, in my respectful belief, a wrong decision, for the reasons that I have given. I am not persuaded, although this is not a matter for me, that there is any advantage to be had in a centralised European system, because, after all, we are looking at some individual systems of law, and we need to keep it as simple as we can.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. Important though this matter is, we are due to have a very important debate on British Shipbuilders, in which there is considerable pressure to take part.

Mr. Tam Dalyell (Linlithgow): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker, and for the protection of the House. It was within your hearing that the Attorney-General, in answer to a question, gave as a reason for the Prime Minister——

Mr. Speaker: Order. This is a continuation of questions. I am sorry that I was not able to call the hon. Gentleman. He will have to try on another occasion.

Mr. Dalyell: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Order. I am not hearing it. I have already said that an important debate, on British Shipbuilders, is to follow.

British Shipbuilders

4.2 pm

The Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister of Trade and Industry (Mr. Tony Newton): I beg to move,

That this House notes with approval the progress which has been made towards returning to the private sector the shipbuilding yards and other facilities owned by British Shipbuilders; notes also that, despite every effort, it has not proved possible to establish a viable basis for continued shipbuilding at North East Shipbuilders Ltd.; and warmly welcomes the measures proposed by Her Majesty's Government to encourage new enterprise and employment opportunities on Wearside.

Mr. Speaker: I have selected the amendment in the name of the Leader of the Opposition.

Mr. Newton: I think that it will be most helpful to the House if I open the debate by concentrating on the major issues at not too great a length, in view of the numbers wishing to speak, and then, with the leave of the House, respond at the end to the specific points that hon. Members will no doubt want to raise.

It is important first to say something about the wider background, which is, of course, the difficult condition of the world shipbuilding market over a long period. In particular, in the early 1970s, the worldwide effects of the huge increases in oil prices produced a sharp reduction in shipbuilding demand, at just about the same time as earlier massive investment in Japan and the developing programme of investment in South Korea were bringing about a huge increase in shipbuilding capacity.

The extent of the problem can perhaps best be illustrated by the simple fact that in 1987, even after very considerable reduction of capacity had taken place, less than 10 million compensated gross tonnes of new ships were delivered by an industry whose worldwide building capacity is something like 18 million tonnes. In other words, the industry worldwide had facilities that could build nearly twice as much shipping as anyone was willing to buy. The effects of that have, inevitably and inescapably, been felt throughout the world.

The debate will understandably focus especially on the position in Britain, where employment in merchant shipbuilding fell from 45,200 in 1977 to 11,300 in 1987, a loss of nearly 34,000 jobs. But the context in which that figure has to be viewed is one in which, in the same period, France lost 21,000 jobs out of 30,000, Germany lost more than 26,000 jobs out of 39,000, the Dutch more than 17,000 jobs out of fewer than 21,000, the Swedes more than 15,000 jobs out of fewer than 17,000, and the Norwegians nearly 14,000 jobs out of fewer than 18,000. The Japanese industry lost more than 100,000 jobs from the 1977 base of 164,000.

In the past two years, Sweden has abandoned the production of larger merchant ships, and its two major yards have been converted for other industrial uses. France has carried out a major restructuring, cutting from five significant yards down to one, with more than 5,000 job losses. Germans yards have shed some 6,000 jobs in that period. Japan has completed a major restructuring of its merchant shipbuilding industry, which involves substantial capacity cuts—since 1985, direct and sub-contract employment in Japanese yards has fallen by almost 50,000 people.

Even the Koreans are not immune from the problems presented by low demand for new ships and continuing huge over-capacity. Their single largest yard is currently employing only half the people that it was designed for.

There is no reason to suppose that the problem of overcapacity in shipbuilding is suddenly about to disappear, as had earlier been hoped. I can best illustrate that by referring to the forecasts of the Association of West European Shipbuilders, of which British Shipbuilders is, of course, a member. In 1984, in its last report on this matter until recently, it suggested an average annual building requirement of 12·7 million compensated gross tonnes between 1984 and 1990, and 18·5 million CGT between 1990 and 1995. As the House will realise from the figure I gave earlier about total world capacity in 1987, that would have meant a demand in the first half of the next decade roughly equal to the industry's capacity in 1987.

The latest AWES forecast, in a report published only three months ago, now puts average annual demand between 1990 and 1995 at only 12·5 million compensated gross tonnes, and suggests that even in the second half of the next decade, demand will not recover to the extent previously predicted for the first. Moreover, the Japanese assessment of the likely course of demand is in line with those forecasts. Whatever may be said—we have said it before and will say it again—about the uncertainties of forecasting, I think that the House will agree that there is no basis here for the view that the problem of excess capacity is about to go away, and that all that is needed is to find a way to tide things over until the good times return.

These, then, are the problems with which successive British Governments, like other Governments throughout the world, have been wrestling. The previous Labour Government nationalised the industry in 1977, in the hope and belief that this would provide a good framework within which to conduct the necessary restructuring and create a viable shipbuilding industry. It would be hard for anyone to argue that those hopes have been fulfilled, or show any real signs of being fulfilled. Since vesting day in July 1977, some £2 billion of public money has been put into British Shipbuilders in one form or another, without achieving what we would all wish to see. Indeed, that figure includes losses of £650 million just on building ships, of which only £250 million represents permitted subsidy under the agreed rules of the European Community.

The recent position of NESL itself perhaps illustrates the position most starkly. In the past five years, it has completed no contract to cost, and the total subsidy on shipbuilding contracts has averaged 50 per cent. of the building costs incurred. In the past three years, it lost £100 million through operating losses over and above intervention fund subsidy of a roughly similar amount; and in the last full year for which we have figures, it lost £56 million on a turnover of £69 million.

The present Government—I simply state this as a fact, of which the House is already aware—take the view that the better course, in the light of this experience, is to seek to return the industry to the private sector, subject, where appropriate, to the availability of subsidy within the rules agreed in the Community—the so-called sixth directive.

Mr. A. J. Beith (Berwick-upon-Tweed): As the Minister has criticised so strongly the management of British Shipbuilders for the chain of losses that he has just described, why has he relied so heavily on that management's advice about the viability of the bids now being considered for the Sunderland yards?

Mr. Newton: British Shipbuilders management, as the people who have been running the industry on the Government's behalf, are an appropriate source of advice for us to seek, without our necessarily always and unalterably accepting that advice. The very experience that British Shipbuilders management has had in the difficulties that it has experienced in recent years puts it in a position to judge the difficulties that others are likely to have when they are confronted by what are, frankly, optimistic bids.

Mr. Bob Clay (Sunderland, North): May one drew the conclusion from the answer given by the Minister to the hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed (Mr. Beith) that because, according to the Government, British Shipbuilders could not make a success of the industry, it may have been induced into the position where it finds it difficult to recommend that anyone else can do so? Is not that the logical contradiction and the true position?

Mr. Newton: It is neither a contradiction nor a logical position to adopt. As I said to the hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed (Mr. Beith), British Shipbuilders experience of accepting, on what has turned out to be, at times, a dramatically over-optimistic basis, contracts that have incurred substantial losses or have collapsed disastrously—as happened with the Danish ferry contract—puts it in a good position to make judgments when others come forward with what are, in my view, overoptimistic bids. I have no doubt that the hon. Member for Sunderland, North (Mr. Clay) will make a number of points to which I shall have to respond, should he be fortunate enough, as I hope he will be, to catch your eye, Mr. Speaker.

The naval shipbuilding yards were sold between 1984 and 1986. The process of selling those yards primarily concerned with merchant shipbuilding—or rather, those that were part of British Shipbuilders, since there were already a number of smaller privately owned yards—has been in train since earlier this year, following my predecessor's statement to the House on 18 April. It is that process of selling the merchant shipbuilding yards belonging to British Shipbuilders that has led to today's debate.

Taken as a whole, that process is being carried through with considerable success. As I told the House in my statements of 14 November and 7 December, at the outset British Shipbuilders owned shipyards at Govan, Sunderland, Appledore and Port Glasgow, together with the Clark Kincaid marine engine builders at Greenock and a services subsidiary, Marine Design Consultants, at Dundee and Sunderland.

The Govan yard has been successfully sold to the Norwegian company, Kvaerner Industries. It is making Govan the centre for its gas-carrying ship technology, with a programme of work taking the yard well into the 1990s. Negotiations for the sale of the Appledore yard in Devon are at an advanced stage. It is set to become part of the Langham Industries group—I hope, around the turn of the year. Clark Kincaid at Greenock should similarly be sold shortly to the management buy-out team. I am particularly pleased, that Clark Kincaid will build the engines for the first two gas-carrying ships that Kvaerner is building at Govan.

[Mr. Newton]

Negotiations with Ailsa Perth for the sale of Ferguson have got off to a good start. There is a reasonable chance that the sale will be completed by early February. The terms of all those disposals are now under consideration by the European Commission.

Finally, as the House will recall from my statement on 7 December, I have accepted British Shipbuilders recommendation that the preferred bidder for Marine Design Consultants should be the team led by its managing director. I hope that that sale will be completed early next year.

Five of the six main undertakings owned by BS have either been successfully returned to the private sector or are well on the way to being so. Those five undertakings account for nearly two of every three of the 6,500 people employed by British Shipbuilders when my predecessor made his statement on 18 April.

The exception, which will no doubt be the main focus of attention in this debate for that very reason, is North East Shipbuilders Limited at Sunderland. The House may feel that it is not surprising that it should have proved far and away the most difficult—and in the event, in our view, impossible—to secure its future, given the facts that I have already recounted about its record in recent years, together with the collapse of the Danish ferry order which was originally seen as its life line. That does not alter the fact that it is a major disappointment, and I do not pretend otherwise to the House. However, it was not for want of effort by Ministers, by officials, or by British Shipbuilders itself—whose chairman travelled many thousands of miles following up any possibility offering even a glimmer of a more successful outcome.

Our determination to find a way forward for NESL, if we could, is clear from our willingness to allow successive extensions of time for possibilities to be explored. Interested parties were originally asked whether they could bid by the middle of August. When the response indicated that there was little prospect of satisfactory bids being received on that time scale, a deadline was set for the receipt of bids by the end of September. At a late stage in the evaluation of those bids, when one of the bidders sought to modify his bid, further time was allowed to take account of that. When none of those bids proved to stand up, but nevertheless there was reason to believe that other possibilities might still produce a solution, further time was allowed, until the end of November, to establish whether any of those possibilities could produce proposals that would give a firm basis for detailed negotiation, leading to our overriding requirement of a viable future for the yards.

In the course, of that process there were discussions with more than 15 bidders or possible bidders, including a number of other overseas interests. Unhappily, none of those appearing to offer the best prospects, and in particular the necessary financial backing to overcome the difficulties I described, produced bids or proposals offering a prospect of successful negotiation. Those that produced bids or proposals did not, in the Government's judgment in the light of the advice of BS and of their financial advisers, offer the basis of a viable future for merchant shipbuilding in the Sunderland yards. As I told the House last Wednesday, in our view, none of the latest proposals provided evidence of sufficient financial resources, given the major uncertainties of the shipbuilding market. None gave evidence of sufficient work for the future. All would have involved levels of subsidy which, in one case in particular, could have faced difficulties under the sixth directive.

In reaching that judgment, we took full account of the widely canvassed possibility of a substantial order for general cargo ships for Cuba. On that, two main points must be made. First, as is all too clear from the figures I gave earlier, there is no guarantee that such an order can be secured in the face of the international competition that exists in a situation of considerable over-capacity. Secondly, it is, in our judgment—and I accept that it is a matter of judgment—highly unlikely that those ships can be built at a price that the Cubans will be willing to pay without Sunderland's incurring further losses, even after allowing for the maximum subsidy under the European rules.

Given those doubts, to have accepted a proposal that effectively depended on such an order, especially from a bidder whose financial solidity was itself unacceptable, would have been no service to the people of Sunderland or to anyone else. That is why, reluctantly but firmly, we came to the conclusion that I announced to the House last week. We believe the right course now is to concentrate on building a new industrial future for Sunderland.

I announced last week a package of measures designed to assist those who will be made redundant in the coming weeks from NESL and to promote alternative employment in the town. One of the main elements in the package is the proposed enterprise zone, offering rate relief for 10 years for new developments, a simplified planning regime and 100 per cent. capital allowances on new industrial and commercial development. That enterprise zone will provide a major new incentive to companies to move into the area, as has been the experience with zones in other areas.

The Northern Development Company is already on record as having said that an enterprise zone will significantly improve Sunderland's chances of attracting inward investment. I also announced that English Estates would be providing 220,000 sq ft of high-quality factory space, at a cost of more than £7 million. I should make it clear that I expect English Estates to have provided a substantial amount of factory space by this time next year.

The third main element in the package of measures for Sunderland, which I mentioned last week, is £10 million for the encouragement of new enterprise and employment opportunities. Half of that sum will be devoted to counselling and retraining assistance for the Sunderland work force. It is our intention that no one will have to leave NESL without having had access to the expert advice on new job opportunities that will be provided by the services offered by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Employment. That advice will be offered in one-to-one interviews, with the aim of ensuring that an individual's existing skills are fully assessed in relation to available jobs.

Mr. Roland Boyes (Houghton and Washington): The Minister will recall that, during last week's statement, I asked two basic questions. First, I asked how many jobs had been created to replace jobs lost in the mining industry. Secondly, I asked the Minister to investigate the magnitude of youth unemployment in the borough. I have obtained the most up-to-date figures, which may be of

interest to the Minister. There are 6,035 youngsters who are either unemployed or on a job scheme that has a finite time limit. I asked what vacancies had been notifed to the careers office by employers. The Minister may be interested to know that in Sunderland there are five vacancies, in Houghton there are none and in Washington there are six vacancies. In other words, there are 11 job vacancies for more than 6,000 youngsters without proper jobs.

Mr. Newton: I intended to say something in a moment about the number of jobs being created in Sunderland, and I shall. I shall study further the figures that the hon. Gentleman has just brought into the debate. However, I must make the point that it is well known that the job vacancies notified to jobcentres—I assume that the hon. Gentleman meant jobcentres—represent a substantial understatement of the jobs available in an area. A considerable amount of evidence is available to that effect.

The other half of the £10 million will be used to help new businesses to start up or existing businesses to expand. Obviously, we shall be prepared to look at any type of business that can make a real contribution to the welfare of Sunderland. These measures, which are substantial in themselves—as I said last week, they have a total value over a period of about £45 million—are, of course additional. That point does not seem to have been fully appreciated by Sunderland borough council in some of the comments that it made last week. They are additional to the help that is already available to Sunderland and will build on what is already being achieved there. They are over and above the support—estimated to be something more than £120 million—that the Government are spending this year in Tyne and Wear in general, including Sunderland in particular.

Unemployment has fallen in the area by more than 7,000 in the past two years, and some 1,000 new jobs have been created in Sunderland in the past year, thanks to the combined work of the city action team, the Tyne and Wear development corporation, the Northern Development Company and the local authorities. Sunderland continues to be helped directly by regional assistance made availabie to the north-east by the Department of Trade and Industry, which has created or safeguarded 135,000 jobs in the past decade.

What is particularly striking and encouraging for the future is the success of Sunderland and the north-east generally in attracting investment. It is expected that more than 3,500 new jobs will be created there in the next two to three years by Nissan, Ikeda Bussan, which makes components for Nissan, NEK Cables of Norway and Goldstar Electronics of South Korea. That is a measure of what has already been achieved in the north-east and, not least, in Sunderland, and on which we believe that the measures that were announced last week will build still further.

I said last week that the House would share my regret that it had not proved possible to find a way forward for NESL and that, at least, was clear. The House will also share my view that there is a way forward for Sunderland, which will give it the new opportunities that all of us want to see. It is those new opportunities that we are now determined to achieve.

4.27 pm

Mr. Bryan Gould (Dagenham): I beg to move, to leave out from "That" to the end of the Question and to add instead thereof:

"That this House condemns the decision to close North East Shipbuilders Ltd. and the loss of jobs and damage to the Sunderland economy which the closure will mean; deplores the obsession with dogma which puts privatisation above the securing of orders; and regrets the unnecessary and untimely demise of British merchant shipbuilding."

I propose to waste little time on the Government motion or on the Minister's speech. I hope that the Minister will not take it amiss that he will not find it embarrassing if I say that I felt that his heart was not in it. I believe that he came to his new responsibilities and discovered that he was the prisoner of a policy bequeathed him by his predecessor and which was then foisted on him by the Secretary of State. He has tried hard to escape the trap in which he found himself, but it is unfortunate for all concerned that, in the end, he has not been able to spring that trap.

The right hon. Gentleman has approached his task today—and his task last week as well—with an appropriately heavy heart because he understands that what he has to announce means the destruction of jobs, the destruction of a major British industry and the destruction of hopes for the future of our industrial economy. It is a wanton act of destruction and an outrageous act of industrial vandalism. Like all acts of vandalism, it is all the more sickening because it is so unnecessary.

The parrot cry for so long in respect of the British shipbuilding industry has been that there are no orders to sustain it. The Minister was very fair in acknowledging that that is precisely the problem that the whole of the world shipbuilding industry has faced over a long period. There is not a shipbuilding industry in the world that has survived without subsidy, and substantial subsidy at that. I can simply counsel the Minister and regret that he and his predecessor have so often grossly and unfairly overstated the degree of subsidy on which our own shipbuilding industry has relied. The absence of orders is not the central point today.

There can be no ground for closing down what remains of British merchant shipbuilding with the excuse that there are no orders. The reason for the closure lies in the Government's obsession with dogma and their insistence on putting privatisation before commercial sense and industrial logic. I use the words "obsession with dogma" advisedly because it takes an obsessive and doctrinaire Government to be ready to kill an industry rather than allow it to survive and prosper in the public sector. It is almost as though the shipbuilding industry is being judged on its past, rather than on its present or its future. It is almost as though this industry is being punished for the subsidy that it has received in the past, rather than being rewarded for its efforts and encouraged to take the opportunities that now open up for it.

It is true that the collapse of the Danish ferry order created an immediate and difficult problem, but even there, there is a mystery and a sense that the crisis was not wholly unwelcome to a Government who had already decided to wield the executioner's axe. The contract with Johansen subsists. Every effort to negotiate further possible buyers for those Danish ferries has met with the objection from Johansen that he still has a contract to buy them. No real effort has been made either to keep Johansen to his

[Mr. Bryan Gould]

contract or to declare him to be in default. Consequently, he and the Government, through their paralysis, have allowed the situation to frustrate genuine expressions of interest from about 80 potential buyers. They may not all be serious or to be taken seriously, but there are real expressions of interest in buying the ferries and none of them have been pursued.

We therefore cannot avoid the conclusion that it was convenient for the Government to discover that the collapse, or apparent collapse, of the Danish ferries order had come about at about the time when they had decided to close those yards.

An equally great—perhaps even greater—mystery surrounds the Cuban order. The Minister will accept that the Cuban order for 10 general purpose merchant ships is worth about £110 million. The seriousness of the Cuban interest can hardly be denied, but the Minister's predecessor denied it when my hon. Friend the Member for Sunderland, North (Mr. Clay) and I went to see him earlier this year and when he gave evidence to the Select Committee. The Cubans are serious, and have been serious all along, and the Minister cannot say that the order could not have been secured at a reasonable price, as no negotiations ever took place. The Cubans have merely suggested an opening target price. They have never been permitted to get to the negotiating table to start to negotiate specifications and price.

Even now, at this late stage, the Cubans continue to signal the seriousness of their interest. The No. 2 man at ASIMEX is to visit London in the next few days, and I understand that he is prepared to negotiate a deal under which he would lease one of the yards and take on short-term contract labour for the duration of the build. That would save 900 jobs, and it would keep the yard alive until we could decide whether there was an upturn in world shipping demand. If the offer is to be taken up, however, quick action is required.

I am glad to hear that the Minister is to wind up the debate; perhaps he may even wish to intervene in my speech to answer this question. The Cubans are prepared to defer placing the order elsewhere for at least another month. Is the Minister prepared to enter proper negotiations with the Cubans, and to put up a proper negotiating partner? So far, the Cubans have been unable to negotiate with British Shipbuilders, and a successor has not been put in place with which to take up negotiations.

The matter is urgent because, if the closure of the yards is finally and irreversibly notified to the EEC Commission, intervention fund assistance will be lost for ever. Has that notification yet been made, is it irreversible and is it in any sense a condition of EEC approval of the other disposals of which the Minister spoke? What we need to know—the information that is desperately needed on Wearside—is whether the door has finally been closed, or whether even now it remains open. If it has finally been closed, this debate is a charade: it has come too late and it is a debate that the Government have offered when they have already cut the throat of British merchant shipbuilding.

It appears that the Minister does not propose to intervene, but I hope that he will comment in winding up.

Mr. Newton *indicated assent.*

Mr. Gould: The Minister made some play of the fact that in his view optimistic assessments had been made of the upturn in world shipping. Let me draw attention to some surveys and forecasts that suggest otherwise. A recent survey of world shipping is much more optimistic. It talks of demand rising to 30 million tonnes in the mid-1990s. There are unmistakable signs in the world shipping market—in the price of second-hand ships, in freight and charter charges and in other market indicators—that clearly show that the world upturn has at last arrived. That is why the Cubans are trying to get in early with substantial orders: they know that there will soon be pressure on capacity. That is why it is so ludicrous that the Sunderland yards are to be closed at this moment of all moments.

All independent observers would accept that, on the basis of substantial investment, the Sunderland yards have become the best equipped yards in Europe and the European yards best placed to take advantage of the coming upturn. Huge efforts have been made by the work force, to which I am sure the Minister would wish to pay tribute. The taxpayer has put in huge investment and, as a consequence, the yards are at the leading edge of new technology. Even the Japanese have visited Sunderland to see how it is done. No one can walk away from those yards without a heavy heart at the thought that that impressive capacity is to be lost to our industrial economy. To turn our back on orders and close down the yards is a vote of no confidence in all that has been achieved so far—and, paradoxically, in the very management whom the Government recently installed.

No sensible business man would walk away from a market when it was just about to turn up, or write off huge investment made or skills developed just when all those efforts were on the point of paying off. No sensible Government would abandon their indigenous merchant shipbuilding capacity just when it is becoming clear that the prizes will go to the Governments who have had the courage, commitment and foresight to stick with their shipbuilding industries. What has been the point of making the effort and of keeping faith with the industry if the Government lose their nerve or prefer political to industrial objectives just when it is all likely to pay off at last and when better times are coming? The truth is that we do not have a serious business man or a sensible Government in charge. We have in charge a salesman who sees no value in anything that cannot be sold and who would close down a vital industry rather than have it remain in public ownership.

There is a value in what is being lost. It is a value that is very great to the people whose jobs and communities are affected and to the economy of Britain. Lord Young may not have obtained the price that he wanted, but there is a price to be paid.

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): Is my hon. Friend surprised at the way in which the Secretary of State is acting, given that he is only a jumped-up property developer who is not interested in the backbone of British industry? The Government do not care tuppence about subsidies; they operate a double standard. Farmers, for example, are subsidised out of the taxpayers' pocket to the tune of £13 a week for every family in Britain to ensure that their industry ticks over. The same Government wrote off £4 billion of Rover's debt so that they could hand the

company over to British Aerospace—the company to whose chairman the right hon. Member for Chingford (Mr. Tebbitt) acts as an adviser.

Mr. Gould: My hon. Friend is on a strong point. He confirms my contention that the values of the asset stripper underlie this sorry story. If no one can be found to offer the required price for the assets, they are simply thrown away. The price that Lord Young had put on the assets could not be obtained, but there is a price to be paid. It will be paid by 2,000 people whose jobs will be lost as a direct result and by a further 3,000 whose jobs will be lost as an indirect consequence. It will be paid by the Sunderland economy.

The package that the Minister has announced is no more than a pathetic sop and a salve for a guilty conscience. The price will be paid in the destruction of a 600-year-old tradition and of the pride and identity of the shipbuilding community. It will be paid in the loss of a future for an industry that will matter greatly to our economy and our industrial base. In the end, this country will no longer be a maritime nation. It cannot now build for its own merchant fleet or to preserve, protect and develop its own trade and strategic requirements.

We are a smaller and weaker economy and country as a consequence, blind to our past and, apparently, to the future and its needs. We are the victim of a Government who see no value in our industrial economy, who care nothing and know nothing about our industrial base, who —as they say—know the price of everything but the value of nothing. The consequence is that the British merchant shipbuilding industry is the last and, in many ways, the most lamented in the long list of this Government's victims.

4.40 pm

Mr. Neville Trotter (Tynemouth): This sad day has been long in coming, but it has been envisaged in our debates for some time.

My right hon. Friend the Minister has given a lucid explanation of the international scene and background. Last night I read the Booze Allen report, one of the earliest documents on shipbuilding that I have seen. It came out in 1972, and what it had to say was prophetic. Let me briefly quote its conclusions:

"Despite the growing world demand for shipbuilding the UK will be faced with rapidly increasing competition in the next ten years, as world-wide over-capacity becomes more severe . . . Government support alone cannot ensure a long term market for the industry, nor is technology likely to offer any particular advantage in the UK."

That is exactly what has come to pass. It is little comfort to us that the same has happened in all other western European countries, as my right hon. Friend pointed out.

In 1975 I visited the Swedish shipbuilding industry, which was a new creation. Modern yards had been built from scratch in green field sites. Every one of them has now closed. At that time the Swedes were second only to the Japanese in shipbuilding. I was surprised that a small country like Sweden could have achieved such a position, but it had. The whole industry came and went within about 10 years. The reason has basically been competition from the Far East—cheap labour competition, especially from Korea—which came about at the same time as a tremendous fall in world demand for ships. In 1974 over 200 million tonnes were on order; now the figure is down to 33 million tonnes. Last year, only 16 million tonnes were built. That in itself is almost a halving of the amount built the year before.

My right hon. Friend referred to the vast sum of public money that has gone into the industry in this country. I compute it as about £1 million for every working day that British Shipbuilders has been in existence. If I have a criticism, it relates to whether that taxpayers' money has been spent to best advantage. It does not seem to me to have achieved much. I understand the arguments that supported it at the time, but I cannot help wondering whether we might have obtained better value by using it in different ways.

One way in which we might have used it would have been to help our Merchant Navy more. If we had put more funds into supporting our shipowners, we might now have had a more assured order book for the future. I think that Govan comes best out of the recent dramatic events. It has an assured future by having a shipowner as its owner, which makes a good deal of sense. I had lunch today with a foreign shipowner who owns a yard in his country. He believes, as I do, that that is probably the key to success for western shipbuilding—that there should be a natural market from the yard owner's own fleet. Of course, he can also sell ships to others if circumstances permit.

Mr. Ted Garrett (Wallsend): There is a slight contradiction in the hon. Gentleman's argument. Only this afternoon I heard that more redundancies are to be announced tomorrow at Swan Hunter, whose work force in Tyneside is shared between his constituency and mine. That contradicts the argument that private owners know best what is best for their business.

Mr. Trotter: Swan Hunter lost out on the last frigate order because, as the hon. Gentleman knows, it was considerably undercut by the other frigate builder. I am happy to tell the hon. Gentleman that, when I last talked to Swan Hunter's management, they said that they now thought that they had got their sums wrong and believed that they could have put in a lower bid in the light of what they know now. I am hopeful that, in the next round of frigate orders, Swan Hunter will be successful. Everyone agrees that it is a very technically competent yard. I am sure that the hon. Member for Wallsend (Mr. Garrett) thinks so as well, and hopes, as I do, to see more frigate orders going there in future—which, of course, would lead to more employment in the yard.

When will there be an upturn in the merchant shipbuilding scene? I do not expect one until the second half of the 1990s. The Drewry shipping consultants, in a recent in-depth study, forecast a further decline in western Europe as the industry concentrates in the far east. Sadly, I also believe that that will happen. I do not think that the House fully appreciates the scale of competition from the Far East with which we are faced. The Japanese export some 16 ships every month; we are not able to export 16 in a year, and nor are the other western European countries. The Japanese and Koreans together have over 300 ships on order, a total of 22 million tonnes. My right hon. Friend read out figures for the fall in the labour force in the main traditional shipbuilding countries, but I think that he will find that the Koreans have added some 100,000 men to their labour force at a time when the rest of the world has seen labour forces contract.

[Mr. Trotter]

The various hourly wage rates are quoted in dollars, because that is the currency of international shipping. In the United Kingdom the rate is approximately $9 an hour. In Korea it is approximately $3 an hour. The Koreans also work about twice as many hours a week as western Europeans are expected to work, and of course they do not have the overheads of modern western industral society. In general, Korean yards have the advantage of paying only about a fifth of the labour costs paid by our yards in Sunderland or other Western European countries.

Recent figures show that the cost of building a bulk carrier in a typical European yard would be $21 million, and that the far east price was $12 million. In other words, the prices being fixed by our low-cost competitors in the far east are being fixed at a figure a great deal lower than the cost of building the ship in this country—in some cases, lower than the cost of the parts that go into building it. The 28 per cent. intervention fund has proved wholly inadequate to meet the competition, and the result has been losses that, in Sunderland, have been running at a rate of £1 million a week. That is due to the world price being fixed by yards in the far east whose workers are paid a fifth of the wages that we pay. These are the facts of life for this country and for Holland, Germany, France, Sweden and the other former shipbuilding countries of Europe. Korea has trebled its capacity while the western European industries have been declining. Now Korea and Japan produce four times as many ships as the whole of Europe put together.

We have been forced in desperation to take dubious contracts, with inevitably huge subsidies and heavy losses on top of that. We have been faced with customers who have no money and want 15 years to pay, or go bust like ITM in Sunderland or renege on the contract as the Danes did.

My right hon. Friend the Minister of Trade and Industry shares my deep concern over the decision that has had to be taken for Sunderland. I congratulate him on the package that he has put together to seek to create new jobs for the future in Sunderland. The total sum has been decried and derided as inadequate, but it works out at £20,000 for every man working in the yard. In addition, a significant sum of redundancy pay is being paid into the community. If it is anything like that paid out in previous cutbacks in the shipbuilding industry, it will be about £10,000 to £11,000 per man. In total there is a massive sum going into the community in Sunderland.

We must all seek to put that money to the best possible use to ensure jobs for future generations in the town. It is no good looking back to the past with pride—however much we are entitled to do so. We must look up the river to Nissan and the industries of the future.

As my right hon. Friend said, there has been a significant fall in the number of unemployed in Sunderland. Unemployment is a desperate problem in that town; nobody could say otherwise. However, there has been an encouraging fall of 7,000 in the past two years and 4,000 in the past year. The number of jobs in shipbuilding in Sunderland has already fallen from 7,500 a few years ago, to 2,200 today. That fall of about 5,000 jobs has been dealt with by the creation of new jobs at Nissan and elsewhere. That is what we must continue to do in the three or four years ahead, by means of the various schemes introduced by my right hon. Friend. It is wrong to decry the nature of those schemes or their magnitude.

Yesterday, the Northern Development Company said that the mood was favourable for new jobs and businesses in the north-east. It saw the new enterprise zone in Sunderland as an attractive feature to new businesses coming to set up in the north-east from abroad or from other regions of Britain. We have not yet heard any details about the enterprise agency proposed by my right hon. Friend. I await those details with great interest because that agency will have a very important part to play for future generations in terms of jobs and the creation of a new spirit in the town.

Tyne and Wear chamber of commerce is particularly strong and will be prepared to accept the challenge. One of the features of the past few months has been the tremendous co-operation between all sides in Sunderland in seeking to save the yards. In the years immediately ahead, we must show the same co-operation in seeking to replace them with future employment in modern industries. The proposed schemes will work towards that end. There is a great deal of Government money going into them and there must be co-ordination of the efforts of all those in the region, whether it be the urban development corporation which concentrates on redeveloping the river banks, the Northern Development Company which attracts industry to the region, or English Industrial Estates which is the Government's industrial promotional agency for property and is creating new factories in Sunderland. All those must work together to provide a future for Sunderland based on secure jobs for the long-term future and not what have come to be give-away ships, for there cannot be a sound future for Sunderland based on continuing to build give-away ships.

4.54 pm

Mr. Bob Clay (Sunderland, North): The decision announced last Wednesday has been widely described as industrial vandalism. Those words are not rhetoric; they are accurate and specific. Vandalism is about wanton destruction, and there is no doubt that this destruction is planned, calculated and deliberate. Vandalism is also about unnecessary destruction and I hope to prove that this destruction, if it goes ahead, is wholly unnecessary.

I concur with my hon. Friend the Member for Dagenham (Mr. Gould) that the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster wanted to find a solution. That is shown by the number of postponements of the closure decision. I thank him for that. However, as I have said before, tragically he inherited a course of events set by his predecessor, the right hon. and learned Member for Rushcliffe (Mr. Clarke). In order to avert that course of events, he had to reverse some aspects of Government policy or overcome difficulties within his Department and British Shipbuilders. However, if he really wishes to retain a viable shipbuilding industry on Wearside, there is a chance for him to do so.

On Monday I attended the launch of the last ferry from Southwick. It was a moving occasion; many people felt empty and unable to comprehend the fact that that beautiful ship, built in that magnificent facility, would probably be the last. In Sunderland, the reality that hundreds of years of tradition are coming to an end is still sinking in.

If the workers in the yards and the people of the town felt that we were facing a lack of orders, they could learn to live with the bitterness. If they felt that they had been working in an out-of-date facility which needed massive investment in plant and machinery that could not be provided and that it could not keep up with other yards in the world, it would be easier to bear. If they felt that they were operating in a declining market and that there was no future for the industry, it would have been bitter and difficult to take, but they might have been able to swallow it. However, the opposite is true; that is why people are so angry.

I pay tribute to the managing director of North East Shipbuilders, together with the rest of its management, work force and shop stewards, who have had to live through months of torture. I pay tribute to all the parties on the council, who were all opposed to what the Government were doing. I pay tribute to the people of the town who have been united in their wish to save the yards.

It is worth referring to the compliment that the Prime Minister paid to the quality of the work and the management and work force in the yards less than three years ago when she named the Stena Seawell. She paid a glowing tribute at that time and said:

"We have the skills, the enterprise, the inspiration to do it . . . I hope we'll be able to do a repeat performance by virtue of the tremendous advertisement we can blazon across the world".

She referred to it being a modern ship and mentioned the latest technology. All that has been put on record many times.

It is interesting to refer to a speech made in the House at the time by the right hon. Member for City of Chester (Mr. Morrison), who was then the Minister of State:

"Building ships more efficiently is the key to delivering them on time and to the owners' satisfaction. I have already referred to the fact that my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister named the Stena Seawell last Friday. The delivery of that highly complex vessel on time and in perfect condition speaks volumes for the dedication and effectiveness of the Sunderland management and work force. It is the best kind of advertisement that the industry could have, and it is worth more than any amount of Government support. I am sure that all right hon. and hon. Members will join in applauding that success."—[*Official Report*, 28 April 1986; Vol. 96, c. 683.]

It is remarkable that Ministers were praising the yards at that time and that they are now announcing closures.

As my hon. Friend the Member for Dagenham said, it is all happening because the Government put the dogma of privatisation before commercial necessity. The tragedy is that, unlike any other privatisation, whatever the ideological merits of the argument, the privatisation was stumbled into almost by accident. The right hon. and learned Member for Rushcliffe intended that the yard should close because it had no orders. Then an extremely embarrassing thing happened. There was a possible order from Cuba and that is where the trouble started.

The right hon. and learned Gentleman pretended that he had never had an intervention fund application, even though, as he told the Select Committee, the chairman of British Shipbuilders had written a letter in the normal manner setting out the deal and asking for intervention funds. However, the Minister's predecessor persisted in effectively misleading the House by saying that he had never received such an application. Eventually it became clear that a form should have been filled in but that he had told the chairman not to fill it in, but to write a letter instead.

By then it was clear that there was this order, so the intervention fund application was made. The line then changed. The intervention fund could not be used unless the yard was privatised. The point that was made at the time, and that is still made, is how on earth can we expect to find a buyer for the yard when the yard's forthcoming order book has not been finalised? If the Government had been serious about privatising NESL instead of closing it, they would have encouraged British Shipbuilders by helping it to obtain the Cuban order. Then the Government would have talked about privatisation. By doing it the other way round, the Government sounded NESL's death knell.

The Danish ferries have already been mentioned. I believe that the DTI did not want to solve that problem. It is a peculiar coincidence that this week, within days of the announcement of the closure of the yeard, Mr. Johansen, who originally defaulted on the 24 ferries contract, is about to sign a contract for six ferries from British Shipbuilders, in addition to the two ferries that he has already ordered.

If Mr. Johansen is buying six ferries from British Shipbuilders to settle the deal and get it out of the way, why did he not buy six ferries from British Shipbuilders six months ago? I am becoming increasingly suspicious about it. I remember that the right hon. and learned Member for Rushcliffe announced almost gleefully in this place that there were problems about the Danish ferries contract. Then I found out that in March, six weeks before any public announcement, the Prime Minister had told a Conservative councillor in Sunderland that there was a problem about the contract. Why on earth had the Prime Minister been briefed about that long before anyone in Sunderland knew about it, other than this Conservative councillor? I think that it smells.

As for subsequent events, I hope that the Minister will not deny that the Export Credits Guarantee Department, not British Shipbuilders, could have stopped that contract with Mr. Johansen. He defaulted to the ECGD and the Department could have cross-defaulted the whole contract. If it had done that, either Mr. Johansen would have had to pay up and Sunderland would have continued to build the ferries for him, or he would have been out of it and somebody else could have come in.

We know that some of the inquiries have not been serious, but I understand that there have been sufficient serious inquiries about the ferries since British Shipbuilders cancelled the contract with Mr. Johansen. Nevertheless, every time somebody seriously proposes to buy any ferries, British Shipbuilders is scared off because Mr. Johansen threatens litigation again. The ECGD and the Department of Trade and Industry should have dealt with that. Sunderland would probably still be building ferries instead of facing the problems that it faces now. The Minister's predecessor was quite happy to allow the persecution of British Shipbuilders by that evil man from Denmark to continue so that it would provide an excuse for closing the yard.

Despite the default on the ferries, there was the Cuban order. That was not an obscure order from a small island on the other side of the world with a different political system. In shipping terms, Cuba is a massive nation. It has one of the world's biggest fleets. Its fleet is expanding, and

[Mr. Bob Clay]

23 ships of the existing fleet were built on the north-east coast of England. Why was Cuba so keen to place the order in Sunderland? It has a greater respect for the technical qualities and abilities of that yard than our Government. The Cubans made it clear throughout that they liked the ships and that they wanted more of them. They have bent over backwards to place the order in the north-east.

It must be unprecedented for another country that is trying to place such a large export order in the United Kingdom to be so abused, to have so much misinformation and misrepresentation put around about their intentions and effectively to be spat upon by our Government. There was misinformation about the price that Cuba was prepared to pay. It said that it wanted to negotiate the price. Cuba sent a letter of intent, which it said would be transferred to other bidders. In that letter Cuba said it would negotiate at about £10·9 million per ship. I have heard civil servants and those in high positions in British Shipbuilders say that they would not pay even £2 million less per ship.

When I organised the bids for those yards, I recall informing the chairman of British Shipbuilders that the Cubans were prepared to make a stage payment of 20 per cent. when the contract had been signed. It would have been one of the most generous stage payments ever made. It would have provided the yard with a huge cash flow advantage, with 20 per cent. of the contract up front. I was told, "I just don't believe that. They would not do it. Why should they?" However, on the same day as I was told that, the Cubans' financial adviser at Lloyds bank informed a senior civil servant in the DTI that that was what his customers were prepared to do.

It is quite scandalous that the Minister should say that these bids and the Cuban order have been seriously assessed when so much misinformation went unchallenged. Cuba wanted 10 ships and 10,000 containers. That is £15 million to £20 million-worth of work on top of the ships. Cuba was interested in training Cuban shipyard workers so that they could then return to Cuba and work in the industry in Havana. Cuba thought that it might be possible to send an occasional repair job for Cuba to the River Wear.. It offered to set up a joint marketing company with the yard to sell the yard's products in Africa, the far east, Latin America and other places where they have influence. It also offered a five-year co-operation deal with the yard on marketing and other projects, but we are told that all that is not serious.

I return to the point that was made earlier. Having described the loss of British Shipbuilders and the state that the industry was in, the Minister said:

> "Against that background, it was clear to my predecessor tand to me that a solid future for the yards depended on finding new owners who could run them in a viable way." —[*Official Report*, 7 December 1988; Vol. 143, c. 318.]

If that is their view of how British Shipbuilders has run the industry, it is a little odd that it has been left entirely to British Shipbuilders to judge who would be an appropriate buyer.

As for the bids that were made, in the case of each of the four early bidders there were complaints about their treatment. Regardless of the merits of their bids, all the bidders said that the goalposts were moved, that new conditions were laid down after they had been told what the conditions would be, and that when those conditions were met even more conditions were found about which they had not been told in the first place.

Now that we have run out of time, I must ask the Minister a crucial question. Why was there a relaxed seven-week delay in the summer during the bid process? The bidders were asked to bid by 15 August, but they were then told that their bids need not be placed until 30 September. I have heard it said that the bidders wanted more time, but the four who eventually submitted bids have all told me that they were prepared to bid by 15 August. I know that two of them complained in writing about the deadline having been put back.

Somebody has been guilty of the most appalling incompetence. The entire privatisation process that the Government wanted to pursue was held up for seven weeks. We could have been seven weeks further on. We should then have been seven weeks less away from the end of the year and there would still have been a chance to produce a satisfactory result.

Included among the early bidders was the owner of the West German shipping company, the Egon Oldendorff line. The hon. Member for Tynemouth (Mr. Trotter) referred to the importance of shipowners being involved in the ownership of yards. He was prepared to bring to the consortium an order for six 33,000 tonne bulk carriers. He was on the point of placing that order in Korea. The contract was within days of being signed. He sent a letter, of which I know the DTI is aware, in which he said that he would withdraw that order from the Inchon yard in Korea and place it in Sunderland at a higher price. Perhaps the price was still not good enough, but when big German shipowners make offers such as that it is criminal that bids should be rejected out of hand and that a yard should have to close.

It is interesting that that shipowner said to me later that, if he were to become involved in any other consortium or in any other form of ownership bidding for NESL, he would do so on condition that if his name were mentioned, even in confidence, to either the DTI or British Shipbuilders he would pull out of it. The House will have to make its own judgment about why shipowners and others appear to be so paranoid about their names being mentioned to the DTI and British Shipbuilders. That, though, is how they feel. That is what I have been told. Privatisation is made rather difficult when the people who can be involved and provide takeover backing are nervous about how their names are used. I shall later relate my own experience of that.

When the Chancellor told the House that he would allow a little more time for bids to be put in, I decided, but not out of any commercial interest, to try to put something together. I thought, "No one else is doing it," I knew that the Cubans were interested, but I decided to put in a bid myself. I sent a letter to the chairman of British Shipbuilders which was copied to Lazards and the DTI. In it was the name of Mr. John Hall as a potential substantial investor. The letter clearly said, "In Confidence" but within 24 hours the public relations consultant of British Shipbuilders had leaked his name to at least six journalists to my knowledge. That has been one of the common problems experienced during the privatisation process.

When I asked for some financial information from an NESL director, he understandably said that I had to sign a letter of confidentiality and that I would have to get such a letter from British Shipbuilders' headquarters. I

telephoned BS headquarters and was told, "No, no, no. You get it from Lazards." I telephoned Lazards and was told, "No, no, no. You should get it from British Shipbuilders, but we will send you one anyway to save time." That demonstrates that nobody knew what they were doing or what the rules were right from the start.

On 28 November, I received two letters. One was from Mr. Reg Arnell, board member for finance of British Shipbuilders, refusing for the second time to tell me what the alternative use valuation of NESL was and that he did not see any good reason why a bidder should want to have that information. The other was from David Coates, head of the shipbuilding division of the DTI, saying, among other things, that I ought to understand that BS's recent alternative use valuation for NESL was £9 million to £10 million and that, if I did not bid near that price, the Commission might regard the difference as an operating subsidy and count it against intervention fund on future contracts. Therefore, while BS told me, "We will not tell you—you do not need to know," the DTI was telling me, "You had better know because you will be in trouble if you do not." Brilliant!

When I complained to the chairman of British Shipbuilders about being treated in that way, I was told that he had told me the information personally six months previously, so why was I complaining? I thought it extraordinary that information apparently given in confidence to me as a Member of Parliament might be used later for commercial purposes. As a result of being abused in that way, I do not feel particularly bound by any confidences made subsequently.

On the Friday after the bid was submitted, I received a letter, again from Mr. David Coates, head of the shipbuilding division in the DTI, saying that a key part of my proposal was not acceptable to the European Commission. He had written to me on 21 November saying that it was acceptable. I am quite sure that he said that in good faith. He got it wrong, which is fair enough. However, when I was told two days after I had put in a submission that a key piece of information, which came from the DTI, was wrong, it might have given me a bit more time to sort it out. I was told that a key part of the proposal was not acceptable at 4 pm on Friday afternoon. The following Wednesday, the Minister was in the House announcing a closure.

On the same Friday, I was told by Mr. Lister, the chairman of British Shipbuilders, that the proposal was good, but not good enough. He told me that Lazards had already done an assessment of the financial side of the bid. It was clear to me from what he said that some things had been added up twice. Repeated requests for meetings were made by the consortium but, as was not the case with previous bidders, those requests were refused. Even meetings with the consortium's accountants, financial advisers or solicitors were refused.

The consortium's accountants telephoned Lazards and asked whether it had done the assessment. Lazards said yes. The accountants said, "We would like to talk to you, as we think that there may be some misunderstandings," but Lazards replied, "It is too late. We have already told British Shipbuilders what our conclusions are." That is an absolutely incredible way in which to conduct matters. I do not know how the Minister can say that the issue received serious consideration. We asked for meetings in our original proposal and in our revised proposal, and telephone calls asking for meetings were made.

Finally, on the Tuesday before the Minister came to the House to announce the closure, I spent the morning accompanied by my hon. Friend the Member for Gateshead, East (Ms. Quin). When we talked to Mr. Coates from the DTI about certain aspects of the proposal, he said, "Do you really want to meet British Shipbuilders?" "Of course I do," I said. He arranged it. He told me to be at Knightsbridge at 3.30 pm that afternoon. We finally got a meeting. A careful assessment of the proposal was supposed to have been made. The meeting was at three hours' notice, so it was impossible to bring in any advisers or other members of the consortium. And the Minister says that this has been a serious process.

We were hounded at the meeting about the consortium not having enough financial backing. We were told when the meeting started that Tom Burlison, the regional secretary of the General, Municipal, Boilermakers and Allied Trades Union, had telephoned Mr. Lister before the meeting. Mr. Lister's account of the conversation was that Tom Burlison had telephoned and said that GMBATU might stump up a bit more money. Mr. Lister said that his response was, "Can you write out a cheque for £10 million here and now?"—a pretty facetious question. The response was apparently no.

John Edmonds, the general secretary of the union, was present when Mr. Burlison made the telephone call and confirmed his account of it, which is that Mr. Burlison said, "Give me three weeks and I shall raise the money." We were hounded for three hours about financial backing, when Mr. Lister had just been told that somebody was prepared to raise £10 million in three weeks.

Is the yard really to close because of those three weeks? There was another extraordinary incident at that fatal meeting on Tuesday afternoon. When we were being pressed on equity, it was pointed out that the potential investment by managers at the yard had not been counted. I found it extraordinary that that was the first time that they knew that any managers wanted equity in the yard. In the proposal which we submitted was a letter from Brian Tennant, the production director of NESL, saying quite clearly that managers were being asked to contribute equity. If Mr. Lister and Lazards were unaware of that, they could not even have read the proposal. That is how serious the consideration was.

The meeting got even funnier. When I said, "You know it now. Here is the letter which was in the proposal. The management will offer some equity"—some senior managers support the consortium; it is effectively a management buy-out as well as a work force buy-out—I was told, "That does not make any difference because managers are not allowed to use any of their redundancy money in British Shipbuilders disposals. That is a British Shipbuilders rule." I do not know whether it is a good rule or a bad one, but it is a pity that bidders were not told that in the first place. It is a bit odd that something that goes on in all other management buy-outs turned out not to be allowed here the day before it was announced that the yard is to close.

The whole thing has been an absolute scandal. It is a scandal in the wider sense that 2,000 jobs have been murdered and British merchant shipbuilding has effectively come to an end. It is also a scandal that the process should have been dealt with in such a way. The Minister must say more about the role of the European Commission. We have heard that, if BS makes the work

[Mr. Bob Clay]

force redundant and a new owner re-employs some workers, the redundancies—or some of them—will count as operating aid and against contract aid.

The yard has no work at the moment. That is the Government's responsibility because they delayed the Cuban order. People are being laid off as a result. We are told, however, that lay-off pay counts as operating aid and will be counted against intervention fund and in future. The steel and equipment for the nine ferries have no more than scrap value, but we are told that, if BS allowed a purchaser to take that material and equipment, its full original cost would count against intervention fund. We are told that British Shipbuilders' losses count against a future owner. I suspect that behind the Minister's words, "Haven't I done well? We have done five successfully; it is a pity about NESL," is a reason for British Shipbuilders to wash its face for the other five—Clark Kincaid, Ferguson, Troon, Appledore and MDC. They are closing NESL so that they can have an easy time with the Commission on the other disposals. Whatever the Minister says, I shall never believe anything different.

At the end of the day, whether or not all the rulings or advice from the Commission are true, no formal proposal was ever put to the Commission before the proposal to close the yard. We are entitled to know the cause of death. Doctors have to put reasons on death certificates; they cannot say, "It might have been a bit of cancer, but he did have bronchitis and he broke his leg two years ago".

Was it the European Commission? Did the rules of the sixth directive make it impossible for a new owner to take over? Was it the fact that the yard had no orders? That has been clearly shown to be untrue. Was it the privatisation process itself? Was it Mr. Johansen? Was it all those reasons, or did the Government welcome all those excuses to propose closure because ideologically they no longer wanted to support shipbuilding?

The final tragedy is this. I shall not spend much time on it, but when I look at the £45 million rescue package I ask myself the following question. If a big industry had just closed on the River Wear and an intelligent consultant was brought in to suggest what could be done to restore jobs in the area, he would say, "It is a riverside site. Let us find something appropriate for it. Let us find something which can produce exports because we have a big balance of payments problem. Let us find a growing market, albeit a weak market in recent years, but one that is on the upturn." When they considered all those points, they would probably say, "Let us start shipbuilding on the River Wear. There is a market, it is a riverside site, and there is an order available to start it."

If it were an empty site, the capital investment in machinery and equipment would be too much. It would certainly be too much for the Government. But that is not the case; the stuff is already there. The Government plan to pull it down. People might say that it might take time to get a skilled work force together to specialise in such activities. The work force exists, but it is being sacked. If shipbuilding were not there already, there would be a unique opportunity to start it, but the Government will not do that. Instead, they will close it down, and that is why people feel so outraged. If we had to swallow privatisation, at least it could have been done fairly, not with the idiocy, incompetence and corruption of the way in which it was carried out.

Hoping to end on a more positive note, may I say that, even at this stage, the Cubans, who apparently were not serious and who suffered so much abuse and misrepresentation, are so anxious for their ships to be built in those yards that they have said that they will not place the order anywhere else for another month. They are still hoping that a solution can be found.

The proposal is that at least we could save Southwick, a yard built specifically for volume production of the ships that the Cubans want. At least we could give it two or three years' breathing space. The Cubans could lease the yard from BS, a residuary body, the DTI, the Urban Development Corporation or whomever ended up owning it. Let the Cubans lease the facilities. Let them take whatever intervention fund is available next year after various bits and pieces have been knocked off by the redundancies, British Shipbuilders' operating losses and so on. Let them take whatever intervention fund is available. Let them have the credit terms which were always available and which other member states allow.

The only contribution that the Government have to make is to give decent credit terms to people who the Government have acknowledged always pay on the nail and never default. Let them take the yard and find a shipbuilder—a distinguished shipbuilder is available elsewhere—to manage the contract for them, and let them employ local workers in Sunderland to build that contract. Let them do it at their own risk, so that, if they get only nine ships instead of 10 ships for their money, that is their risk. There is no financial risk to the British Government.

The Government need only say yes and agree credit. It would provide a breathing space and allow us not to have to finalise the debate about whether there are further orders and whether there is an upturn in the market. In the two or three years that the contract is being built, we shall find out. It would keep a foot in the door.

What possible reason can the Government have for refusing that proposition if the Cubans are prepared to agree to it? It suits everyone. There is no problem about transfer of ownership; the Cubans would lease it. There is no question of losses for the Government; it would be done at the Cubans' own risk. If the Minister says, "Yes, we shall give it a try," and immediately withdraws the notification of the closure of Southwick to the Commission—there is to be a meeting in seven days' time and the Commission will need a change of notification well before that meeting—I shall believe that he genuinely wanted to save something and finally had the opportunity to do so.

That proposition meets every objection that the Government have raised to every previous proposal. It meets all the objectives, it retains shipbuilding at no loss to the Government, it saves at least a few hundred jobs for people who wish to remain working in shipbuilding, and it gives us a breathing space to decide what to do in the long term. If the Minister says no to that, he will confirm the notion that, whatever his own feelings, the Government started something several months ago that they would not allow anyone to change—even one of their Cabinet Ministers.

5.26 pm

Miss Emma Nicholson (Torridge and Devon, West): I speak as a Member with shipbuilding responsibilities—Appledore is in my constituency—and family and political links in the north-east. My father was a Member of Parliament for Morpeth and I fought Blyth, as it was then, before the hon. Member for Blyth Valley (Mr. Campbell) took his seat. Further, I was a management consultant with 10 years' hands-on experience in heavy and light industry.

I was intrigued by the lengthy speech of the hon. Member for Sunderland, North (Mr. Clay) pinning his case to the two words, "economic vandalism". He used those words with intensity; he said he meant them and that they were the purpose of his speech. If he really meant them, perhaps he will allow me to examine those two words.

If the phrase means anything at all and is not just two words plucked out of the Oxford dictionary, it must mean the wanton destruction of something that is financially healthy. As a former management consultant, I must say that that means to me a company with full order books, an expanding work force and a bright future, with buyers clamouring for appointments and with the managing director and chairman with their sleeves rolled up, working exceptionally hard and being desperate for time, with the telephone constantly ringing. Alas, the truth is very different from the way in which the hon. Member for Sunderland, North described recent months for NESL. It would appear that it has been dependent on Members of Parliament to make its business appointments. That cannot be right.

In chasing the Cuban rainbow, the hon. Gentleman overlooked the fact that Cuba is a Communist republic where key workers send their children to fee-paying private schools. That is bad news in his terms.

Mr. Clay: Will the hon. Lady give way?

Miss Nicholson: When hon. Members want another to give way, they normally rise to their feet. Therefore, I shall continue.

If the mythical consultant to whom the hon. Gentleman referred went to look at NESL after closure, would he honestly propose such things as the hon. Member for Sunderland, North suggested? Would he honestly say that in a declining shipping market the one thing that we should do for Sunderland is to bring in more shipbuilding? He would not. He would suggest small businesses. He would suggest that the outposts of large and flourishing businesses should be tempted to go there by such things as the Minister has announced—for example, enterprise zones.

Sadly, NESL, which is a fine facility, is not in a niche market. It is in open competition. As my hon. Friend the Member for Tynemouth (Mr. Trotter) said, it competes with shipbuilding yards in countries such as Korea, which pay wages that we would not tolerate. NESL is exposed to open competition in the world market. It has not built the niche that would enable it, in a difficult world market, to pursue its business in such a way as to make it financially viable.

The small Appledore shipyard in my constituency, which will soon be known as Appledore Shipbuilders, provides a good opposite to NESL. It has been able to carve out a niche market in dredgers. I am delighted that, following ministerial help, John Langham of Langham Industries fully expects to complete all the negotiations next week and effectively to take over the yard at the end of the month. He envisages no problems. Everything is geared up—the management is in place and already there is a firm letter of intent relating to a large aggregate dredger, which will provide work for the yard until July 1990.

Because John Langham has been actively marketing and promoting the yard, he has discussed contracts for two further dredgers to be built following completion of the large dredger, or slotting in with its construction. With orders coming in, it is possible to juggle and to get more work. Mr. Langham aims to re-enter the market for small corvettes, or gunboats, which would provide coastal protection for foreign navies in the far east. The yard built minesweepers for the Royal Navy after the war, but the market faded. Private enterprise will probably bring the yard back into that market. Langham Industries is quietly confident that it can turn the company around. Like NESL—indeed, like all British shipbuilding yards—Appledore has been a loss-maker. The proper objective is to make it fully profitable. Langham Industries aims to break even within the next 18 months.

What is the difference between a company that is nationalised and run by the Government—perhaps I should say "run down by successive Governments", because Governments are demonstrably bad at running industry—and one that is private? The difference is motivation. The Opposition talk scathingly about "profit making". What is wrong with profit making? Making a profit means that one can look after not only one's family but a large and expanding work force. It means bringing money into areas and making things happen. It means doing what we all want to do—raising the economic level and increasing people's happiness. The key is to get our shipbuilding companies into the hard commercial world in which we must all live. We cannot seek Cuban rainbows or live in Alice Through the Looking Glass worlds.

Shipbuilding is still bumping along with the barnacles scraping the bottom. There has been only a marginal improvement. No one knows whether the improvement is sustainable. It is folly to pretend that a marvellous world is around the corner. That chimera has floated further and further away over the many months of the continuing debate on the privatisation of British shipbuilding. There is a long way to go in the shipbuilding market. We must learn to live off what is available.

How does the sale of Appledore, a small but crucial yard, compare with NESL's failure? Private industry saw NESL as unviable, even at a rock-bottom price. It was given subsidies of many millions of pounds a year. The yard lost more than £100 million over three years, with £66 million lost last year alone to keep 2,000 jobs going. Can that be logical and proper?

The loss of those 2,000 jobs is a minor run down compared with the massive run-down under the last Labour Government. Between 1974 and 1979, about 10,000 jobs were lost. Is that not the death sentence—pronounced then and not today—to which the hon. Member for Sunderland, North referred? The hon. Gentleman has now disappeared from the Chamber. Those 2,000 jobs lost are little enough compared with the haemorrhage earlier.

It was a shame that the Labour Government closed the last ship repair yard on the Wear, Greenwell. I understand

[Miss Nicholson]

that the area may return to ship repair work, rather than shipbuilding. I am glad that Sunderland's economic base, as in so many depressed areas, is now much sounder than it was under Labour, when large losses were suffered. Perhaps due to the general upturn in the economy under the Conservative Government, it will now be easier to find jobs for those 2,000 people.

Ms. Joyce Quin (Gateshead, East): Surely the hon. Lady accepts that, under the Conservative Government, the losses in shipyards in Tyne and Wear have been far greater than in any other period. The losses under Labour about which she talks simply do not compare with the huge haemorrhage and losses experienced since 1979.

Miss Nicholson: Because of the better economic conditions under the Conservative Government, it will be much easier to find work for those people who are now losing their jobs. The yards suffered much more under Labour, just as pit after pit was closed in Durham under Labour. My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister helped a tremendous amount in trying to find orders for the yards.

The hon. Member for Dagenham (Mr. Gould) described the closure of NESL as a destruction of jobs, major industry and hopes for the future. He was totally wrong. It marks the creation of jobs which will last in industries which are for the future. It marks the creation of small and large industries which will give young people a viable future. It marks the creation of hope, which will help the area much more than continued propping up of an industry which, alas, is past its best. It is not a matter of dogma on privatisation or, as the hon. Member for Dagenham said, putting privatisation dogma before commercial sense and profitability. On the contrary, we are putting commercial sense and profitability before the dogma of nationalisation.

5.37 pm

Mr. Ted Leadbitter (Hartlepool): During the past three decades, there has been bloodletting in the shipbuilding industry that cannot be matched in by any other industry in the land. During the 1950s, our shipbuilding industry was the largest in the world. In 1985, we were promised, in a statement by the Minister for Trade, that our 1·25 per cent. share of the world market would be increased. But there has been a dramatic decline in the industry. We do not hear such words today. The labour force has decreased from 85,000 to between 45,000 and 40,000.

The Government have been tricky again. The Opposition demanded a debate on the Sunderland closure, but the motion is about British shipbuilding and the successes of privatisation. It says that some parts of the industry are not viable, and that is the end of that. The motion does not deal specifically with the subject about which we talked last week. I challenge the Minister about the calculation behind the Government's statement. I have made it clear that it was convenient that the Prime Minister had returned from Gdansk in Poland, where there is a shipbuilding yard.

My hon. Friend the Member for Sunderland, North (Mr. Clay) has given us a remarkable account of the to-ings and fro-ings and the misinterpretations, confusions, contradictions and political nepotism. However, if the Prime Minister had intended to keep the Sunderland yard open, she would have gone to Poland and said to our Polish friends, "In Britain, we have done what you want here in Gdansk," but the decision was already made. She must have known then that she did not intend to save the Sunderland yard.

The Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster has a remarkable reputation for understanding the issues with which he deals, but he is not master in his own house. It is sometimes embarrassing to be a parrot for the man in the other place, the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry. The Chancellor has had an unpleasant task which he did not deserve and I absolve him from responsibility for the decision that has been made.

On the other hand, as the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster is a good Member of the House, he might have felt a little upset. He might have said, "I don't like what's going on here. I'll resign." Last week's statement contained no feeling at all for the kind of Christmas card that has been sent to the Sunderland workers.

The hon. Member for Tynemouth (Mr. Trotter) talks glibly, as I have known him talk for many years. He said that he had a chat with the chairman of the Northern Development Company, who apparently said that things were looking buoyant and that jobs were coming up. However, if we start off from a low level of economic activity and there is an upward trend, it is easy to feel buoyant.

I come from a part of the world not far from that of the hon. Member for Tynemouth, but I am an expert on closures. If a shipyard worker, instead of the hon. Gentleman, had gone to see the chairman of the Northern Development Company to ask him about the economy in the northern region and the chairman had replied that things were buoyant, what would the shipyard worker do when he and 2,000 or more of his colleagues lost their jobs?

We have not yet mentioned the multiplier effect. The service and supply industries will also be affected so, in all, about 5,000 jobs will be lost, although, if I am conservative, perhaps I should say 4,500 jobs will be lost in all. It would not please that shipyard worker for the chairman to talk about buoyancy if his skills, pride, hopes and aspirations for his family are suddenly shattered. In any case, the poor guy can live, even when he is in work, only by obtaining a little credit to help him over Christmas.

In 1962, my constituency lost a shipyard. I am an expert in industrial closures in a town of 90,000 people, where only about 30,000 have jobs. In 1962, we lost 5,000 jobs and, in the following 15 years, we lost almost 20,000. I know what it means and I am heartily sick and tired, after 25 years in this place, of listening to the same glib chat with Conservative Members saying, "We'll mend it. We'll put it right. Let's have a task force." What will we do with a task force? We simply bring in civil servants, give them a job and call it a task force.

We are good at cosmetics in this country. What has happened in Sunderland reminds me vividly of what happened all those years ago. It takes a long time to put matters in order when the economy is breached in this way. We have had a post mortem here today. My hon. Friend the Member for Sunderland, North said that there would be a month's breathing space and a kind offer. I thought that, although we had had a post mortem, there would be no need for a requiem mass, but we might as well have a requiem mass. Nothing has come out of the House today apart from a factual account of the position and some

palliatives from a few Conservative Members who feel good because the Secretary of State has offered £45 million to create new job opportunities. The hon. Member for Tynemouth should know better.

We have been shifting regional policies year after year, until many of our people are immune to those palliatives. It is time that politicians did something to find out how people really feel, instead of talking to the chairmen of development corporations, good as they are, and feeling satisfied because the economic indicators are looking a little better. We should put ourselves in the position of a shipyard worker listening to the director of a development company saying that the economy is becoming buoyant. That is not true in this case.

This might have been a useful debate, but, unfortunately, it will achieve nothing. However, I hope that there will be sufficient press coverage to show that the Government have once again done a spot of professional cheating.

5.47 pm

Mr. Phillip Oppenheim (Amber Valley): Almost everyone must have a great deal of sympathy for the people of Sunderland because of the number of jobs that they will lose. *[Interruption.]* It is all very well for Opposition Members to sneer at that, but no Conservative Members takes any comfort or pleasure from the fact that jobs will be lost, although we are not so blinkered as to claim that those jobs have been lost as a result of Government actions or policies.

Opposition Members have accused us of murdering Sunderland and the yard. In truth, the yard was murdered many years ago. It is worth looking briefly at the history of shipbuilding to put the matter in perspective and to learn some lessons for the future. We began shipbuilding in Britain with many natural advantages—abundant rivers and estuaries, demand from the largest merchant marine in the world, resources of iron and steel and, many years ago, the finest engineering industry in the world.

However, as long ago as the late 19th century, virtually no new shipbuilding capacity was laid in, and by the turn of the century our shipyards had already become unsuitable for the larger steel ships that were being built. By the beginning of the first world war, our yards were already far less modern than those of the United States and Germany. In addition, they were riddled with labour problems. In 1914, at the outbreak of the first world war, there were no fewer than 90 demarcated skills in British yards. In writing about the time, one historian stated:

"The engineers quarrelled with the boilermakers, shipwrights and joiners, brassworkers and tinplate workers; the boilermakers with the shipwrights, smiths, chippers and drillers; the shipwrights with the caulkers, boat and barge builders, mast and blockmakers, and joiners and the joiners with the mill-sawyers, patternmakers, cabinet makers, upholsterers and French polishers. On the Tyne there was an average of one major strike per month over questions of demarcation".

That was the position at the turn of the century.

Apart from labour problems, we were falling behind in education and skills. In 1907, Britain had one full-time student of naval architecture per 16,000 tonnes of ship produced. In Germany, there was one per 100 tonnes. It is no surprise that our share of world tonnage shrunk from 60 per cent. in 1913 to just over 30 per cent. by the outbreak of world war two. The labour situation had not improved one jot by the outbreak of the second world war. Even Ernest Bevin noted in a letter in 1942

"how difficult and backward the shipbuilding industry has been from a labour point of view . . . Everything that has been done has almost had to be forced upon them."

Even under the threat of Hitler, the Amalgamated Engineering Union and the Boilermakers Society refused to allow men of the National Union of Railwaymen—the electricians trade union similarly prevented non-union electricians—to work in yards to remedy skill shortages. There were numerous inter-union demarcation strikes during the second world war, but union attitudes alone were not to be blamed. There was a legacy of bitterness, poor management and poor education, and these factors were also partly to blame.

Attitudes that were ingrained over many years made investment in the yards harder to secure, and the shipbuilding industry has suffered ever since from a lack of investment. It is one of the many factors that allowed far eastern competition to overtake us in the 1950s. Even during the second world war, the Germans were using 20-tonne cranes, whereas in our yards the norm was a 3 to 5 tonner. When one-man pneumatic riveting was introduced in the early 1940s, the unions insisted on a riveter's mate being put by every riveter. The mate just stood and watched the job being done.

Since the breathing space after the war, when every other country's shipbuilding industry was flat on its back, there has been further, continual and sorry decline. By 1954, German ship exports had passed the United Kingdom total. A year later, the Japanese had overtaken us. In the 1980s, conditions are harder than ever before. Even the Japanese, with all their efficiency, management, fine education and natural advantages, are now beginning to lay men off and to close yards. The huge Mitsubishi yards at Nagasaki are now only partially operational. Even the South Koreans, with their advantages of cheap labour and discipline, have severe problems in the shipbuilding industry.

The answer to the problem is not to keep pouring money into an industry which, sadly, was overtaken many decades ago. We cannot make a living on past glory. The more money that we put into declining and unprofitable industries, the more jobs we cause to be lost elsewhere in our economy. There is no future in that.

It is nonsense for Opposition spokesmen to talk of the Government's lack of concern about the nation's indutrial base. It is worth reminding them that, when the Labour Government were in office, shipyards were closed and many jobs were lost in the shipyards and ship repair yards. Indeed, during that period our manufacturing output shrunk, whereas under the present Government manufacturing output has risen. It has done so extremely rapidly since the trough of world recession in 1981.

If we are to have an industrial policy, we must examine what the Japanese have done, so that we understand why they have succeeded. Over the past 50 years, the Japanese have had a consistent policy of allowing old and relatively low-tech, labour-intensive, low added-value industries to decline. They have not attempted to subsidise them. Instead they have invested in productive capacity in newer and higher added-value industries. They have left the older and more labour-intensive industries to countries that are best able to cope with them, such as South Korea and China.

[Mr. Phillip Oppenheim]

That is what we must do. We must not keep old and dying industries alive, however painful it might be to do otherwise. We must concentrate our investment on newer, less labour-intensive and higher value-added industries. That is what we must do to help the people of Sunderland. It may have been the short-term political option to keep the yards open. It may have appeared kind, and it would have been the easier decision to make. I believe, however, that it would have been a disastrous decision in the long term for the region and for the national economy.

5.56 pm

Mr. Chris Mullin (Sunderland, South): I share the widespread view that the decision to close the yards was made some months ago, and that since then nothing has been allowed to get in its way. I believe that it was taken before the Minister took office. I recall an article that appeared in *The Guardian* during March—I think that it was the front page lead—that quoted apparently well-informed sources as saying categorically that the Government proposed to wind up British Shipbuilders.

I join my hon. Friend the Member for Sunderland, North (Mr. Clay) in paying tribute to those who have participated in the campaign over the past eight months to keep the yards open, especially the people of Sunderland. They have been supported by the Sunderland borough council, people of all political opinions and the work force. The shop stewards and others have led a magnificent campaign. I pay tribute to my hon. Friend the Member for Sunderland, North, who has been outstanding. His speech reflected his inspirational leadership on this issue.

When the Minister replies, I hope that he will respond seriously to the proposal of my hon. Friend the Member for Sunderland, North that at least one part of North East Shipbuilders Ltd. should be saved. I understand that the Cubans are returning next week and one must admire the persistence and generosity of their approach. After all the rebuffs, they are still interested in placing orders with NESL, or what remains of it. I hope that the Minister will assure us that any proposals that the Cubans have to make will be taken much more seriously than the ones that have so far been put before the Government.

It has been said that Cuba is a Communist country. I do not know what that has to do with the matter. I should like to know the terms of the order from the Chinese that was received at Govan for the COSCO ships, such as the length of credit and the interest rates. It would be interesting to match the terms of that order with what may be offered in reponse to a Cuban order.

The upturn in shipping has been referred to with various degrees of scepticism by Ministers over a long period. We need look no further than today's *Lloyd's List*, a newspaper which must be taken to know something about the shipbuilding industry. The first sentence of the leading article reads:

"With new building prices hardening and secondhand prices for most types of ship escalating appreciably, there is real confidence that the ship, at long last, is set to acquire something of a scarcity value which it has not enjoyed for 15 years."

Those at *Lloyd's List* probably know a great deal more than those at the Department of Trade and Industry about the future of the industry.

I would not like the House, including Ministers, to be under the illusion that indignation at what has been done to Sunderland is confined merely to the Government's political opponents. Last week, after the ministerial announcement that NESL would be closed, the leader of the Conservative group on Sunderland borough council said:

"They have done at a stroke what the Germans for six years tried to do. It is industrial sabotage."

He added:

"I think the decision was taken nine months ago by Lord Young."

I should also like to quote from the *Sunderland Echo*, the owners of which gave £2,500 to the Conservative party last year and, therefore, must be considered to be reasonably impartial on this issue. The *Sunderland Echo* described the Minister's statement last week as

"misguided, short-sighted and cruel . . . A self-inflicted and disabling wound to a maritime country which has deliberately enfeebled a strategic industry."

I do not know whether the owners of the *Sunderland Echo* will make a donation to the Conservative party next year, but I pay tribute to their support for the campaign to save the shipyard.

I want the Minister also to understand the reason for the great anger that the decision has generated. The anger is not irrational, contrived or founded solely on the basis of emotion. The shipyard workers of Sunderland are not daft. They know as well as anyone that if there is no work, yards will have to close. However, as has already been made clear, there was and there is work. Reference has been made repeatedly to the Cuban order, which is worth around £110 million. I acknowledge again the extraordinary patience of the Cubans, who must be, as I am, bewildered by the fact that, in a world where shipyards are crying out for orders, they cannot find anyone to take their very large order seriously. That order is one of the largest on offer anywhere in the world.

The past eight months have been wasted looking for an owner for North East Shipbuilders. That time should have been spent looking for orders. Orders are available, and other western European yards have obtained them. Last April, a large order for a passenger ship worth $150 million was placed at a West German yard. In July and August, orders for tankers and chemical carriers were placed with Spanish yards and, recently, a large order was placed for Soviet cargo ships. I checked with the Department of Education and Science this afternoon and I understand that the Department has invited tenders for an Antarctic survey ship. Why could not that ship be built in Sunderland? That order is within the gift of the Government.

Hon. Members have already compared this privatisation with others. It has become normal for the victim of privatisation to be fattened up through various price increases, as we have seen with electricity, water and other major privatisations. At no stage in their programme of privatisation did the Government choose a moment to put an industry on the market when its fortunes were at the absolute lowest point. However, that happened with North-East Shipbuilders.

Lloyd's List remarked on an alternative only last week:

"The United Kingdom Government could at least have admitted that the shipbuilding industry was looking rather better in the medium term and financed the Cuban order to tide the yard over until rather more commercial orders came along.

It could have given the yard another couple of years in the public sector, with the knowledge that the security this would provide could have encouraged work, for assuredly no owner"—

this is surely the key point—

"is going to place an order in a yard which is under threat of immediate closure."

The background against which this disaster has been inflicted on Sunderland is that our merchant fleet is being allowed to disappear in the face of repeated warnings from every responsible source, including the Select Committees on Defence and on Transport, within the past year. The United Kingdom fleet in 1980 contained 1,275 ships or 42·3 million tonnes and, by 1986, the latest year for which I have seen figures, the fleet was down to 545 ships or 11·2 million tonnes. The percentage of world tonnage under the British flag in 1980 was 6·4 per cent. It is now down to 1·8 per cent. Half the fleet that sailed to the Falklands now sails under foreign flags. The Select Committee on Transport stated that our ships are older and more in need of replacement than those of our chief rivals.

The problem is wider than just the future of British shipbuilders or North East Shipbuilders. The problem is that the Government have no maritime policy. We are an island nation, dependent for our survival on trade, but we cannot own or build our own ships. Surely it is not beyond the wit of Government to devise a policy, even at this late stage, to salvage what remains of our capacity.

I want to quote, not from an Opposition Member, but from a former Conservative Member, Sir Edward du Cann. Two years ago, in a debate on the future of the shipbuilding industry he said——

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Industry (Mr. Robert Atkins): We have heard it before.

Mr. Mullin: Yes, I know that the Minister has heard it before, but it is rather apposite. Sir Edward du Cann was right. He said:

"During my time in the House I have watched the decline of many manufacturing industries and the extinction of others —motorcycles, television, radio, optical instruments, motor cars and so on. Too many have declined and too many have gone. We choose fancy words to describe the process—and rationalisation is one. To me, it has been a history of industrial disaster . . . Future generations will never forgive us if we do not say that this process of attrition in British manufacturing industry has gone far enough. It is time to cry halt."—[*Official Report*, 21 May 1986; Vol. 898, c. 422.]

That is what Sir Edward du Cann said about shipbuilding two years ago. How right he was.

In his aid package announced last week for Sunderland, the Minister offered £45 million over 10 years or so. That money would have been better spent subsidising a new order. That would have cost less and preserved, or created, more jobs. I also invite the Minister to compare the £45 million on offer with the £155 million that has been taken away from Sunderland over the past decade in lost rate support grant. That is equivalent to virtually the total budget of Sunderland for one year. That is not a source of amusement, although the Minister may find it so.

This is a disaster for Sunderland, because it takes place in a town that already has some of the highest unemployment in the country. In Sunderland, there are whole streets where virtually no one is working and where a generation of children are growing up who may never work. Some of those made redundant last week have been made redundant three or four times, working their way down the river as each enterprise folds beneath them.

The Minister has before him the last of many positive proposals from my hon. Friend the Member for Sunderland, North. What will the Minister do about it? Will he take that proposal a lot more seriously than the others that we have heard about tonight? I hope that the Minister will rise to the occasion.

6.8 pm

Mr. James Cran (Beverley): Today's debate has an air of inevitability about it. I was the Confederation of British Industry's northern director in 1979. I was based in Newcastle upon Tyne, and I knew Sunderland extremely well. I was also familiar with the shipyards that we have been discussing this afternoon. I remember members of the work force, the management, people living in Sunderland and in Newcastle and Jarrow asking me, in view of the level of public funds going to shipbuilding support, how long their companies and jobs could survive. There was a level of understanding at the time of the problems facing shipbuilding. It is therefore by no manner or means a new phenomen and no hon. Member could say that the Government had not, with a vengeance, supported the industry. Indeed, some of us believe that the Government have persisted for too long in supporting the industry.

The chairman of British Shipbuilders appeared before the Trade and Industry Select Committee—of which I am a member—in June 1988, and more or less said that, just because the Koreans had lost £2·3 billion in building ships and grabbed a 17 per cent. share of the world market, perforce this country and every other country should follow suit. I thought that an extraordinary argument at the time, and the more that I have thought about it, the more ludicrous it has become. For each country to outdo other countries in providing even larger subsidies and making even larger losses is a bankrupt policy. It is a fool's paradise to suggest that losses within an industrial company or organisation guarantee jobs at the end of the day. They do not. That was understood by the people of the north-east in 1979, and I suspect that it is understood there today.

When the chairman of British Shipbuilders appeared before the Select Committee, I was intrigued by the question whether British Shipbuilders could ever become profitable. One would have thought that the answer would be that it could do so. Other hon. Members have already said that seaborne trade is at a 10-year high and that the second-hand ship market has virtually disappeared, which indubitably gives opportunities to British Shipbuilders. However, the chairman's answer was:

"I believe five or six years down the line we could almost get to break-even or break-even itself subject to the market improving."

In effect, he was saying that we would have to wait until 1994 for the organisation to break even.

I remind the House that this would coincide with demand being at its highest, since demand is rising. Therefore, if the organisation can break even only when demand is at its highest, the fact that it is a cyclical industry makes it difficult to imagine what will happen after 1994 if demand turned down. It is absurd to ask the taxpayer to continue to bear that sort of burden—£2 billion since 1979. I strongly believe that that £2 billion could have been infinitely more wisely spent, not only for the benefit of the people of Sunderland, but for people in other areas.

[Mr. James Cran]

My constituency is home to a shipbuilding firm, Dunstons of Hessle, which has never received a penny piece of public funds. Yet it is supposed to operate in world markets, it is supposed to win orders, it is supposed to pay weekly salaries to its work force. I can say with some pride that that is exactly what it is doing, and British Shipbuilders should have done the same.

Mr. John Redwood (Wokingham): Does my hon. Friend agree that on many occasions during the past 12 years the shipbuilding industry has forecast an improvement in demand and a reduction in losses, but that often those forecasts have not come true? Should we give any more credence to the current forecast of those two events happening?

Mr. Cran: I could not agree more with my hon. Friend, because that is exactly what has happened in that cyclical industry. Indeed, when upturns did occur, the then management of British Shipbuilders could not take advantage of them because its overheads were far higher than those of most of its competitors. I concede that the current chairman is attempting to deal with that position but, alas, it may be too late. I see that you are looking at me, Madam Deputy Speaker, and I wonder whether you want——

Madam Deputy Speaker (Miss Betty Boothroyd): Order. I am listening to what the hon. Gentleman has to say.

Mr. Cran: I am delighted to hear that, Madam Deputy Speaker. British shipbuilding, in contradistinction to British Shipbuilders, certainly has a future. The United Kingdom should take a certain amount of pride—I certainly do—in the fact that we are in the lead in the restructuring of shipbuilding—*[Laughter.]* Opposition Members may laugh, but the chairman of British Shipbuilders told the Select Committee:

"The Koreans have recognised they bought a 17 per cent. world market share by selling below cost and they have now turned their attention to other industries . . . they are not interested in subsidising shipbuilding to the extent they have in the past."

The penny has at long last dropped in Korea, just as it has dropped in this country. The resources that we pour into British Shipbuilders could be far better spent in rejuvenating the economies of the regions. I am not prepared to take any lessons from Opposition Members about the need for vibrant regional economies in the United Kingdom. I have operated in the regions all my life and there was not one that I did not wish to leave in better condition than I found it. I am sure that that would be true of every hon. Member. It is instructive to study the figures for economic growth in the regions, because almost every index shows that the northern regions are doing rather better than the southern regions. There is no reason why that should not continue in the north-east, just as it is in Yorkshire and Humberside.

I realise that Opposition Members do not want to hear literate and economic truths, so they will not welcome my next remarks. The Government are taking three steps that will help the economy of the northern region. First, the Chancellor of the Duchy announced a £43 million package last week, and I pay tribute to him for that. I have taken the trouble to speak to my contacts in the north-east because I did not think it right to speak from hearsay.

In contradistinction to what has been said by some Opposition Members, that package is very much welcomed in the north-east. It recognises the fact that the Government were not prepared to pull the rug from under the north-east and not offer some hope of future economic growth. The Government should be applauded for that. *[Interruption.]* I have been here throughout the debate, and Opposition Members must listen to what I have to say.

Secondly, I did not hear any Opposition Member mention the Northern Development Company, the body that encourages inward investment. It now receives greater resources than almost any other such body in the English regions. It certainly receives more Government money than my region of Yorkshire and Humberside. I make no complaint about that, because it merits that support in present circumstances. That company is respected by all the other inward investment bodies for its level of success.

The third matter that the Opposition clearly do no want to hear, but will, relates to the Tyne and Wear development corporation. I do not hear much from them on that subject. I wonder how many other hon. Members took the trouble to consult a document that it has produced called, "Forward to 1991". Clearly, not many.

That document is extremely bullish about the future of the north-east, particularly Sunderland. I have three encouraging quotations to give the House. The first states:

"We discovered that the area already has a sound economic base"—

the corporation says that, not me or the Government—

"with a skilled and adaptable workforce."

Those are exactly the ingredients that will produce the sort of economic success that the north-east and Sunderland in particular need.

Secondly, the document states:

"it became clear to us that people do have confidence in the area."

It appears that inward investors have confidence in that region, but Opposition Members have shown precious little confidence and they should be thoroughly ashamed. If I were to speak about my region I would speak with pride and confidence.

I realise that Opposition Members are growing impatient, but the third quote states:

"The result of our appraisal is a far more positive picture than we'd expected. And while clearly there are problem areas these are on a limited scale."

There is an inevitability about the debate, but no inevitability that Sunderland need decline in any way, shape or form. If in 10 years' time the figures for any index of economic development in Sunderland are not better than in the past 10 years, I shall regard that as a failure. I do not expect it to happen.

6.21 pm

Mr. A. J. Beith (Berwick-upon-Tweed): We have had some offensive and patronising comments from Conservative Members. They are patronising towards the north-east, local authorities, trade unions and those who have been involved in the creation of the Northern Development Company. They are patronising to the shipbuilding industry, which has had to face all the turmoil of change and was busily re-equipping itself when this blow hit it, to those in all parties and sections of the

community who have campaigned for Sunderland and its shipyard, and to the hon. Member for Sunderland, North (Mr. Clay) who made such an effective case. I had hoped to see him become a capitalist entrepreneur. That would have had a nice political irony to it. I genuinely wished him success in his bid. The fact that he was prepared to undertake that venture showed that everybody on all sides of the political spectrum set aside their general political views to see what could be done for Sunderland shipyards —everybody, that is, except the Government, who could have set aside some of their political preconceptions.

My great anxiety is that the whole affair has been bungled. It is a sign of Government bungling that there could still be the prospect of realistic progress with the Cuban order, given the possibility of substantial container work alongside shipbuilding work, which would have made use of the Pallion yard in Sunderland as well as shipbuilding yards. When Conservative Members talk about the sums that would have been involved—I presume they are thinking of the intervention fund help for that order—they seem to forget the Government's readiness to offer a substantially larger amount to Mr. Tikkoo for an order to go to the Harland and Wolff yard in Belfast, and in the end that did not work out. We did not hear the same complaints from them then.

We are entitled to ask what is happening on the ferries order. How is it that ferries could be sold to Mr. Johansen, as we believe they have, when that deal could not be completed in preceding months and when no Government action could deal with Mr. Johansen's default? Why do the Government not, at least for the next two years, secure a future for the sites? Given the strategic importance of shipbuilding, it seems absurd for these sites to fall into complete disrepair just when it is recognised that there could be a significant upturn in shipbuilding. Yesterday I listened to Conservative Members explaining that there were strategic reasons for intervening in the market. They were talking about nuclear power. But all of a sudden those arguments are of no consequence because we are talking about merchant shipping and shipbuilding. Today, strategic reasons cannot be allowed to interfere with the operation of the market, according to them.

What has the Minister said to the European Community about the Sunderland yard? Has he taken action to ensure that we do not permanently lose the right to build ships and have intervention funding in Sunderland? As he well knows, that could be the effect. We are entitled to know what he has said to the European Community.

The Minister talks about the success of privatising the rest of British Shipbuilders, but there will not be unbridled enthusiasm in all parts of Sunderland or Dundee at the acceptance of the managing director's bid for Marine Design Consultants. One can only hope that that bid will be successful, but it is viewed with apprehension by many who work for the enterprise in Sunderland and by those engaged in Dundee.

The recovery package which the Government have offered will not be enough, even when set beside the splendid self-help efforts in which the Sunderland people are engaged, including the Wearside opportunity initiative. My right hon. and hon. Friends and I have warmly welcomed Nissan to the Sunderland area and believe that it has been a beneficial enterprise for British industry in general because of the example that it can set British industry. But it would take three Nissans and a great deal of public funding to make up the shortfall in Sunderland's employment problems. It would take three whole Nissans to solve the problems to which the closure of this shipyard has added so hugely.

Sunderland is a handsome, lively town which has united with great spirit in the fight for the shipyards. That spirit has not been recognised by the Government. They owe Sunderland a tremendous debt. The first way to discharge that debt is to seek, even now, a continued future for some shipbuilding in Sunderland; the second is to offer far more to Sunderland's future than they have done so far.

6.27 pm

Mr. Julian Brazier (Canterbury): I am sorry to have missed the bulk of this debate, but I was engaged elsewhere. Many of those present came to the successful parliamentary maritime group session with my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster, and I should like to return to many of the points that I know have been raised. I firmly believe that the Government have made the right decision on Sunderland but that nevertheless they must look carefully at their future policy on shipyards and shipping.

I used to work for a company which had more than 50 shipyards worldwide in its client base. I visited several of them, and one where I worked was Swan Hunter shipbuilders in the north-east. The reasons why the shipyards' customers, the shipping companies, have turned down so much do not relate to anything temporary that will disappear overnight or in the next few years, although there may seem to be a glimmer of light on the horizon. In a world of oil pipelines, fewer oil tankers are needed. In a world of containerisation, there are not vast numbers of ships tied up loading and unloading for long periods. The sad fact is that, around the world, there are mothballed and semi-mothballed yards, which will come straight back on stream as soon as the first sign of an upturn is seen, and I admit that there are signs of a temporary upturn. Many of those yards enjoy considerable subsidy, which will ensure that prices remain low.

The Government are right to take the view that it is absurd to say on purely regional grounds that we should keep the shipyard going in those market conditions. They have adopted a sensible attitude towards Sunderland shipbuilders. The substantial sum of £45 million that they have put forward will go a long way towards filling the gap that must be filled with modern competitive industries of the sort on which my hon. Friends have touched so well.

There are, however strategic and military reasons for believing that we must keep a minimum base of shipbuilding, just as we need to keep a minimum strategic base in shipping. We know of the number of ships that we needed in the Falklands crisis, and that other crises may require more ships over a longer period, as well as substantial ship repair, ship conversion and other facilities. For this reason, it is essential that, just as the Government have defined a strategic core for shipping, they define a strategic core for shipbuilding and ship repairs. Inevitably, because of subsidies paid to shipbuilding industries in other countries, such a strategic definition will involve subsidies-although not, I hope, on the scale that we have had. If there is no subsidy, what happened in Sweden, where what were arguably the most efficient shipbuilding companies in Europe disappeared, will happen to the remainder of our shipyards.

[Mr. Julian Brazier]

The way to apply this core principle may be to look particularly hard at the dual capability naval shipyards, of which Swan Hunter is an example. If the intervention funding available to the small residual core outside the naval sector were to be available to these yards as well, with the baseload of work for the Royal Navy and the Royal Fleet Auxiliary, they would be well placed to survive almost any storm in the market.

In a nutshell, we must strike a balance. There is no point in trying to keep yards going for regional reasons where there is no hope for the future. However, we must keep a small basic core of shipbuilding, just as we must keep a core of shipping. This will mean defining that core and being willing to continue to subsidise it.

6.31 pm

Ms. Joyce Quin (Gateshead, East): When the closure of North East Shipbuilders Ltd. was announced to the House last week, the reactions were emotional and the atmosphere was highly charged. Two emotions predominated—anger and sadness. I share both. There were many reasons for the anger expressed last week, particularly since the statement had been widely leaked in advance, which undermined many of the arguments that we wished to make. There was also anger at the outrageous decision to close a modern yard that had not just the possibility but the probability of a multi-million pound order. We were also angry that the closure seemed to stem simply from the Government's political dogma, and that the Government had been determined to force through change in ownership at the worst possible time, when the negotiations for the Cuban order were taking place. That decision merely added greatly to the delays and uncertainties of the situation.

There was also anger because the Government did not seem to have explored every possibility, and because the EEC made no formal presentation of a rescue bid. Like others, I have been closely linked to the shipyards in Sunderland, in my case because, since 1979, I have represented the area in the European Parliament. When I was first elected, there were some 27,000 shipyard workers in Tyne and Wear. Seven years later there were fewer than 7,000 and today there are fewer than half that number.

Throughout the period of decline, we were told that restructuring was necessary and that we needed a restructured industry that would be slimmed down and capable of competing. In the process, workers, particularly in the Sunderland yards, undertook many sacrifices. There were dramatic changes in working patterns, such as the development of flexible methods of working, and a great deal of modernisation of the yards. Now, we see that all that sacrifice was to no avail. That explains some of the anger and the reactions on Wearside.

Throughout my nine years as a European Member of Parliament, I was keenly aware of the lack of action by the Government and the EEC when they were confronted with the determined and cut-throat competition from the far east. It has not helped that we have had so many different Ministers with responsibility for shipping over this time, or that even in this crucial period, we have had another change of Minister. It has also not helped that in the EEC there has been little in the way of a shipbuilding policy worthy of the name. The only policy has been one of limiting state aid by the EEC countries to their respective shipyards. That policy has been inadequate to ensure that Britain and Europe survive the years of shipbuilding slump and will be in a position to pick up orders.

The EEC has adopted a negative approach, which has been aided and abetted by our Government. Over the past nine years, there have been few negotiations on shipbuilding between the EEC and Japan and Korea. Although great concern has been expressed about the unfavourable trade balance between the EEC and the trading countries of the far east, shipbuilding has been a low priority in all those discussions. The latest issue of the publication *European Report* says that, once again,

"negotiations led by the European Commission with Japan and South Korea to re-organise the world shipbuilding market have come to a standstill."

That standstill is nothing new, because it has existed for the past nine years, and even more so recently, when such discussion was vital for the future of British shipbuilding industry.

The redundancies and restructuring sacrifices made by those in the EEC shipbuilding industry have been unequally shared out. Recently, the Minister admitted to me in a letter that we had lost more shipbuilding jobs than any other EEC country. Capacity in certain European countries has been reduced much more dramatically than in others, despite the existence of supposedly fair EEC rules. The shipbuilding world is not a chivalrous business. It is dependent on political will and decisions by politicians, just as much as on the efforts of business men. For that reason, we feel that the British Government and the EEC have let us down by not defending the industry and ensuring its future.

Furthermore, the demise of shipbuilding takes place at a time when we have a record balance of payments deficit and when that deficit is dramatic in manufactured goods. What is the Government's response? Simply to close down a superb manufacturing facility in Sunderland and run the shipbuilding industry into the ground. This is a disgraceful record.

Throughout the debate, the Government have suggested various palliatives, or bandages, for the wounds of the shipbuilding industry. I know, from experience in the EEC, of the money that is available there to help the shipbuilding areas, and that would have been available for Wearside and the whole of the north-east simply because of the redundancies that have already taken place. The closure of North East Shipbuilders Ltd. is irrelevant to that. We would have earned a large slice of money to help that area, irrespective of the closure.

Other hon. Members have mentioned the different points of view held in the Government's ranks. There is a clear division between various members and supporters of the Conservative party who are interested in maritime policy and shipbuilding and those who, unfortunately, have been particularly powerful in the Cabinet and who have taken the opposite view. It is a great tragedy that the wrong side has won the argument.

Two or three months ago, I accompanied my hon. Friends the Members for Sunderland, North (Mr. Clay) and for Sunderland, South (Mr. Mullin) for discussions with the Minister's predecessor. On that occasion, we presented him with a book entitled "Sunderland—the Town where Ships are Born". Unfortunately, we did not realise that we were making that presentation to the man who would be responsible for Sunderland becoming

known as the town where shipbuilding died. The Government's decision is disgraceful, and it is one for which they will be blamed for a long time to come—not only in Sunderland and in the north east but throughout the country.

Dr. Norman A. Godman (Greenock and Port Glasgow): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. As the Minister referred to my constituency on a number of occasions during his opening speech, I wish to know why I have not been called to speak—particularly in view of the fact that one hon. Member who was called honestly admitted he was not present in the Chamber for most of the debate.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Sir Paul Dean): I regret that a number of hon. Members wishing to speak have not been called, and that the hon. Member for Greenock and Port Glasgow (Dr. Godman) is among them. I suggest that he might seek to intervene during one of the wind-up speeches.

6.41 pm

Mr. John Garrett (Norwich, South): We have been discussing an industrial tragedy—a tragedy not only for Sunderland but for every region of the country. It has been a deeply serious debate, with my hon. Friends making their analysis of the causes of North East Shipbuilders' closure and its consequences for their constituencies. In an outstanding speech, my hon. Friend the Member for Sunderland, North (Mr. Clay) asked many important questions of the Minister, particularly in respect of the Cubans' latest proposition, which I hope the right hon. Gentleman will answer.

There is no doubt that the Government contributed to the closure by concentrating on seeking private owners for the yards in pursuit of their privatisation ideology rather than on helping the yard to obtain orders and assuring its production continuity. One of our concerns is the lack of any Government strategy or policy for merchant shipbuilding, other than to get it out of the public sector by any means, as quickly as possible.

In a memorandum submitted on 14 June to the Select Committee on Trade and Industry, British Shipbuilders observed:

> "We are concerned that there is apparently no policy concerning the merchant shipbuilding industry or indeed the whole maritime infrastructure of the United Kingdom. This is in no way concerned with the question of either public or private ownership."

British Shipbuilders also made the point that shipping policy should be an integral part of national maritime capacity, and clearly it was right to say so. British Shipbuilders' opinion was that merchant shipbuilding worldwide was on the brink of an upturn for the 1990s, as has been said many times during the debate.

In his evidence to the Select Committee, the chairman of British Shipbuilders said that his view of the upturn was based on the fact that seaborne trade was at a 10-year high and on the increase in freight rates. He remarked that a new generation of efficient modern ships is needed to replace much of the present world fleet. The re-equipment of the Sunderland yard placed it in an excellent position to take advantage of an upturn.

On 28 June, the then Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster told the Select Committee:

> "I think there is plainly some improvement in the market, yes . . . I think I do accept there is a change."

He referred to the scope for replacing aging vessels throughout the world. But now it suits the Government to play down the upturn. When all the signs are right, only then do the Government decide to end merchant shipbuilding in a modern, competitive yard.

Ministers talk of £1·8 billion being sunk into British Shipbuilders, but they know that the cost of merchant shipbuilding was about one third of that total. They maintain that all such subsidies are unacceptable. It is a pity that they do not apply the same economic logic to the farm subsidies that they so generously support.

The Government's decision itself incurs enormous costs. Two thousand jobs will be lost in the yards, and for every job lost there, three will go in sub-contracting and service industries. There is also the indirect multiplier effect of the loss of spending power in the local community. At least one job in retailing banking and services is lost for every two redundancies in manufacturing. Therefore, in an area of 20 per cent. unemployment, one is confronting job losses totalling about 10,000.

I turn to the Government's programmes for creating employment in Sunderland—what the *Financial Times* called a "palliative package". We know something about enterprise zones because last year the DTI published an evaluation report on them. We know that, in the 23 enterprise zones, most of the jobs created were transfers from their local economies—and that most were transfers from areas of high unemployment. Only 12 per cent. of enterprise zone firms were in high-tech industries, 40 per cent. of the new jobs were unskilled, and the cost was £30,000 per job. More than one quarter of the jobs were in retailing and distribution, and the retailing jobs were created at the expense of local city centres. All that is revealed in the Government's own report.

The last thing that Sunderland's redundant skilled workers need is the building of yet another shopping experience or more low-paid, unprotected jobs in retailing or warehousing. The zone cannot, anyway, be established before next April, and it will be long after that before any new jobs appear. Whatever economic development takes place, it will not use shipyard workers' skills or the equipment that is in the yards.

Over the next three years, about £5 million will be made available to encourage new enterprise in Sunderland. That is a paltry sum. With a balance of payments crisis, and record—and still rising—interest rates, there has hardly ever been such an unpropitious time to start new enterprise. We all know that new firms are acutely sensitive to interest rates. Another £5 million will be made available over three years to assist NESL's present staff to retain and to find new jobs. Retrain for what? From where are the new jobs to come? Will the Government assist local organisations to produce an inventory of available skills and help to find a substantial employer willing to use them? Or will the Government trust to market forces to produce sufficient small firms and new starts to provide employment?

One of the most interesting exchanges in the Select Committee concerned national industrial policy. British Shipbuilders' chairman made the modest proposal that there should be a maritime policy for Britain, encouraging British shipbuilders to have ships built in British yards, and that there be a forum in which maritime interests could discuss such issues with the Government. He said that no such regular forum existed. There is no such forum, there is no such policy, and there is no strategy.

[Mr. John Garrett]

We have instead a series of financial expedients, which *The Guardian* of 9 December described as "Young's dream come true":

"Lord Young, the Trade and Industry Secretary, yesterday saw come true his dream of ending his department's role as sponsor to what he sees as British industry's 'lame ducks' and creating a Department of Enterprise . . . Closure of the NESL shipbuilders was the last big obstacle to establishing his new-look department."

Other Governments defend their shipbuilding interests, but ours sells them out. The Minister in the other place had no intention of saving the yards. The decision was delayed simply because the Prime Minister was giving support to Polish shipyard workers. The closure was a forgone conclusion, and the Secretary of State was determined to kill off NESL so that he could create his new-look Department of Enterprise—or is it Department of Advertising? I am never sure.

The Government have betrayed thousands of shipyard workers and the national interest in an act of gross incompetence and folly.

6.48 pm

Mr. Newton: In view of the closing remarks of the hon. Member for Norwich, South (Mr. Garrett) I must flatly deny that there is any truth in his suggestion that the decision I reluctantly and regretfully announced last week was a forgone conclusion, or that the Prime Minister's visit to Gdansk played the part suggested by the hon. Gentleman and by one of his hon. Friends earlier.

We have been seeking a way forward for the yards within the terms that we set out. In my opening speech, I went to some lengths to describe the various processes through which we went and the various points at which time extensions were allowed to explore further possibilities. I make that absolutely clear. I shall not speak further on that point, because if I do, it will prevent me from replying to points on which hon. Members seek replies.

Dr. Godman: I am grateful to the Minister for showing his characteristic courtesy by giving way to me.

May I point out to the right hon. Gentleman, with regard to his remarks about Clark Kincaid and Ferguson, that the negotiations concerning the buyers at Clark Kincaid are proceeding apace. However, I must say to him, in all seriousness, that the negotiations concerning Ferguson at Port Glasgow are deeply worrying. I have been informed that the shop stewards have been denied a meeting with representatives of the preferred bidders, Ailsa Perth of Troon. If such an impediment has been placed in their way, will the Minister do what he can to bring the two parties together?

Mr. Newton: The hon. Gentleman has put his point fairly. I hope that he will accept from me that this is the first that I have heard about a difficulty of that kind. There have been a number of occasions when, in advance of the naming of a preferred bidder, there has been some controversy about whether it would be appropriate for representatives of the work force to talk to the various possible bidders, but the general understanding has been that any preferred bidder would wish to talk to the work force in whatever way seemed most appropriate. I have certainly not sought to discourage that. I shall not comment further in my immediate response, but I shall look at the point that the hon. Gentleman has raised on behalf of his constituents and be as helpful as I can—in the spirit in which he raised the question.

The hon. Member for Dagenham (Mr. Gould) asked me a number of questions, which interrelated to a significant extent with points that were made subsequently by the hon. Member for Sunderland, North (Mr. Clay). He asked me whether the closure proposals for NESL had been notified to the European Commission. The answer is yes. To allow an orderly rundown in activity and to make redundancy payments, we have already notified our intention to pay closure aid at NESL, by way of redundancy payments to the work force and assistance with retraining and job creation.

The hon. Member for Dagenham asked me whether the notification was reversible. I am not sure whether "reversible" is the right word, but it would be possible to renotify to the Commission. Several Opposition Members, including the hon. Member for Sunderland, North, made that point. There is one problem on which those hon. Members may care to reflect. The hon. Member for Sunderland, North made a proposal, and I once again pay tribute to the ingenuity with which he has acted on these matters in recent weeks and the tremendous effort he has put in. However, it is not clear to me how far it is a proposal from him which the Cubans are considering, or how far it is a proposal from the Cuban which is, properly, for British Shipbuilders or the Government to consider. I am advised that no such proposal has been received—which is not to say that the Government would not look at it were it received. I hope that the hon. Gentleman understands what I am saying.

The point I want to make is that the proposal made by the hon. Member for Sunderland, North would itself involve the entire existing work force being made redundant; that is a difficulty on which I want him to reflect. The hon. Member proposed that, after renotification, the work force would be re-employed—he hopes—on some completely new basis to start up the yard again with only one third of the current work force at Sunderland, and that is the best hope that he would hold out.

Manifestly, any process of renotification that called into question the capacity of British Shipbuilders to pay redundancy payments within the terms of the overall notification to the European Community would present considerable difficulties, as the work force at Sunderland would not want to have any question marks raised over the payments that they were expecting in those circumstances. I do not make that point to shoot down the hon. Gentleman's proposal.

The hon. Member for Dagenham asked me to say whether we would negotiate in terms of a proposal on those lines. I should prefer to say that we shall consider any proposition put to us, in the way that I outlined in my statement last week. I said that we had hopes of finding a buyer for Sunderland Forge Services, which employs a significant part of the work force at Sunderland, and that I would ask British Shipbuilders to explore possibilities that appeared to exist in respect of Pallion, rather than Southwick, for a possible use that had connections with shipping—that is, conversions and repair, rather than building. In that same spirit, I will not seek to rule out anything. That would not be in the spirit in which I have been carrying out my responsibilities.

However, I must say that I would not be prepared to run risks with the other disposals that have been notified to the Commission as part of an overall package. I must point out to the hon. Member for Dagenham that they have been notified together simply because it is obviously sensible for the Commission to look at our position in respect of British Shipbuilders as a whole. That does not —I repeat not—in any sense mean that any individual proposal is dependent on any other individual proposal that has been put to the Commission at the same time. I am not prepared to do anything that might jeopardise other disposals, on which we have made such good progress, or the package of measures for Sunderland.

Following any proposition put forward by the hon. Member for Sunderland, North, there would be a large number of redundancies at Sunderland and it would be necessary to take action to ensure new jobs and new enterprise in the town. I should not want to risk that. The hon. Member for Sunderland, North, gave some indication of his proposition in a message to my office yesterday, but in the circumstances in which he has put it forward, I am not in a position to give any undertakings about the future availability of intervention fund aid for several reasons—some of which I have touched on in the past few minutes.

I can say to the hon. Members for Sunderland, North and for Berwick-upon-Tweed (Mr. Beith) that I can and shall do everything possible to ensure that no options are prematurely blocked off—by, for example, the immediate disposal of equipment in the yards—although I cannot give precise undertakings about the length of time. The Tyne and Wear development corporation, for example, is commissioning a study of possible future uses for the yard, for marine or non-marine purposes, and that must be taken into account. I shall certainly ensure—I deliberately choose general terms—that no precipitate action is taken that blocks off a possibility for using the yards in a productive way as part of the general aim of promoting employment in Sunderland. I hope that that general observation will be welcomed.

Mr. Clay: Will the Minister give at least one commitment? Will he say that he has not entirely ruled out renotifying the Commission that there may be a continuation of shipbuilding at Southwick whatever reduction in the intervention fund next year is consequent on that? Will he at least not rule that out entirely?

Mr. Newton: I have used the phrase "rule out" in some of what I have said, but not in the specific terms that the hon. Gentleman has described. I shall not be as specific as the hon. Gentleman has pressed me to be, simply because I am not prepared to run risks with the package, which we are determined to press ahead with for Sunderland as a whole. Nor am I prepared to jeopardise the successful sale of other yards around the country with the good prospects that exist in those places for the future of the work force. It would be irresponsible for me to run such risks in response to the question that the hon. Member for Sunderland, North has asked me.

It has, inescapably, been impossible for me to comment on all the points that have been raised, including many of the detailed complaints made by the hon. Member for Sunderland, North.

Finally, I must say to the hon. Member for Dagenham and other hon. Members that it is quite ludicrous to suggest that this means the end of merchant shipbuilding —let alone shipbuilding—in this country. There will still be more than 30,000 people employed in shipbuilding. British Shipbuilders accounts for a very small part of shipbuilding employment as a whole. There will remain not only important civil yards, such as Govan, but military yards with substantial merchant shipbuilding capacity. Should demand arise for ships that can be sold at satisfactory prices, we could and would turn towards it. No one—not even the hon. Member for Sunderland, North—has suggested that the whole of shipbuilding employment in Sunderland can be retained. In those circumstances, we shall need new enterprise and new jobs in Sunderland, and that is what we are determined to bring about.

Question put, That the amendment be made:—

The House divided: Ayes 227, Noes 290.

Division No. 16] **[7 pm**

AYES

Abbott, Ms Diane	Dixon, Don
Adams, Allen *(Paisley N)*	Dobson, Frank
Allen, Graham	Doran, Frank
Alton, David	Douglas, Dick
Anderson, Donald	Duffy, A. E. P.
Archer, Rt Hon Peter	Dunnachie, Jimmy
Armstrong, Hilary	Eadie, Alexander
Ashley, Rt Hon Jack	Eastham, Ken
Ashton, Joe	Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatf'd)*
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*	Ewing, Harry *(Falkirk E)*
Barnes, Harry *(Derbyshire NE)*	Ewing, Mrs Margaret *(Moray)*
Barnes, Mrs Rosie *(Greenwich)*	Fatchett, Derek
Beckett, Margaret	Faulds, Andrew
Beggs, Roy	Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Beith, A. J.	Fields, Terry *(L'pool B G'n)*
Bell, Stuart	Fisher, Mark
Bennett, A. F. *(D'nt'n & R'dish)*	Flannery, Martin
Bermingham, Gerald	Flynn, Paul
Bidwell, Sydney	Foot, Rt Hon Michael
Blair, Tony	Forsythe, Clifford *(Antrim S)*
Blunkett, David	Foster, Derek
Boyes, Roland	Foulkes, George
Bradley, Keith	Fraser, John
Bray, Dr Jeremy	Fyfe, Maria
Brown, Gordon *(D'mline E)*	Galbraith, Sam
Brown, Nicholas *(Newcastle E)*	Galloway, George
Brown, Ron *(Edinburgh Leith)*	Garrett, John *(Norwich South)*
Buchan, Norman	Garrett, Ted *(Wallsend)*
Buckley, George J.	George, Bruce
Caborn, Richard	Gilbert, Rt Hon Dr John
Callaghan, Jim	Godman, Dr Norman A.
Campbell, Ron *(Blyth Valley)*	Gordon, Mildred
Canavan, Dennis	Gould, Bryan
Cartwright, John	Graham, Thomas
Clark, Dr David *(S Shields)*	Grant, Bernie *(Tottenham)*
Clarke, Tom *(Monklands W)*	Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Clay, Bob	Grocott, Bruce
Clelland, David	Hardy, Peter
Clwyd, Mrs Ann	Hattersley, Rt Hon Roy
Cohen, Harry	Healey, Rt Hon Denis
Cook, Frank *(Stockton N)*	Heffer, Eric S.
Cook, Robin *(Livingston)*	Henderson, Doug
Corbett, Robin	Hinchliffe, David
Corbyn, Jeremy	Hogg, N. *(C'nauld & Kilsyth)*
Cousins, Jim	Holland, Stuart
Cox, Tom	Home Robertson, John
Crowther, Stan	Hood, Jimmy
Cryer, Bob	Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Cummings, John	Howell, Rt Hon D. *(S'heath)*
Cunningham, Dr John	Howells, Geraint
Dalyell, Tam	Hoyle, Doug
Darling, Alistair	Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(Llanelli)*	Hughes, Roy *(Newport E)*
Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*	Hughes, Sean *(Knowsley S)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham Hodge H'l)*	Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Dewar, Donald	Hume, John

Illsley, Eric
Ingram, Adam
Janner, Greville
Jones, Ieuan *(Ynys Môn)*
Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd S W)*
Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Kennedy, Charles
Kilfedder, James
Kinnock, Rt Hon Neil
Lambie, David
Lamond, James
Leadbitter, Ted
Leighton, Ron
Lestor, Joan *(Eccles)*
Lewis, Terry
Litherland, Robert
Livingstone, Ken
Livsey, Richard
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Lofthouse, Geoffrey
Loyden, Eddie
McAllion, John
McAvoy, Thomas
Macdonald, Calum A.
McFall, John
McKay, Allen *(Barnsley West)*
McKelvey, William
McLeish, Henry
McNamara, Kevin
McTaggart, Bob
McWilliam, John
Madden, Max
Maginnis, Ken
Mahon, Mrs Alice
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Marshall, Jim *(Leicester S)*
Martin, Michael J. *(Springburn)*
Martlew, Eric
Maxton, John
Meale, Alan
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Michie, Mrs Ray *(Arg'l & Bute)*
Mitchell, Austin *(G't Grimsby)*
Molyneaux, Rt Hon James
Moonie, Dr Lewis
Morgan, Rhodri
Morley, Elliott
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(W'shawe)*
Morris, Rt Hon J. *(Aberavon)*
Mowlam, Marjorie
Mullin, Chris
Murphy, Paul
Nellist, Dave
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Brien, William
O'Neill, Martin
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Patchett, Terry
Pendry, Tom
Pike, Peter L.
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Prescott, John
Primarolo, Dawn
Quin, Ms Joyce
Radice, Giles
Randall, Stuart
Redmond, Martin
Rees, Rt Hon Merlyn
Reid, Dr John
Richardson, Jo
Roberts, Allan *(Bootle)*
Robertson, George
Robinson, Geoffrey
Rooker, Jeff
Ross, Ernie *(Dundee W)*
Rowlands, Ted
Ruddock, Joan
Salmond, Alex
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheerman, Barry
Sheldon, Rt Hon Robert
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Short, Clare
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton & F'bury)*
Snape, Peter
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Steinberg, Gerry
Stott, Roger
Strang, Gavin
Straw, Jack
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Thomas, Dr Dafydd Elis
Thompson, Jack *(Wansbeck)*
Turner, Dennis
Vaz, Keith
Walker, A. Cecil *(Belfast N)*
Wall, Pat
Wallace, James
Walley, Joan
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wareing, Robert N.
Welsh, Michael *(Doncaster N)*
Wigley, Dafydd
Williams, Rt Hon Alan
Williams, Alan W. *(Carm'then)*
Wilson, Brian
Winnick, David
Wise, Mrs Audrey
Worthington, Tony
Wray, Jimmy
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Frank Haynes and
Mrs. Llin Golding.

NOES

Adley, Robert
Aitken, Jonathan
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael
Allason, Rupert
Amess, David
Amos, Alan
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Tom *(Hazel Grove)*
Ashby, David
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkins, Robert
Atkinson, David
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Batiste, Spencer
Beaumont-Dark, Anthony
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Bennett, Nicholas *(Pembroke)*
Benyon, W.
Bevan, David Gilroy
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Body, Sir Richard
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Boscawen, Hon Robert
Bowden, A *(Brighton K'pto'n)*
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Bowis, John
Boyson, Rt Hon Dr Sir Rhodes
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brown, Michael *(Brigg & Cl't's)*
Bruce, Ian *(Dorset South)*
Buck, Sir Antony
Budgen, Nicholas
Burt, Alistair
Butcher, John
Butler, Chris
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, John, *(Luton N)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Chalker, Rt Hon Mrs Lynda
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chapman, Sydney
Chope, Christopher
Churchill, Mr
Clark, Hon Alan *(Plym'th S'n)*
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clark, Sir W. *(Croydon S)*
Clarke, Rt Hon K. *(Rushcliffe)*
Colvin, Michael
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre F'rest)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, Rt Hon John
Cormack, Patrick
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Critchley, Julian
Davies, Q. *(Staml'd & Spald'g)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Devlin, Tim
Dickens, Geoffrey
Dicks, Terry
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Durant, Tony
Dykes, Hugh
Emery, Sir Peter
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatf'd)*
Evennett, David
Fallon, Michael
Favell, Tony
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Finsberg, Sir Geoffrey
Fishburn, John Dudley
Fookes, Miss Janet
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fox, Sir Marcus
Freeman, Roger
Fre[illegible]n, Douglas
Fry, Peter
Gardiner, George
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Gill, Christopher
Gilmour, Rt Hon Sir Ian
Glyn, Dr Alan
Goodhart, Sir Philip
Goodlad, Alastair
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Gow, Ian
Gower, Sir Raymond
Grant, Sir Anthony *(CambsSW)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, Sir Eldon *(Bury St E')*
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth N)*
Grist, Ian
Grylls, Michael
Gummer, Rt Hon John Selwyn
Hamilton, Hon Archie *(Epsom)*
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, John
Hargreaves, A. *(B'ham H'll Gr')*
Hargreaves, Ken *(Hyndburn)*
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, Christopher
Hayes, Jerry
Hayhoe, Rt Hon Sir Barney
Hayward, Robert
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Heddle, John
Hicks, Mrs Maureen *(Wolv' NE)*
Hicks, Robert *(Cornwall SE)*
Higgins, Rt Hon Terence L.
Hill, James
Hind, Kenneth
Hogg, Hon Douglas *(Gr'th'm)*
Holt, Richard
Hordern, Sir Peter
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'd-on-A)*
Howarth, G. *(Cannock & B'wd)*
Howell, Rt Hon David *(G'dford)*
Howell, Ralph *(North Norfolk)*
Hughes, Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, David *(Wirral W)*
Hunt, John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hunter, Andrew
Irvine, Michael
Irving, Charles
Jack, Michael
Jackson, Robert
Janman, Tim
Jessel, Toby
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert B *(Herts W)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Key, Robert
King, Roger *(B'ham N'thfield)*
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Greg *(Derby North)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Edgbaston)*
Knowles, Michael
Knox, David
Lang, Ian
Latham, Michael
Lawrence, Ivan
Lee, John *(Pendle)*
Leigh, Edward *(Gainsbor'gh)*
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Peter
Lord, Michael
Luce, Rt Hon Richard
Lyell, Sir Nicholas
McCrindle, Robert
Macfarlane, Sir Neil
MacKay, Andrew *(E Berkshire)*
Maclean, David
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, Sir Michael
McNair-Wilson, P. *(New Forest)*
Madel, David
Major, Rt Hon John
Malins, Humfrey
Mans, Keith
Maples, John
Marland, Paul
Marlow, Tony
Marshall, Michael *(Arundel)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Mates, Michael
Maude, Hon Francis
Mawhinney, Dr Brian
Maxwell-Hyslop, Robin
Mayhew, Rt Hon Sir Patrick
Meyer, Sir Anthony
Miller, Sir Hal

Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Moate, Roger
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Moore, Rt Hon John
Morris, M *(N'hampton S)*
Morrison, Sir Charles
Morrison, Rt Hon P *(Chester)*
Moss, Malcolm
Moynihan, Hon Colin
Mudd, David
Neale, Gerrard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Onslow, Rt Hon Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Patnick, Irvine
Patten, John *(Oxford W)*
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Porter, Barry *(Wirral S)*
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Price, Sir David
Raffan, Keith
Rathbone, Tim
Redwood, John
Renton, Tim
Rhodes James, Robert
Riddick, Graham
Ridsdale, Sir Julian
Rifkind, Rt Hon Malcolm
Roberts, Wyn *(Conwy)*
Roe, Mrs Marion
Rost, Peter
Rumbold, Mrs Angela
Sayeed, Jonathan
Scott, Nicholas
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Shephard, Mrs G. *(Norfolk SW)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shepherd, Richard *(Aldridge)*
Shersby, Michael
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Sir Dudley *(Warwick)*
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Speller, Tony
Spicer, Sir Jim *(Dorset W)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Squire, Robin
Stanbrook, Ivor
Steen, Anthony
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Stewart, Andy *(Sherwood)*
Stokes, Sir John
Stradling Thomas, Sir John
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Tebbit, Rt Hon Norman
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thatcher, Rt Hon Margaret
Thompson, D. *(Calder Valley)*
Thorne, Neil
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Townsend, Cyril D. *(B'heath)*
Trotter, Neville
Waddington, Rt Hon David
Wakeham, Rt Hon John
Walker, Bill *(T'side North)*
Waller, Gary
Walters, Sir Dennis
Ward, John
Warren, Kenneth
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Wheeler, John
Widdecombe, Ann
Wiggin, Jerry
Wilkinson, John
Wood, Timothy
Woodcock, Mike
Yeo, Tim

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. John M. Taylor and
Mr. Tom Sackville.

Question accordingly negatived.

It being after Seven o'clock, MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER *put the main Question, pursuant to order [9 December]:*

The House divided: Ayes 281, Noes 223.

Division No. 17] **[7.14 pm**

AYES

Adley, Robert
Aitken, Jonathan
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael
Allason, Rupert
Amess, David
Amos, Alan
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Tom *(Hazel Grove)*
Ashby, David
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkins, Robert
Atkinson, David
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Batiste, Spencer
Beaumont-Dark, Anthony
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Bennett, Nicholas *(Pembroke)*
Benyon, W.
Bevan, David Gilroy
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Boscawen, Hon Robert
Bowden, A *(Brighton K'pto'n)*
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Boyson, Rt Hon Dr Sir Rhodes
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brown, Michael *(Brigg & Cl't's)*
Bruce, Ian *(Dorset South)*
Buck, Sir Antony
Budgen, Nicholas
Burt, Alistair
Butcher, John
Butler, Chris
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, John, *(Luton N)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Chalker, Rt Hon Mrs Lynda
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chapman, Sydney
Chope, Christopher
Clark, Hon Alan *(Plym'th S'n)*
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clark, Sir W. *(Croydon S)*
Clarke, Rt Hon K. *(Rushcliffe)*
Colvin, Michael
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre F'rest)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, Rt Hon John
Cormack, Patrick
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Critchley, Julian
Davies, Q. *(Stamf'd & Spald'g)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Devlin, Tim
Dickens, Geoffrey
Dicks, Terry
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Durant, Tony
Dykes, Hugh
Emery, Sir Peter
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatf'd)*
Evennett, David
Fallon, Michael
Favell, Tony
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Finsberg, Sir Geoffrey
Fishburn, John Dudley
Fookes, Miss Janet
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fox, Sir Marcus
Freeman, Roger
French, Douglas
Fry, Peter
Gardiner, George
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Gill, Christopher
Gilmour, Rt Hon Sir Ian
Glyn, Dr Alan
Goodhart, Sir Philip
Goodlad, Alastair
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Gow, Ian
Gower, Sir Raymond
Grant, Sir Anthony *(CambsSW)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, Sir Eldon *(Bury St E')*
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth N)*
Grist, Ian
Gummer, Rt Hon John Selwyn
Hamilton, Hon Archie *(Epsom)*
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, John
Hargreaves, A. *(B'ham H'll Gr')*
Hargreaves, Ken *(Hyndburn)*
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, Christopher
Hayes, Jerry
Hayhoe, Rt Hon Sir Barney
Hayward, Robert
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Hicks, Mrs Maureen *(Wolv' NE)*
Hicks, Robert *(Cornwall SE)*
Higgins, Rt Hon Terence L.
Hill, James
Hind, Kenneth
Hogg, Hon Douglas *(Gr'th'm)*
Holt, Richard
Hordern, Sir Peter
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'd-on-A)*
Howarth, G. *(Cannock & B'wd)*
Howell, Rt Hon David *(G'dford)*
Howell, Ralph *(North Norfolk)*
Hughes, Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, David *(Wirral W)*
Hunt, John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hunter, Andrew
Irvine, Michael
Irving, Charles
Jack, Michael
Jackson, Robert
Janman, Tim
Jessel, Toby
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert B *(Herts W)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Key, Robert
King, Roger *(B'ham N'thfield)*
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Greg *(Derby North)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Edgbaston)*
Knowles, Michael
Knox, David
Lang, Ian
Latham, Michael
Lawrence, Ivan
Lee, John *(Pendle)*
Leigh, Edward *(Gainsbor'gh)*
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Peter
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Luce, Rt Hon Richard
Lyell, Sir Nicholas
McCrindle, Robert
Macfarlane, Sir Neil
MacKay, Andrew *(E Berkshire)*
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, Sir Michael
McNair-Wilson, P. *(New Forest)*
Madel, David
Major, Rt Hon John
Malins, Humfrey
Mans, Keith
Maples, John
Marland, Paul
Marlow, Tony
Marshall, Michael *(Arundel)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Mates, Michael
Maude, Hon Francis
Mawhinney, Dr Brian
Maxwell-Hyslop, Robin
Mayhew, Rt Hon Sir Patrick
Meyer, Sir Anthony
Miller, Sir Hal

Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Moate, Roger
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Moore, Rt Hon John
Morris, M *(N'hampton S)*
Morrison, Sir Charles
Morrison, Rt Hon P *(Chester)*
Moss, Malcolm
Moynihan, Hon Colin
Mudd, David
Neale, Gerrard
Nelson, Anthony

Neubert, Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Onslow, Rt Hon Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Patnick, Irvine
Patten, John *(Oxford W)*
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Porter, Barry *(Wirral S)*
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Price, Sir David
Raffan, Keith
Rathbone, Tim
Redwood, John
Renton, Tim
Rhodes James, Robert
Riddick, Graham
Ridsdale, Sir Julian
Rifkind, Rt Hon Malcolm
Roberts, Wyn *(Conwy)*
Roe, Mrs Marion
Rost, Peter
Rumbold, Mrs Angela
Sackville, Hon Tom
Sayeed, Jonathan
Scott, Nicholas
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Shephard, Mrs G. *(Norfolk SW)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shepherd, Richard *(Aldridge)*
Shersby, Michael
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Sir Dudley *(Warwick)*
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Speller, Tony
Spicer, Sir Jim *(Dorset W)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Squire, Robin
Stanbrook, Ivor
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Stokes, Sir John
Stradling Thomas, Sir John
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, John M *(Solihull)*
Tebbit, Rt Hon Norman
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thatcher, Rt Hon Margaret
Thorne, Neil
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Townsend, Cyril D. *(B'heath)*
Trotter, Neville
Waddington, Rt Hon David
Wakeham, Rt Hon John
Walker, Bill *(T'side North)*
Waller, Gary
Walters, Sir Dennis
Warren, Kenneth
Wells, Bowen
Wheeler, John
Widdecombe, Ann
Wiggin, Jerry
Wood, Timothy
Woodcock, Mike
Yeo, Tim

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Stephen Dorrell and
Mr. David Maclean.

NOES

Abbott, Ms Diane
Adams, Allen *(Paisley N)*
Allen, Graham
Alton, David
Anderson, Donald
Archer, Rt Hon Peter
Armstrong, Hilary
Ashley, Rt Hon Jack
Ashton, Joe
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnes, Harry *(Derbyshire NE)*
Barnes, Mrs Rosie *(Greenwich)*
Beckett, Margaret
Beggs, Roy
Beith, A. J.
Bell, Stuart
Bennett, A. F. *(D'nt'n & R'dish)*
Bermingham, Gerald
Bidwell, Sydney
Blair, Tony
Blunkett, David
Boyes, Roland
Bradley, Keith
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, Gordon *(D'mline E)*
Brown, Nicholas *(Newcastle E)*
Brown, Ron *(Edinburgh Leith)*
Buchan, Norman
Buckley, George J.
Caborn, Richard
Callaghan, Jim
Campbell, Ron *(Blyth Valley)*
Canavan, Dennis
Cartwright, John
Clark, Dr David *(S Shields)*
Clarke, Tom *(Monklands W)*
Clay, Bob
Clelland, David
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Cohen, Harry
Cook, Frank *(Stockton N)*
Cook, Robin *(Livingston)*
Corbett, Robin
Corbyn, Jeremy
Cousins, Jim
Crowther, Stan
Cryer, Bob
Cummings, John
Cunningham, Dr John
Dalyell, Tam
Darling, Alistair
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(Llanelli)*
Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham Hodge H'l)*
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Don
Dobson, Frank
Doran, Frank
Douglas, Dick
Duffy, A. E. P.
Dunnachie, Jimmy
Eadie, Alexander
Eastham, Ken
Evans, John *(St Helens N)*
Ewing, Harry *(Falkirk E)*
Ewing, Mrs Margaret *(Moray)*
Fatchett, Derek
Fields, Terry *(L'pool B G'n)*
Fisher, Mark
Flannery, Martin
Flynn, Paul
Foot, Rt Hon Michael
Forsythe, Clifford *(Antrim S)*
Foster, Derek
Foulkes, George
Fraser, John
Fyfe, Maria
Galbraith, Sam
Galloway, George
Garrett, John *(Norwich South)*
Garrett, Ted *(Wallsend)*
George, Bruce
Gilbert, Rt Hon Dr John
Gordon, Mildred
Gould, Bryan
Graham, Thomas
Grant, Bernie *(Tottenham)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Grocott, Bruce
Hardy, Peter
Hattersley, Rt Hon Roy
Healey, Rt Hon Denis
Heffer, Eric S.
Henderson, Doug
Hinchliffe, David
Hogg, N. *(C'nauld & Kilsyth)*
Holland, Stuart
Home Robertson, John
Hood, Jimmy
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Howell, Rt Hon D. *(S'heath)*
Howells, Geraint
Hoyle, Doug
Hughes, John *(Coventry NE)*
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport E)*
Hughes, Sean *(Knowsley S)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Illsley, Eric
Ingram, Adam
Janner, Greville
Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd S W)*
Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Kennedy, Charles
Kilfedder, James
Kinnock, Rt Hon Neil
Lambie, David
Lamond, James
Leadbitter, Ted
Leighton, Ron
Lestor, Joan *(Eccles)*
Lewis, Terry
Litherland, Robert
Livingstone, Ken
Livsey, Richard
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Lofthouse, Geoffrey
Loyden, Eddie
McAllion, John
McAvoy, Thomas
Macdonald, Calum A.
McFall, John
McKay, Allen *(Barnsley West)*
McKelvey, William
McLeish, Henry
McNamara, Kevin
McTaggart, Bob
McWilliam, John
Madden, Max
Maginnis, Ken
Mahon, Mrs Alice
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Marshall, Jim *(Leicester S)*
Martin, Michael J. *(Springburn)*
Martlew, Eric
Maxton, John
Meacher, Michael
Meale, Alan
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Michie, Mrs Ray *(Arg'l & Bute)*
Mitchell, Austin *(G't Grimsby)*
Molyneaux, Rt Hon James
Moonie, Dr Lewis
Morgan, Rhodri
Morley, Elliott
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(W'shawe)*
Morris, Rt Hon J. *(Aberavon)*
Mowlam, Marjorie
Mullin, Chris
Murphy, Paul
Nellist, Dave
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Brien, William
O'Neill, Martin
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Owen, Rt Hon Dr David
Patchett, Terry
Pendry, Tom
Pike, Peter L.
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Prescott, John
Primarolo, Dawn
Quin, Ms Joyce
Radice, Giles
Randall, Stuart
Redmond, Martin
Rees, Rt Hon Merlyn
Reid, Dr John
Richardson, Jo
Roberts, Allan *(Bootle)*
Robertson, George
Robinson, Geoffrey
Rooker, Jeff
Ross, Ernie *(Dundee W)*
Rowlands, Ted
Ruddock, Joan
Salmond, Alex
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheerman, Barry
Sheldon, Rt Hon Robert
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Short, Clare
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton & F'bury)*
Snape, Peter
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Steinberg, Gerry
Stott, Roger
Strang, Gavin
Straw, Jack
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Thomas, Dr Dafydd Elis
Thompson, Jack *(Wansbeck)*
Turner, Dennis
Vaz, Keith
Walker, A. Cecil *(Belfast N)*
Wall, Pat
Wallace, James
Walley, Joan
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wareing, Robert N.
Welsh, Michael *(Doncaster N)*
Wigley, Dafydd
Williams, Rt Hon Alan
Williams, Alan W. *(Carm'then)*
Winnick, David
Wise, Mrs Audrey
Worthington, Tony
Wray, Jimmy
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Frank Haynes and
Mrs. Llin Golding.

Question accordingly agreed to.

Resolved,

That this House notes with approval the progress which has been made towards returning to the private sector the shipbuilding yards and other facilities owned by British Shipbuilders; notes also that, despite every effort, it has not proved possible to establish a viable basis for continued shipbuilding at North East Shipbuilders Ltd.; and warmly welcomes the measures proposed by Her Majesty's Government to encourage new enterprise and employment opportunities on Wearside.

Orders of the Day

Transport (Scotland) Bill

Order for Second Reading read.

7.26 pm

The Secretary of State for Scotland (Mr. Malcolm Rifkind): I beg to move, That the Bill be now read a Second time.

The purpose of the Bill is to privatise the Scottish Bus Group, to make provision for the future of Caledonian MacBrayne and to dissolve the Scottish Transport Group. It will lead to a major change in the organisation of Scotland's public transport system and it marks an important further stage in the Government's policy of returning nationalised industries to the private sector.

The objectives of the Government's privatisation policy are, first, to increase real competition and as a result to increase efficiency and responsiveness to the consumer; secondly, to widen share ownership; thirdly, to release enterprise by removing Government controls from industry; and fourthly, to create new locally based Scottish companies which will strengthen the private sector in Scotland.

The Scottish Transport Group is a significant employer in Scotland. It employs about 10,000 people, providing bus and ferry services. The main subsidiary of the group is the Scottish Bus Group, which employs about 9,000 people. With its 3,000 buses, it is a dominant force in the Scottish bus market. Through its various geographical subsidiaries, it provides over half the local bus services in Scotland. Some of these companies had their origins in the great period of bus expansion. The bus industry was then responding to a growing demand for popular travel. Although it is still a lively and innovative industry, bus operators now face a different situation. The growth of car ownership is mirrored by a long-term decline in the number of people travelling on buses.

However, it is far from being a dying industry. When an economy is growing, the demand for travel grows as well. Public transport has to respond to this and also to new types of transport demand. For instance, increased car ownership can lead to congestion in cities and to the need for public transport to provide a better way of moving large numbers of people on limited road space. New types of vehicle, such as minibuses, can offer cheaper and more flexible ways of meeting demand which cannot be met by larger buses on major routes.

In order to let the bus market respond to the changing demands of the public transport market, it was necessary, first, to free it of the restrictions of regulation which had governed its operations for 50 years. We did that in 1986, when bus services throughout Scotland were deregulated on 26 October of that year. From that date, subject to safety requirements and avoidance of congestion, a bus operator was free to run a service wherever he saw a commercial opportunity. The system was designed to encourage the bus operator to find out what the public wanted and provide it.

There were many prophets of doom who said that deregulation would not work and that rural bus services would disappear. That has not happened. Local authorities have used their subsidy powers wisely. The

[Mr. Malcolm Rifkind]

network of rural services remains intact. What is more, local authorities have been able to get their subsidised bus services at significantly less cost. Far from leading to a decline in bus services generally, deregulation actually led to an increase in the number of vehicle miles operated. Critics have said that these extra miles are on existing routes. Some of them are, and the result is that the busy routes, which were once the preserve of a single operator, now have competition. This means more buses and downward pressure on fares. In some cases there have been significant fare reductions.

Deregulation has also allowed new operators to emerge. In Scotland, 140 new firms have, since deregulation, provided local services. The number of vehicle miles provided by independent operators has increased by a third. Deregulation has encouraged innovation. There are more minibuses providing new services in housing estates. There are hail-and-ride services.

Having deregulated bus services in Scotland, the next step in making the industry more responsive to its customers is privatisation. The privatisation of the Scottish Bus Group will create 11 new locally based companies where previously there was only a single, dominant, nationalised industry.

Mr. James Wallace (Orkney and Shetland): I hear what the Secretary of State says, but would he be concerned if the result of privatisation were that the 11 separate companies were all bought up by a single company? Does he believe that that would promote competition, and will he seek powers to try to prevent that from happening?

Mr. Rifkind: I would be intensely disappointed if that were to happen, but I do not believe that it will. I shall deal later with the Government's approach to the flotation of the individual companies, which will be relevant to the hon. Gentleman's point.

We have three important aims in our privatisation of the Scottish Bus Group. I want to explain in greater detail how each will be achieved.

The first aim is viaible and sustained competition. As I announced to the House on 30 November, the Scottish Bus Group, with its 3,000 buses, will be split into 11 units. These will vary in size, depending on local competition. Seven of the units will be existing subsidiaries of the Scottish Bus Group. The number of buses will range from 122 buses to 340 buses. All broadly correspond to the boundaries of a regional council, although since deregulation there are no longer exclusive territories. Two further companies will be created by combining Western and Clydeside and by combining Central and Kelvin. That will create two companies of around 700 buses and provide balanced competition with Strathclyde Buses, which is of similar size. In addition, Scottish CityLink, the coach firm, and SGB Engineering will be separately privatised to make the total of 11 units.

We believe that the Scottish travelling public will benefit from the creation of a number of new independent companies that can sustain vigorous competition.

Mr. David Marshall (Glasgow, Shettleston): The Transport Act 1985 led to the privatisation of the National Bus Company in England and Wales. The Government saw fit not to privatise the Scottish Bus Group at that time. What has happened since then to bring about that change of policy? What is the benefit of privatising the Scottish Bus Group now when there was apparently no benefit from doing so three years ago?

Mr. Rifkind: The hon. Gentleman will recall that we did not then rule out the privatisation of the Scottish Bus Group. Two aspects led to no measure being introduced at that time. First, we wished to give priority to deregulation. We believed that it was such an important change that it had to be allowed usefully and comprehensively to come into effect. Secondly, we thought that it would be viable to look at what happened after the National Bus Company was privatised. The privatisation has been successful and it has led us to conclude that the time is ripe to introduce these proposals.

We considered whether we should divide the Scottish Bus Group into an even larger number of units in order to create more widespread competition. We were much impressed by the enthusiasm of the work force of the Bannockburn depot to set up their own company. We took their proposals very seriously. However, we decided that a smaller number of larger companies would also ensure vigorous competition and would at the same time provide greater stability of services.

Mr. Harry Ewing (Falkirk, East): I notice that in the Secretary of State's recent statement and in his speech this evening he has deliberately referred to the workers at the Bannockburn depot. Is he aware that they wrote to me personally and, I suspect, to a number of my hon. Friends and complained about the fact that their Member of Parliament had refused to provide them with the information that they needed on which to base their inquiries about buying the depot?

Mr. Rifkind: That is untrue.

Mr. Jimmy Hood (Clydesdale): Not at all.

Mr. Rifkind: I am sorry; I repeat that that is quite untrue. I do not know what they have said to the hon. Member for Falkirk, East (Mr. Ewing), but the allegation that he has reported to the House is untrue. After the meeting between my hon. Friend the Member for Stirling (Mr. Forsyth) and his constituents from the Bannockburn depot, he discussed their request with me and we took measures to ensure that the information that they had requested was made available to them. I personally ensured that the Scottish Bus Group would ensure, for its part, that the information would be made available to the people concerned.

If the hon. Gentleman has received such a letter, I should be grateful if he will pass it to me so that we may consider what points have been made. I am entirely confident that, quite apart from his enthusiasm for the proposals, my hon. Friend has complied 100 per cent. with the responsibilities that he would properly have undertaken as a local Member of Parliament.

Obviously the pattern of sales depends on the bids that are made, but it is clear that bus competition will be maximised if the new companies that we are to create form a net addition to the number of bus companies that are already operating.

Our second aim is local control and responsiveness to local needs. The existing organisation of the Scottish Bus Group obviously makes provision for decisions to be devolved to local management. However, we want to

increase this local responsiveness by setting up independent companies that are locally based and that are in close touch with the communities they serve.

The new companies will be free both from the central control of being part of a large group and free from Government controls over their investment. We took that into account in our decisions on the pattern of privatisation. I know, for instance, that the Borders was keen to retain its own locally based bus company, Lowland Scottish, which it has had since 1986. This local company was able to be more responsive to local needs. I was glad to be able to announce that Lowland Scottish would be privatised as an individual company. Elsewhere, the scale of the companies should allow them to be in close touch with their communities.

Our third aim is to widen share ownership and increase employee involvement in the firms in which they work. I was delighted to see the widespread interest shown by management and employees in buying their own companies which followed on my statement on 30 November. For instance, a substantial number of the work force at Strathtay Buses are already contributing to a savings scheme to buy shares in their own company. In Northern Scottish, which serves Grampian, staff have also started a savings scheme and are keen to take part in a buy-out. Highland Scottish staff have started a savings scheme. In Midland and Fife the management are keen to mount bids involving the staff. In fact, I would expect that in every bus company a management-employee buy-out proposal will be developed.

Mr. Alistair Darling (Edinburgh, Central): May I ask the Secretary of State a question that I asked him yesterday on electricity privatisation but which he failed to answer? Even if there is a management buy-out, what will he do if the shareholders in the new company sell to a third party? That happened in England. There were management buy-outs, after which there were sales to Gibraltar and other places. How will the Secretary of State ensure that control over the Scottish bus industry remains in Scotland; or is he concerned only about the location of its head office—never mind who owns and controls the undertaking?

Mr. Rifkind: We are seeking to encourage bids not just from management but from management and employees, combined. There is a crucial difference between the two. Apart from the obvious difference, there is also the factor that if management and employees combine in a successful bid to acquire a company, the proportion of the shares that are acquired to control the company could not lead to a change of control unless the staff as well as the management wished such a change to take place. The hon. Gentleman has referred to management alone being involved in a buy-out. That is one of the reasons why, if one had to choose between the two options, I should prefer a management-employee buy-out to succeed rather than one that involved the management alone.

Mr. Robert Hughes (Aberdeen, North): The Secretary of State says that he is keen on employees becoming involved in the ownership of companies. Will he arrange for the Bill to provide for a minimum number of employee shareholders, and will he also provide for the right of veto by employees to prevent sale to a third party?

Mr. Rifkind: If the hon. Gentleman waits for a moment, he will find that I am about to refer to the provisions in the Bill that represent Government policy on that matter. It will answer at least part of the question that he has put to me. Staff and management in virtually all the companies in Scotland have expressed their support for the possibility of a buy-out, and I am delighted to read of the support for buy-outs which is forthcoming from the trade unions. It was reported in the press that the Transport and General Workers Union will encourage its members to participate in buy-out schemes. The Unity Trust, which is financed by the trade union movement, has already helped to provide the funds for a buy-out in England. I understand from the press that there are to be discussions about its involvement in the Scottish Bus Group privatisation.

We in the Government will play our part. In my recent statement to the House, I said that I was keen that this privatisation should increase employee participation and that financial assistance would be provided to management-employee teams who are considering making a bid. Hon. Members on both sides of the House welcomed this undertaking. The financial assistance will be designed to enable management-employee teams to obtain the professional, financial and other advice necessary to enable them to put forward credible proposals for purchasing their companies. It will be available to one management-employee team per company.

The aim is to ensure that, when developing proposals, management-employee teams are not disadvantaged as compared with existing companies in the private sector who already have their own sources of professional advice and may be contemplating making bids. The assistance will be available in the form of an underwriting, by the Scottish Transport Group, of a proportion of the fees which teams will incur. In the event of a bid being successful, the assistance will require to be repaid. If, however, the bid fails, the greater part of the fees will be met.

I am pleased to announce that the level of assistance in such cases will be 75 per cent. of the costs of approved fees for the preparation of a detailed bid, in each case not exceeding £65,000—that is, maximum assistance of £48,750. In addition, the Scottish Transport Group will run seminars for managers and make a video on buy-outs which will be shown at depots. [HON. MEMBERS: "Hear, hear".] I am delighted at this enthusiastic welcome for initiatives which the Government have in mind. We have not yet decided who will feature in the videos, but I am open to constructive suggestions from Opposition Members.

I was also asked what other form of preference would be given to management-employee teams—in particular whether they would be given financial assistance towards the bid itself. I am bound to say that it would be somewhat circular for the Government to give money to a potential purchaser to buy an asset from the Government. An element of financial preference was given to management buy-outs in the National Bus Company privatisation.

I have already said that we want a rather different pattern of bids in Scotland, with much greater involvement by employees. This is already evident with the widespread reports of management-employee interest. We would clearly wish to give some preference to management-employee proposals, but I have already made it clear that

[Mr. Rifkind]

we cannot give a guarantee that any one type of potential purchaser will always succeed, irrespective of the price offered.

As hon. Members will see from clause 2, price is not the only consideration which I shall take into account when deciding on which bids to accept. The main test will always be the promotion of sustained and fair competition. Subject to that, the other considerations I will have to take into account are employee participation and price. New Scottish-based companies with significant employee participation will clearly satisfy some of the competition and participation objectives, but it is essential that the price is also relevant to the value of the assets.

Hon. Members will wish to note that we have given greater emphasis to employee participation in the Bill than was the case with the National Bus Company disposals in the Transport Act 1985. In particular, clause 2 provides that emloyee participation should be taken into account —with the question of sale proceeds, and subject to the main objective of promoting competition—in framing the disposal programme. In the 1985 Act, employee participation was not taken into account when the programme was being prepared and it was taken into account only so far as practicable when it was carried out. This difference in emphasis reflects our keenness to have management-employee buy-outs, provided, of course, that a proper price is paid for public assets.

I welcome the proposal put forward by the management and employees of Grampian Regional Transport to buy their company from its owners, Grampian regional council. I particularly welcome the fact that the buy-out has the support of all policital parties on Grampian regional council. The proposal provides for substantial employee participation in the company through an employee share ownership plan. Discussions between the regional council and the Scottish Development Department are now at a very advanced stage and I expect, subject to studying information sent to me yesterday by the council, to be able to give formal approval to the proposal soon.

I very much hope that the three other public transport companies—in Edinburgh, Glasgow and Dundee—will follow the same course as Grampian and provide their employees with the same opportunity to participate in the ownership of their companies.

Mr. John McAllion (Dundee, East): When the Secretary of State last made a statement on this matter, he said that there was evidence of support among employees of the Tayside public transport company for privatisation. I asked him to give us the evidence, but he did not provide any. Will he take this opportunity to give us the evidence which led him to claim that there is support among employees of the Tayside public transport company for privatisation and a buy-out?

Mr. Rifkind: I notice that the hon. Gentleman mentions employees and does not dispute the claim about management. It appears that there is common ground between us that the management in Dundee are keen on a buy-out.

Mr. McAllion *indicated dissent.*

Mr. Rifkind: The hon. Gentleman shakes his head at that, too. All I can say is that that is the information that I was given. If the management and the employees show that they are uninterested in having the same opportunities as the management and employees in Grampian, that will be interesting. In Strathtay, which operates in a comparable part of Scotland, we have found that that is not the view of employees.

The other component of the Scottish Transport Group is Caledonian MacBrayne. It provides essential ferry services on the west coast of Scotland. It has 28 vessels of varying types and sizes, depending on the different requirements of its 26 routes and employs about 800 people. When we came to office we increased the support for Caledonian MacBrayne significantly in real terms. During the past three years, we have been able to reduce subsidy while keeping the general level of fare increases in line with inflation. The reduced subsidy reflects a reduced need for subsidy to provide the same level of service—it is not a reduction in our commitment to ferry services. It is the result of reduced oil prices, increased carryings and increased efficiency. We are anxious that this trend should continue, and that the company should further reduce subsidy while maintaining the standard of service.

Since 1979, there has been substantial investment in CalMac. We have approved £22 million in new vessels and £6 million on new piers. In 1984 the new Isle of Arran came into service, and in 1985 the new Hebridean Isles came into service. In 1987, the new Isle of Mull was launched at Port Glasgow and early next year a new vessel to serve Barra and Lochboisdale will be launched, also at Port Glasgow. Linkspans have been added to the piers at Uig, Tarbert, Lochmaddy and Colonsay. A linkspan is at present being built at Barra. These are greatly improving the time for unloading and the quality of the service.

For the most part, however, these services do not make a profit, and a subsidy of about £6 million a year is required. I have always been clear that Caledonian MacBrayne is not a straightforward case for privatisation. The first priority in any arrangements is to guarantee the lifeline services which they provide. It is for this reason that, having studied the issues carefully, I have decided that, on the dissolution of the Scottish Transport Group, the ownership of Caledonian MacBrayne should be transferred to the Secretary of State. The Bill makes provision for this.

I intend to appoint a new board for the company, which will contain persons with commercial expertise, including some with first-hand knowledge of the islands served and their needs. That is vital to ensure the responsiveness of the company to its customers. As a matter of priority, I would look to the new board to examine the possibilities of relocating the headquarters nearer the centre of the area which it serves. Oban seems likely to prove a suitable place for this purpose. I shall also ask the new board to explore the possibility of transferring to the private sector the Gourock-Dunoon and Wemyss bay-Rothesay routes. It is anomalous that Caledonian MacBrayne operates a substantial service on a route similar to one operated by an unsubsidised private operation. In the longer term, I will expect the board to examine carefully all existing practices in the company's operation with a view to providing more efficient and cost-effective ways of providing at least the present standard of service.

No options for the longer term will be excluded, subject to the overriding proviso that they must ensure at least the

present quality of service to the islands. I consider that, with its own board and independence, CalMac will be well placed to continue to provide an improving and cost-effective service to the islands.

The Government attach great importance to improved communications for the remoter parts of Scotland and, in particular, for the islands. As I have mentioned we have provided substantial resources for Caledonian MacBrayne. We also believe that the smaller islands should not be neglected. In Orkney, a substantial improvement is being carried out in the internal ferry services supported by Government grant. Last week we announced that we would be paying grant on two new roll-on/roll-off vessels for the outer North Isles of Orkney. We accept that, in per head terms, the cost of providing adequate communications for small remote islands may appear large. However, we believe that, within limits, everyone should enjoy benefits of improved communications.

A good example of the problems of improving communications in remote areas is Vatersay in the Outer Hebrides. In 1985 my predecessor announced that he was prepared to pay grant on a causeway linking Vatersay with Barra. Since then, the islands council has taken forward the necessary preparatory work promoting a parliamentary order and carrying out a hydrographic survey. The main obstacle to further progress was accommodating such a project within its normal capital allocation. I am happy to announce today that I shall be making a special addition to the islands council's capital allocation for 1989-90 and for the following year to accommodate the building of the Vatersay causeway.

I understand that Vatersay has seen an alarming drop in population in recent years and also that it is the firm view of the islands council that this trend can be reversed with improved communications. I therefore look to see a return of population to Vatersay with the improved communications which this causeway will bring.

In addition to the bus group and CalMac there are also a number of minor interests of the Scottish Transport Group to be disposed of, including the SMT Insurance Company and Sanderson Travel, before the Scottish Transport Group can be dissolved. The future of those subsidiaries is being considered at present, with the help of my financial advisers, Quayle Munro. I may decide that some such disposals should take place prior to the passage of the Bill under the Scottish Transport Group's existing powers to dispose of activities not required for the on-going purposes of their business. Any disposals made in advance of legisiation will, however, be limited to these minor interests and will not include any of the operating subsidiaries of the Scottish Bus Group.

I should like to turn briefly to the detailed provisions of the Bill. The first part deals with the bus group. It gives me the power to draw up, after consultation with the Scottish Transport Group, a programme for the disposal to the private sector of the Scottish Bus Group's subsidiaries and the minor subsidiaries of the Scottish Transport Group. It provides that, in preparing that programme, my main objective will be to promote sustained and fair competition. I am further required to have regard to the desirability of encouraging employee participation, a matter to which I have already referred, and to the effect of implementing the disposal programme on the net proceeds to be expected from all disposals.

The Scottish Transport Group will be required to implement the disposal programme within a time scale which will be specified in the programme and will be given the necessary power to make any necessary preparations — for example, by forming subsidiaries or transferring property rights or liabilities between them. In implementing the programme, the group will be required to have regard to my main objective of promoting sustained and fair competition, and to the other considerations relating to employee participation and disposal proceeds relevant to the drawing up of the programme. Each disposal will require my consent. The group is furthermore required, in conducting its business in the period before privatisation, to have regard to the estimated effect of its activities on the likely net proceeds of sale.

Part II of the Bill relates to the group's shipping operations and simply provides for the transfer of ownership of Caledonian MacBrayne to me on a date to be appointed, after suitable preparations have been made. It also provides that the annual accounts of CalMac should be laid before Parliament while the company is in my ownership. There is also provision for the Secretary of State to give any necessary directions and to guarantee borrowing by the company. Part III of the Bill contains a number of general provisions including powers to enable transitional arrangements to be made, should they be needed, with regard to group services and pensions, financial provisions and powers to dissolve the Scottish Transport Group once the disposal programme has been completed and the ownership of Caledonian MacBrayne transferred to the Secretary of State.

The Bill has important implications for the future of Scottish public transport. It will create new locally based Scottish bus companies designed to provide competitive bus services. That will benefit the traveller who stands to gain from the competition among a number of companies. It will give a boost to Scottish enterprise. It will provide Caledonian MacBrayne with its own independent board and the stimulus to increased cost-effectiveness and responsive to its island communities.

The reaction of the employees and management of the various companies that make up the Scottish Bus Group demonstrates that they are enthusiastic about the opportunities that are now available to them. In Grampian there is all-party support for similar proposals for the passenger transport company in that area. If the Labour party, the Democrats, the Nationalists and the Conservatives in Grampian believe it is right to give employees and management an opportunity to own the bus company in which they work, I hope, although I cannot anticipate, that the same parties in the House will not wish to deny management and employees elsewhere in Scotland similar opportunities. If they wish to deny them, it will certainly be appropriate and opportune for an explanation to be given as to the differences between their approach to Grampian and to the rest of Scotland.

The Bill offers exciting opportunities in the bus industry which will benefit the consumer as well as the employees and management. Accordingly, I commend the Bill to the House.

7.55 pm

Mr. Brian Wilson (Cunninghame, North): I begin on a note of total harmony, by welcoming very warmly the Secretary of State's announcement about the causeway to

[Mr. Brian Wilson]

Vatersay. That is a matter close to my heart and the heart of my hon. Friend the Member for Western Isles (Mr. Macdonald). I have not the slightest doubt that, without that announcement, the island of Vatersay would have gone the way of other Hebridean islands and within a relatively short time would have been left devoid of population. That would be particularly inappropriate as Vatersay is populated largely by people whose forebears came from the island of Mingulay, when it became depopulated due to the lack of a reasonable harbour. I welcome the announcement very warmly and advise my hon. Friends that, if they want £3 million on Wednesday, they should get an Adjournment debate on Thursday.

At that point, the harmony ends. We have heard from the Secretary of State the familiar fable about thrusting competition, undisturbed rural services, eager shareholders, and delighted consumers—a veritable Brigadoon. It is all the more remarkable that the party that the right hon. and learned Gentleman stands for measures its support at 19 per cent., even in Brigadoon. He spoke of real competition and new locally based Scottish companies, but all those delights are speculation. None of it is in the legislation. Furthermore, there is absolutely nothing in the English experience that leads us to believe that the picture that the Secretary of State has painted is likely to become reality.

We are against the privatisation of the Scottish Transport Group and of the Scottish Bus Group in particular. We consider it an unnecessary measure, and we believe that we should leave well alone. We believe that there is no demand from consumers or employees of the Scottish Bus Group for its privatisation. Now, through yet another unwelcome piece of Conservative legislation for which no mandate exists in Scotland, we are engaged in a damage limitation exercise.

Mr. Rifkind: So that we can be clear about the hon. Gentleman's position and that of his party, is he saying explicitly that, even if he could be satisfied that every company that is to be privatised would be sold to a management-employee buy-out, nevertheless he would advise his hon. Friends to vote against the Bill because of his opposition to privatisation?

Mr. Wilson: I shall come to that in good time. For the moment, it is important to note that that is not what is in the Bill. In spite of the Secretary of State's impressive sleight of hand in attempting to suggest otherwise, that is not what is on offer, so he asks me a hypothetical question.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett (Pembroke): What is the hypothetical answer?

Mr. Wilson: The real answer will come in a short time, if the hon. Gentleman can contain his red-tied eagerness.

Scotland needs a comprehensive, integrated bus service. That service can be run only with due regard for the social interest. In this, as in so many other matters, that is the philosophy which the Government have deserted.

The Secretary of State spoke about the need to respond to changing times and the increase in private car ownership—all of it true—but the implication that, because more people own private cars, we need less social remit in the public transport service which remains, stands truth on its head. The fact that proportionately more economically disadvantaged people and people living in rural areas depend on public transport is the justification for leaving the service in public hands and having a social remit rather than a justification for the priority of private profit.

No transport debate can be complete without reference to safety considerations. There is much talk about bus competition. The Secretary of State referred repeatedly to "real competition", as though it were universally accepted that that was a condition to which to aspire. As we watch the deregulated competitive buses hurtling down the A9 or the unimproved A74 or the unextended M8, some of us question whether competition on the roads is such a wonderful idea. We sometimes have the uneasy feeling that here is yet another disaster waiting to happen.

We do not believe that the product of the exercise will be a series of worker and management-owned and controlled bus companies throughout Scotland. We would conditionally welcome that. We see the Bill as an opportunity on the cheap for the expansion of large and powerful operators whose loyalty is not to communities, levels of service or working conditions. The loyalty will be to profit. How that profit is gained will be a matter with which the Government will not concern themselves too much.

I want to take up the points that the Secretary of State made about Grampian. The right hon. and learned Gentelman trumpeted Grampian loudly, both when he announced the legislation and again tonight. We are told that Grampian is to be held up as the model of political unity on the joys of privatisation. That is rubbish and a travesty of the truth.

In June, when the Secretary of State initially intimated his intention to privatise the Scottish Bus Group, naturally the municipal bus authorities and those who run them listened to his words and started to draw some uncomfortable conclusions. *Bus Business* of 15 June 1988 stated:

"Scotland's four municipally-owned bus operators have been thrown into doubt about their future by the suggestion from Scottish Secretary Malcolm Rifkind that his announcement about the break up and privatisation of the Scottish Bus Group drew attention to their 'somewhat anomalous position'".

The Secretary of State went on to say tactfully that the Scottish Bus Group decision must have "implications for them". The municipal bus authorities saw a thinly veiled threat that they were next to go down the road taken by the Scottish Bus Group. Not surprisingly, they looked again for ways to pre-empt, and engage in damage limitation. To say that the people who controlled and operated these municipal services in Grampian and elsewhere were advocates or supporters of privatisation is not true.

Mr. Rifkind: I have listened to the hon. Gentleman with considerable fascination. If he suggests that Grampian regional council has no choice and that the employees, management and the council are simply indulging in what he calls "damage limitation", can we hear whether he would advise Strathclyde, Lothian and Tayside to indulge in damage limitation and to privatise their companies for the same reason? Will the hon. Gentleman make that clear? If the hon. Gentleman would not so advise them, why are those councils somehow judged by different criteria to those applying to Grampian?

Mr. Wilson: I am surprised that the right hon. and learned Gentleman's normal facility for words has deserted him. He seemed to be under the impression that my comment that Grampian made a pre-emptive strike was synonymous with what he suggested I said, which was that it had no choice. I should have thought that those were two different concepts. On a good night, the Secretary of State would have no difficulty in distinguishing between them.

What about Strathclyde? I am not here to advise local authorities on how to react. I have no doubt that, on exactly the same basis, they will have to make exactly the same calculations as Grampian has done. The emphasis is again on damage limitation and pre-emptive strike—not, as the Secretary of State suggests, on the wishes of employees local authorities, Opposition parties and, least of all, consumers. That is the distinction.

Mr. Robert Hughes: Having had extensive discussions with employees in the Grampian bus companies, I assure my hon. Friend that he is right. The approach to privatisation is one not of enthusiasm but of resignation and desperation. The employees were terrified that their fate would lie in the hands of the Secretary of State.

Mr. Wilson: I am grateful to my hon. Friend. He is right and reinforces my point.

The next point of distinction involves the way that "privatisation"—if the Secretary of State demands the use of that word—was carried out. *Bus Business* of 28 September 1988 stated:

"A council spokesman said that the company was 'not on the open market' and that the management and staff of the bus company were the only present bidders. But it was not clear this week if Rifkind would allow the deal to go through, or if he would rule that the company should be offered for sale to all-comers."

The Secretary of State seems anxious to draw parallels. He told us that tomorrow he will approve this great privatisation exercise. Is he drawing the same parallel with the Scottish Bus Group? If, on the same terms, those involved in the employee-management buy-out seek to take over without the companies going "on the open market" but they are offered directly to them as "the only present bidders", will the right hon. and learned Gentleman maintain the parallel that he has sought to draw and accede to those demands? Apparently, the right hon. and learned Gentleman does not wish to intervene at this time.

That deals easily with the Grampian issue of which the Secretary of State made such a meal. The Grampian structure provides for two councillor directors and two worker directors. If that is the kind of arrangement that the Secretary of State wants, he should withdraw the legislation, go back to the drawing board and do exactly as Grampian has done, and we shall give close consideration to supporting that as a decent compromise in the public interest.

But that is not what the right hon. and learned Gentleman expects to see or has any interest in seeing. He does not want anything similar to what Grampian has done. In his heart, he knows that this is a cowboy's charter and an invitation to asset strippers. He knows that the majority of those who work in the Scottish bus industry will pay the price of this legislation in jobs and conditions rather than end up as proud co-owners of the industry in which they work. The folksy image of conductors controlling their destinies as well as their ticket machines is largely a myth. We need not look in a crystal ball, because we can read the book—the one that tells the story of what has happened in England.

We listened in vain to the Secretary of State, hoping for new information. He moved around the subject. He said that he was delighted to hear about widespread interest in management-employee buy-outs. He said that he was keen—the one thing that no one would accuse the right hon. and learned Gentleman of not being is keen—and enthusiastic about management-employee buy-outs. We listened in vain for new information about how these are to be encouraged, or, indeed, made possible. The Minister's fig leaf of enthusiasm for employee buy-outs has not expanded. Nothing turns that aspiration from pious hope even to a reasonable prospect of reality. Even if some management-employee buy-outs succeed, the Bill contains no safeguards against predatory takeover, probably within months, rather than years. We shall fight in Committee for those safeguards, and the Government's good will in the whole question of management-employee buy-outs will be judged by their responses.

Why have we heard so much in Scotland about these management-employee buy-outs when we know that the legislation does nothing to promote them? It is lip service to the political climate in Scotland. The reasoning is that the Government might get away with it if they say often enough that they are trying to promote management-employee buy-outs. That might then have some credibility in Scottish public opinion and make the idea seem a little less naked and foolish than it would otherwise. As usual, the Conservative party in Scotland underestimates the intelligence of the people to whom they are appealing. People can easily see through the Government's plan. They will not listen to tonight's fine words, but will look at the legislation at the reality that eventually emerges.

Unless the means of promoting management-employee buy-outs are written into the Bill, the Minister's avowal of sympathy for them will be seen as hollow and hypocritical. No one can serve two masters. If the Government are legislating in the interests of Stagecoach and its ilk, no number of honeyed words will disguise that fact.

Clause 2(2) of the Bill states:

"The Secretary of State shall have regard . . . to the desirability of promoting the acquisition by persons employed in any undertaking or part of an undertaking which is to be the subject of a disposal under the programme."

Those words are meaningless unless the Government choose to make them meaningful. There will be no shortage of support in Scotland for such a course.

Mr. Bill Walker (Tayside, North): The hon. Gentleman will be aware that Stagecoach is based in my constituency. Is he suggesting that it is not a good employer and that it has not done considerable good by the travelling public in my constituency? If he is, he does not know the people well or the benefits that have been received.

Mr. Wilson: I shall deal with Stagecoach later. However, I read in a transport magazine that, when there was discussion about whether a Hungarian company might buy out the Scottish Bus Group, a manager—the hon. Gentleman will be pleased to hear that it was a manager who made this disrespectful remark—suggested that he would rather work for Gorbachev than Souter.

I am sure that, as an upholder of law and order, the hon. Gentleman will wish to balance his remarks by giving

[Mr. Wilson]

us a list of the offences of which that epic private enterprise company has been convicted since it has been operating on the highways and byways of Scotland.

The Scottish Consumer Council told me:

"We have no doubt that management-employee buy-outs run by people with a commitment to the communities that they serve will be the most effective means of protecting rural and off-peak services."

As the Secretary of State has rightly said, the trade unions have voiced some support for the proposal because they see it as the best and probably the only way of defending the jobs and the conditions of their members.

Mr. Hamish Morrison of the Scottish Council (Development and Industry) is quoted as saying last year:

"Simply to offer assistance with drawing up a bid with no guarantee that management and employees will not be outbid by competitors with deeper pockets is wishful thinking. What is needed is a solid assurance from Mr. Rifkind."

We have not had that solid assurance tonight and, without it, the Secretary of State's presentation is worthless.

I wish to talk briefly about the English experience. Let us remember that, when the National Bus Company was privatised, there was a 5 per cent. discount offer to management-employee buy-outs. There is still no word of that in Scotland and it is perhaps a tribute to the Secretary of State's skill with words that he almost managed to make this sound like a bonus to the Scottish employees of the bus companies.

In England, the early sales of companies in the National Bus Company went mainly to management buy-outs with very little mention, incidentally, of employees. That was the early trend of the first 30 sales. Only a handful went to the existing private sector. Then the big guys realised that there was money in this and that these companies were being sold off at bargain basement prices. To help them on their way, the Government obligingly changed their rules under which the companies were to be sold.

A different picture then emerged. The Stagecoaches from north and south of the border started taking over the companies, so that, by October 1987, *Bus Business* again reported:

"Now it is unusual, not the norm, for managements to secure a buyout. And the true employee ownership approach, implicit if not explicit in the government's plans, has been seen in only three or four sales. The carefully controlled policy of promoting competition through privatisation has been faithfully espoused by the government in word but not in deed . . . The industry grapevine is groaning with endless talk of companies that are secretly allied and of mergers deals and shadowy connections between others."

That is the reality of England and Wales at present. There is not the slightest reason to suppose that it will not become the reality in Scotland.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: As the hon. Gentleman is quoting examples in England and Wales, will he explain why the president of the Bus and Coach Council, at its Eastbourne conference this year, was reported in *Buses* last month as saying that the industry is enjoying its new environment and its new role as an entrepreneur and was a "born-again commercial industry." He said that the industry was delighted that it was privatised and deregulated.

Mr. Wilson: I should like to help the hon. Gentleman, but, before I could do so, I should have to know who the chairman of the Bus and Coach Council is. For all I know, it might be like the hon. Gentleman quoting in innocence the chairman of a Scottish health board.

Mr. Bennett: The hon. Gentleman will want to know that the chairman is Mr. Irwin Dalton, formerly of the National Bus Company.

Mr. Wilson: I never fail to be astonished by what amuses Conservative Members.

It is already abundantly clear that the private sector will not sit back in Scotland and allow management-employee buy-outs to occur in the public interest. I am sure that the hon. Member for Tayside, North (Mr. Walker) would be appalled if that were the case.

Mrs. Anne Gloag—I do not know whether she is any relation of the Famous Grouse, but she is the managing director of Stagecoach—immediately announced:

"We certainly intend to consider submitting bids for all of the separate units when further details become available in the New Year."

That is the point at which the proud announcement by the Secretary of State that employee buy-outs would be entitled to the vast sum of £48,750 for a sort of bus-world legal aid is put into perspective. That sum is washers in the back pocket to such outfits as Stagecoach and others that these buy-outs will be up against. If that sum, plus a video, is all that the Minister has to offer, there will be precious few management-employee buy-outs.

I do not make a great issue of the origins of the companies that are doing the buying out. That is not the problem. I have mentioned Stagecoach, which is active down south. It is a transborder operation. It is a firm of couthie Scottish capitalists of the many-a-mickle-mak's-a-muckle school of exploitation. When Scottish bus employees are asked by whom they do not wish to be taken over, they respond unanimously, "Souter." So the question—*[Interruption.]*

Conservative Members, whose wits are dim—"dim-wits" is probably an unparliamentary expression—think it tremendously funny that I should be saying that workers in Scotland fear a Scottish capitalist as least as much as an English or outside capitalist. Anyone who knows anything about class politics as opposed to tartan trivia, and anyone who knows the history of Scottish industry and enterprise, will understand that there is nothing funny or unusual about that attitude. It does not matter primarily whether we are talking of an English company or a Scottish company. The important considerations are the motives and nature of the company, the services it provides and the conditions that it provides for its workers.

Mr. Rifkind: The hon. Gentleman has made an important statement which is at variance with the questions that were put to me by the hon. Member for Edinburgh, Central (Mr. Darling). It seems that he does not mind whether it is a Scottish company or an English company. He thinks that the consequences will be exactly the same, and he draws no distinction between the two. Will he confirm that?

Mr. Wilson: I think that the record will show that I said that I do not think that that is the first priority. The priority is the nature of the company and where the management is. With Stagecoach the money comes from Canada——

Mr. Bill Walker: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Wilson: No, I shall not give way further.

There is an interesting example of how Stagecoach has operated in the south by jumping on the privatisation gravy train. The hon. Member for Tayside, North greatly approves of Stagecoach. The company bought Hampshire Bus, and one cannot go much further south than that company. I am sure that the hon. Member for Moray (Mrs. Ewing) approves of that move as a piece of buccaneering Scottish capitalism. It bought the Hampshire company for £2·1 million. Two weeks later, it sold the bus station at Southampton for £4 million. Is that what the Secretary of State describes as the enterprise culture? Presumably the buying price for the Hampshire company was recommended by Government officials as being in line with Government policy.

Mr. David Marshall: Does my hon. Friend agree that it is disgraceful that the Secretary of State for Transport has refused to divulge any of the details of sales of individual bus companies in England and Wales? He said that at some future date we may get the global sum when all the sales have been completed. It is a common belief—I must confess that I am not sure whether it is a fact—that one company sold assets worth £6 million, which was much more than the sum paid for the entire company. That is an example of what is taking place all the time. Unless the practice is checked, it will take place in Scotland as well.

Mr. Wilson: Of course it will take place in Scotland. It is all part of the game. That is what it is all about. It is not about encouraging management-worker participation. Instead, it is about flogging off public assets.

The asset-stripping potential in the sale of the Scottish Bus Group is considerable, and especially in the sale of Eastern Scottish Buses, which will be watched extremely closely. That is because along with the bus group goes some valuable real estate. I have no doubt that my hon. Friend the Member for Edinburgh, Central (Mr. Darling) will wish to expand on that.

Many of my hon. Friends will refer to the concerns that exist in the areas that they represent and the implications of this petty piece of privatisation. They will tell the House that managements and employees generally prefer to maintain the status quo and are not interested in buy-outs, except as a pre-emptive strike. Our interest lies in protecting employees and consumers and maintaining standards of safety, service and efficiency. We believe that these standards are best protected by the status quo, which the Government choose to despise. We have no doubt that they will be least protected by the market force mentality of bus entrepreneurs.

There is already an example of entrepreneurship in Scottish transport. In 1985, the Government sold a company called MacBrayne Haulage to the private sector. By any standards, it was a seedy privatisation. It demanded many answers and it attracted only a few. MacBrayne Haulage was a branch of the Scottish Transport Group and it had a social remit and a special responsibility to serve the isles. It had a modern fleet of vehicles. It had a depot in Blochaira road, Glasgow, which had a substantial value. It was estimated that the company's assets were worth £1·5 million. It was a tasty morsel for one of the entrepreneurs whom the Government are so anxious to encourage. As a result, the Government privatised the company.

The privatisation took place before I became a Member of the House, but sitting on the Government Front Bench during the relevant period was Mr. John MacKay, sadly now departed to other places. Mr. John MacKay advanced much the same case as the Secretary of State adduced tonight. He talked about greater efficiency and competition and sweeping out the cobwebs of public ownership and introducing thrusting, dynamic private enterprise.

MacBrayne Haulage was put up for sale and it did not attract much interest. It is not clear to this day whether there was one offer or two. The Scottish Office said that there were two, but the second was never identified. There was certainly one offer, however, and it came from a Mr. Bill Walker of Kildonan Transport. He is another couthie entrepreneur. Alas, he is not a constituent of the hon. Member for Tayside, North. Such entrepreneurs must exist elsewhere as well.

Mr. Walker put in his bid for MacBrayne Haulage, only to find that it was refused. By a strange circumstance, Mr. Walker shared the same firm of financial advisers as the Scottish Transport Group, which had been ordered to sell off the company. Doubtless it was all completely above board. Kildonan Transport and the Scottish Transport Group went into a huddle. Lo and behold, this time round a deal was struck. The £1·5 million assets of MacBrayne Haulage were transferred to Kildonan Transport for a figure reported at the time—it has never been denied subsequently, although it might be on the high side—of £450,000.

Mr. Walker was asked whether he thought that he had secured a bargain, to which he replied, memorably:

"It would be a stupid man who did not think that."

He added that he had been looking for a device that would enable him to stop paying tax. He had assumed that MacBrayne Haulage was a loss-making concern. Instead, when he examined the books he found that it was a profitable business with tremendous potential. As a result, he bought it for £450,000. It was calculated immediately that within two years he would be able to recover his outlay and have in excess of £1 million of assets, after taking depreciation into account. It was asked, "How could this happen?" It was private enterprise at its best. This week, slightly on the long side of two years, Mr. Walker is negotiating with a company in Bradford. I expect the sale of Kildonan Transport to be finalised within the next few days for a sum in excess of £1 million.

That is what privatisation is about. It is the ripping off of public assets by a combination of greed and incompetence. If such things were to happen in the private sector, it would be defined as corruption. If a trustees or solicitors handled a person's assets in the same way as the assets of MacBrayne Haulage were handled by the Government, there would be an outcry and an investigation. The Public Accounts Committee should set up an investigation into the circumstances under which MacBrayne Haulage was privatised.

I must refer to Caledonian MacBrayne. To some extent we must welcome what is before us. We must welcome the fact that at least in that case the petty doctrinaires have had to retreat because of political pressure and, more important, because of community pressure. When faced with the prospective loss of lifeline services or the handing over of lifeline services to a seaborne Mr. Billy Walker or Stagecoach, islands people of every political persuasion

[Mr. Wilson]

said that they did not want that under any circumstances. At that point, the Secretary of State, unusually, had to listen.

The Government went along to their tame Tory consultants and asked for a way to privatise the ferries. They asked for a solution that could be put as credibly, if that is how we can describe the Secretary of State's comments tonight, as the selling off of the buses.

My hon. Friend the Member for the Western Isles has established that the cost of the Pieda report was £20,597. Frankly, the Government might just as well have thrown that little dose of public money in the Minch. The Pieda report provided the Government with a few options, but even by their standards, the Government realised that they could not get away with the recommendations. Of course the Government had to cover up their embarrassment over the report and the climbdown on privatisation of ferries.

A continuing threat hangs over two of the services, Gourock to Dunoon and Wemyss bay to Rothesay. The arguments about that should perhaps be left to another evening because those routes will not be affected in the near future and we hope that they will not be affected at all. However, it is nonsense to continue to talk about privatising two of the more economically viable routes within the CalMac network. The only ground for privatising them is that they are reasonably economically viable. However, the inevitable corollary of privatising viable routes is that the less viable routes would require more subsidy because they would have lost the balancing factor of the Clyde services. Alternatively, the level of service would diminish.

If the Clyde services are taken out of the public sector and the integrated Caledonian MacBrayne company, the result will be a diminution of service through the rest of the network or an increase in subsidy from the public purse. Why should the Secretary of State wish to go down that road? If the Government try that, they will receive the same response that they received in the early 1980s when they tried to privatise the Gourock-Dunoon route. Hell hath no fury like Tory ladies on the Clyde when they are threatened with the prospect of standing on a pier waiting for a ferry that does not come on a wet Tuesday in February. I believe that it was the former Member, Mr. Michael Ancram, who went to Dunoon on that occasion.

Mr. Donald Dewar (Glasgow, Garscadden): The Secretary of State was in charge.

Mr. Wilson: It was the Secretary of State. Well, whichever Minister it was, he retreated in some disarray and I do not fancy the chances of the present Under-Secretary of State for Scotland against the Tory ladies on the Clyde coast.

Arising from the proposal to privatise the routes in future is the proposition that the headquarters of CalMac should be moved away from Gourock. We should not prejudge that idea in advance of reasoned debate. My hon. Friend the Member for Renfrew, West and Inverclyde (Mr. Graham) will deal with that matter. The headquarters have been built up over 20 years and 110 people are employed there. Why on earth should they be uprooted? If one is sitting in Barra or Stornoway, the headquarters of CalMac are at the end of a telephone. It does not greatly matter where the headquarters are located. If on the other hand one is sitting at the end of a phone in Arran, Rothesay or Dunoon, it is no greater convenience to have the headquarters moved to Oban. That must be considered and unless there is a very good reason for change, which I have not yet heard, matters should be well left alone.

This Bill is petty. It will not rock the firmament of society. It is an irritant and it will provoke insecurity. It improves nothing. We will try to improve it in Committee, but we weep for the fact that valuable, legislative time on Scottish affairs, which could have been used to better the living standards of the Scottish people, will be frittered away on this ideological nonsense which is unasked for and unwelcome.

8.35 pm

Sir Hector Monro (Dumfries): If the past 40 minutes are an indication of the new furious forty-niners, for goodness, sake bring back the hon. Member for East Lothian (Mr. Home Robertson). We have heard a tirade about nothing, and if ever someone was trying to stir up the reason for a three-line Whip on a Bill that is patently required by the Scottish public, the last 40 minutes of sheer boredom show just how far from reality the hon. Member for Cunninghame, North (Mr. Wilson) has strayed. As the Opposition Front-Bench spokesman, he must bear in mind his responsibility for parliamentary privilege and not make comments about companies and individuals unless he is absolutely sure of his facts. Hon. Members have always been very careful not to breach parliamentary privilege when they are on the Front Bench.

I welcome the Bill, and I believe that the majority of the people in Scotland will also welcome it. We all know that rural and urban public transport is extremely important in Scotland. To most, of course, it means rail and bus transport. Many, as the hon. Member for Cunninghame, North admitted, have private motor cars. We welcome that and it shows the improvement in the quality of life throughout Scotland. To many, that transport means ships or ferries. It also means transport by air where that is appropriate.

The Government's actions about CalMac were right. They are also right to demand better services with more acceptable timetables than at present. We want more convenient timetables. Heaven knows, it is difficult with the island services to provide that. However, if we are to develop tourism and industry in the inner and outer islands, we must have more convenient services than at present.

Tourists may want to visit an island for a day. They may want to visit Rhum, Eigg or Canna. It is particularly difficult to visit such islands, do something and come back the same day.

Mr. Sam Galbraith (Strathkelvin and Bearsden): Rubbish.

Sir Hector Monro: I have been and tried. I know that it is not rubbish.

It is right that my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland should set as his target much higher standards and better services and facilities than we have at the moment—*[Interruption.]* I wish that the hon. Member for Strathkelvin and Bearsden (Mr. Galbraith) would stick to his own Front-Bench responsibilities, about which he seems to know very little.

I note and welcome what my right hon. and learned Friend has said about the amount of investment in CalMac since 1979—£22 million. His announcement about Vatersay tonight shows his determination to help all communities of whatever size. I am sure that he will help that island and particularly the movement of stock, which has been so difficult in the past.

My right hon. and learned Friend was right to proceed in the way that he did in relation to CalMac because that is a socially necessary service and difficult to run at a profit. He must move with caution until the situation is right to take further steps forward.

The Bill does not cover air transport, although in a broad sense that is Scottish transport as well. The privatisation of air services in Scotland has been valuable, and we have a better and more competitive timetable as a result.

Rail and bus services are most important to those wanting public transport. British Rail has been subjected to a great deal of criticism. An all-party group of hon. Members and representatives of trade unions in south-west Scotland and Ayrshire had satisfactory discussions with British Rail and local authorities, and the rail service is now very much better than was anticipated a year ago. With the new sprinters and other improvements, British Rail has shown its determination to provide the British commuting public with a better service. We should not constantly slam it when it is trying to improve its service and, indeed, is meeting with some success.

The hon. Member for Cunninghame, North had only miserable criticism to offer the House. Had he listened to my right hon. Friend's statement on investment in roads during recent years, he would appreciate that it is very substantial. It includes preparations for the completion of the M74——

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Harold Walker): Order. I know that we have a wide debate on Second Reading, but I remind the hon. Gentleman that there is nothing in the Bill about British Rail or about roads.

Sir Hector Monro: With respect, Mr. Deputy Speaker, buses cannot run without roads.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I hope that the hon. Gentleman does not intend to start a debate on middle eastern oil supplies.

Sir Hector Monro: That is 15-all.

The Bill is an important step forward in an integrated transport system. There will be greater competition and a greater variety of routes and buses, from minibuses to double deckers. The school system will have a greater choice of buses with various carrying capacities.

There has been a great increase in mileage since deregulation. Services have been improved, yet they are being provided at a lower cost. That is the best of both worlds. My right hon. Friend is right to transfer ownership of the Scottish Transport Group to a selected group of companies. He has decided how the groupings should operate. I note with interest that Dumfries and Galloway —currently run by Western—are to be linked with Clydeside. That will give us 750 buses and about 2,000 employees. It should be a thoroughly valuable operation and well worth the great interest in both areas being shown in a management-employee buy-out.

I note from the local newspapers that the area manager in Dumfries, Mr. Bill McGowan, is "happy with the proposals." Mr. George Watson, the general manager in Clydeside, said:

"We could be bigger than ever."

The 210 employees in Dumfries have been putting aside part of their wages towards a management-employee buy-out. They, together with those employed in Clydeside, hope that the headquarters will be at Kilmarnock, which was the centre for Western for many years. The management and the employees have a positive wish to be involved in future operations and are keen to be involved in a buy-out.

I have written to Western offering to help in any way that I can. I shall pass on information from my right hon. Friend about his preparations to ensure that the employees have the necessary information on how to proceed towards a management-employee buy-out. Such local enterprise will be warmly welcomed in Scotland.

It was wrong of the hon. Member for Cunninghame, North to hint that privately operated buses might be less safe than the current Scottish Transport Group buses. He knows that the Scottish traffic commissioners and the police would be extremely concerned if any of the regulations were breached by any bus company, of whatever ownership.

Mr. Wilson: The hon. Gentleman must recognise that my remarks were about a possible threat to safety, and I stand by what I said about competitiveness on the roads. Anyone who has driven on a Scottish trunk road knows that buses shoot past each other at very high speeds. My concern has nothing to do with party politics; it is simply concern about road safety because of the way in which those buses are driven.

Sir Hector Monro: Is the hon. Gentleman implying that buses owned by the Scottish Transport Group are being driven at slower speeds than those of individual operators? He certainly gave the impression that the safety record of Stagecoach was not as good as that of other companies. I dispute that. I have no interest in or knowledge of Stagecoach, other than that it is a jolly good Scottish company that is doing very well. Indeed, it runs a company in Cumbria, and I understand that that is working satisfactorily. Opposition Members are opposing a thoroughly good Bill. The hon. Member for Banff and Buchan (Mr. Salmond) likes throwing stones in glasshouses when he is here and the other 71 Scottish Members are not. He is not here tonight to debate an important Scottish Bill. He should be careful about his comments, because they do him no good.

My right hon. Friend made it clear that the pensions of all those involved would be guaranteed. I hope that in Committee we can discuss why bus complaints are dealt with by the Scottish Consumer Council rather than the Transport Users Consultative Committee. It would be better if complaints about buses were handled by the consultative committee. The bus aspect should not be hived off. It would be better to have all the transport complaints under one umbrella which would benefit the passengers.

I give my right hon. Friend 100 per cent. for introducing the Bill. I wish it a speedy passage through Committee. I should be surprised if the Opposition did not realise their mistake in opposing the Bill on a three-line Whip. The Scottish people are looking forward to its success.

8.48 pm

Mr. John McAllion (Dundee, East): The hon. Member for Dumfries (Sir H. Monro) showed no little irritation about a three-line Whip for this Bill. I can guess the reason for that, and it is not because of the nature of the Bill. Like me, the hon. Gentleman is an office bearer of the all-party Scotch whisky group. The Scotch Whisky Association is holding an event this evening in Half Moon street and we have been invited to partake of Scotch whisky. The hon. Gentleman and I would have liked to take advantage of that invitation, and I am sure that that is the reason for his irritation.

The Bill deserves to be debated fully and should be opposed because, ultimately, it can only damage the comprehensive nature of the public network in Scotland. I will certainly argue that the Bill should not be given a passage through the House but should be opposed.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: Is the hon. Gentleman trying to explain that the reason why only seven Scottish Labour Members are present is that they are all at a Scotch whisky reception?

Mr. McAllion: Only two other Scottish Members received an invitation to the reception. Scottish Members will be elsewhere doing their work, as they always are if they are not in the Chamber.

This is not a major Bill in terms of size. It has only nine pages and 18 clauses, and no schedules. But it is major in terms of its impact on a neglected area of Government policy, and that is the important area of public transport. It is neglected because whereas the Department of Transport has no fewer than 1,200 people employed on its road building programmes—the hon. Member for Dumfries referred briefly to that when he boasted of the Government's extensive road programmes—only 120 people look after the Department's strategic responsibilities for public transport. That ratio of 1,200:120 of civil servants responsible for roads and private vehicle users to those responsible for public transport works out at exactly 100:1, which reflects the importance that the Government attach to public transport and explains why they can introduce a Bill which can only damage public transport in future.

Few people would argue with the notion that the Government seek to create a society which is more dependent on private road transport than any other in Europe. To be honest, the Government have already succeeded in doing precisely that. Whereas the people in Germany make almost one third more journeys on public transport than 20 years ago, in the United Kingdom the reverse is the case. We are making 20 per cent. fewer demands on public transport than 20 years ago.

I understand that one Minister even referred to the public transport industry as a sunset industry. I do not know exactly what he meant by that, but I assume that he means the same as Ministers who refer to shipbuilding, car manufacturing and heavy engineering in the same terms and that decent public transport will become a thing of the past if the Government have their way. It will decline into a skeleton service designed only for the unfortunates who cannot afford the convenience of a private motor car. It is certainly true that recent Government action has brought us perceptibly closer to that sorry scenario.

Perhaps this is not the time or place to talk about the merits of bus deregulation since 1986, but far from reversing or even halting the long-term decline in public transport, the number of bus passengers, as distinct from vehicle mileage or bus operators about which the Secretary of State boasted, has continued to fall in the first year after deregulation, as the Scottish Consumer Council has pointed out.

The immediate impact of deregulation on the Scottish Transport Group was to force the company to cut its bus fleet, to close its engineering and depot facilities and to issue redundancy notices to hundreds of staff. Those are hardly the measures that can be associated with reviving an ailing industry or improving the quality and frequency of bus services. They are the undeniable consequences of opening the bus industry to the operation of free market forces.

That is the central question that divides us on the Bill. The Government insist that the answer to reversing the long-term decline in public transport and to improving the quality and frequency of services is privatisation and letting the market rip. We in the Opposition have the certain knowledge that these measures must damage the quality and frequency of services and will ultimately threaten the survival of a national public transport network.

I should like to set out some of the arguments which have persuaded me that it is important to oppose the Bill. There is the question of improving services to customers. In my area the bus market is dominated by three major companies. I live in Dundee in Tayside region and the three major operators are Stagecoach, the Perth-based company much beloved by the hon. Member for Tayside, North (Mr. Walker), the regional council's public transport company and Strathtay, which is a local subsidiary of the Scottish Bus Group. Together they account for more than 80 per cent. of bus services in Tayside. Some 30 smaller companies operate the remaining services. It is difficult to conceive of any of those 30 minnows mounting a serious challenge to the three major companies. Only Stagecoach is in the private sector, which explains why it is the one so beloved of the hon. Gentleman.

Mr. Bill Walker: I hope that the hon. Gentleman understands that I was reacting to attacks on a company which provides a good service in his constituency and mine. I feel just as strongly about Strathtay, which is also a good company.

Mr. McAllion: The hon. Gentleman has warm remarks for Strathtay, which he expects to be privatised in the near future, but he makes no reference to Tayside public transport which used to employ him as a bus driver. That is regrettable and I hope that he is equally enthusiastic about the public service. I will happily give way now and allow him to praise Tayside public transport for its service to the people of Dundee.

Mr. Bill Walker: The hon. Gentleman will be aware that there are still people working in the Tayside transport company whom I knew as a young man. I have no hesitation in saying that they and those who run it have done a good job. No one has ever heard me criticise them.

Mr. McAllion: For once, the hon. Gentleman is talking sense.

There is no realistic prospect of the 30 small companies mounting any serious challenge to the three major

companies. Since each of the major companies concentrates largely on its own particular area of domination, it is difficult to conceive of even these three seriously competing with one another directly for any of the 80 per cent. of the services which they already control. For example, most of the local registered bus routes in the city of Dundee and in the province of the regional council's transport company are not seriously competed for by either Stagecoach or Strathtay.

I cannot see the case for arguing that privatisation of Strathtay will significantly add to the competition between bus companies in Tayside or that it will lead directly to the improvement of local bus services. Strathtay already stands in a competitive relationship with Stagecoach and the public transport company. The privatisation of Strathtay will do nothing to alter that relationship. The only difference is that while Strathtay remains in the public sector it cannot be subject to any takeover by another private sector company, whereas post-privatisation it will be subject to such a takeover.

That is the only major difference arising from this privatisation measure, and it is an important one. The locally led bus company, which was much praised by the Secretary of State, will now be vulnerable to takeover bids either from Stagecoach in Perth—that would lead to a near-monopoly in Tayside and would, I hope, be unacceptable to hon. Members on both sides of the House—or from outsider companies such as the cash-rich predators from the south, about which we have heard so much. They are looking for rich pickings and quick profits in the Tayside area.

I can see no gains in improved services as a result of the Bill. The reverse is more likely. I quote from a document issued by the local management and employees of Strathtay. It says:

"We fear that where ownership could pass into other hands, then there would be a significant likelihood that profit maximisation would become the overriding objective, to the detriment of bus services on Tayside, and to the detriment of bus users on Tayside."

Those people are correct to fear that happening in the aftermath of privatisation.

Where a commercial bus service is being run, a continuing and careful balancing act between the available resources of the company and customer demand for the service has to be performed. After the deregulation measures in 1985, no one is immune from such pressure, even the regional public transport company. As a result of these commercial pressures and the withdrawal of cross-subsidisation by the Government, one of the bus services in my constituency has had to be re-routed. That led to an outcry from the residents in the affected area, who saw a serious deterioration in their bus service as a result of the introduction of free market principles to the running of bus services.

While the bus companies are locally owned and managed by people with a real commitment to the local bus industry and its users, incidents of this kind will be kept to a minimum. What will happen if the bus company is owned from outside, and there is no real commitment to the needs of the local people? What will happen if local bus operations are viewed solely as a means of maximising profits, or as assets that are ripe for stripping when the profits no longer flow? What will happen when investment is seen not as a guarantee of securing a future for expanding bus services but as something to be kept to a minimum because it interferes with profits? What will happen when staff reductions and significant fare increases are seen not as defeats but as victories for the free flow of market commercialism? There will be a gradual decline in the frequency and quality of public bus services in areas such as Tayside.

If the Minister is sincere in saying that this should not happen, he must take the necessary steps to prevent the realisation of the one potential major development for which the Bill provides—the takeover of a locally based indigenous Scottish Bus Group by cash-rich predators from outside the area where the group is located. That such a threat exists is certain.

Bus Business has already been referred to several times. It is a management fortnightly publication for those in the bus and coach market. In an article last August, it gave detailed information of a new group with the acronym SEBIL, which stands for the South East Bus Investments Ltd. This consists of five former National Bus Company subsidiaries that have been privatised under management buy-outs and taken over by outsiders. They freely admit that they have come together to combine the resources of the member companies and to take advantage of future bus industry privatisations, including that of the Scottish Bus Group. Their clear aim is to make acquisitions as opportunities arise and if the Bill becomes enacted in this form, those opportunities will arise in areas like Tayside. If the hon. Member for Tayside, North wishes to see indigenous Scottish companies remain as they are, he should take that on board and be wary of it.

In the same edition of *Bus Business*, it was revealed that Mr. Robert Beattie, who happens to be the chairman of a group known as Frontsource, and who has already purchased several National Bus Company operations, is now preparing to bid for parts of the Scottish Bus Group. These examples show that southern England-based conglomerates are forming with a view to cashing in on the privatisation of the Scottish Bus Group. Many of them have already acquired, via management buy-outs, not employee buy-outs, National Bus Company subsidiaries at 50 or 60 per cent. of asset value.

It was strange to hear the Secretary of State insist that, if there were to be successful management-employee buy-outs, their bid must be commensurate with the asset value of the companies for which they were bidding. In the National Bus Company in England, the management groups, which had no employee participation, were given the assets at half their face value—give-away prices, knock-down prices—but that is not to be the case in Scotland. That speaks volumes for the different treatment handed out to the Scottish management-employee buy-outs.

These predators now have large cash reserves and borrowing powers and those pose a real threat to the continuing independence of the Scottish bus service. If the Secretary of State was serious in saying that the Bill provides a basis for creating a vigorous new Scottish companies, he has to address himself to the threat posed to those companies by the home counties-based predators.

It is not enough to promise financial assistance to management employee teams. It seems strange that, in the event of a management-employee team retaining professional advice and spending up to £75,000 on it, and in the event of its bid failing because, for example, a member of South East Bus Investments Ltd. is successful, the Secretary of State will return to the failed bidders

[Mr. McAllion]

£48,000 of their own money. That hardly compensates for losing control of their own company and being prey to whatever comes into the minds of the predators from the south who have taken it over. The Secretary of State has not in any sense provided the kind of guarantees we sought.

It is not enough for the Secretary of State to say either that he wants to give preference to bids from management-employee teams. Wanting to give them preference is very different from actually giving them preference. The Secretary of State said nothing to suggest that he will do that. He must guarantee that, if management-employee teams can put together a financial package commensurate with the value of the public assets involved, he will not sell those teams and their companies down the river and allow the companies to be sold to a higher bidder elsewhere.

The other evening, I was reminiscing with my hon. Friend the Member for Dundee, West (Mr. Ross) about the days before the Scottish Bus Group was formed, and even before the old Alexander buses were brought into public ownership. He reminded me how hard were those times for the employees, who worked long hours for low pay and were constantly under threat of dismissal for offences as trivial as leaving a top shirt button undone.

When the companies came into the public sector, there was created the strength that comes from the joining together of workers from all over Scotland employed in the newly nationalised industry, which put an end to that particular brand of management bullying. Everything improved—wages, working conditions and the way in which employees were treated by management. The hon. Member for Tayside, North acknowledged the truth of that. He worked for the Dundee corporation bus group in the public sector and was given fair treatment as well. Those improvements were secured by combining with other bus workers throughout Scotland, usually through the Transport and General Workers Union.

The Bill worries me because it will divide the workers. Employees of other individual companies may no longer be seen as allies but as a threat to one's own job because they are competing for whatever services are provided locally. What is euphemistically called the right of management to manage, really means the right of management to impose upon workers conditions that they do not want. Rather than be fought against by workers collectively, such impositions may be slowly but surely conceded by workers in individual companies in competition with one another. I hope that I am wrong, and that the unions will be able to hold the line and to resist any deterioration in wages and conditions of service. Experience suggests that whenever there is privatisation there quickly follow cuts in wages and poorer working conditions for those workers involved.

Our votes will not be sufficient to prevent the Bill receiving its Second Reading tonight or to stop privatisation. However, I hope that the Minister has listened, and that he will respond to the need to protect the local character of the newly formed private companies and the Scottish character of those companies. I hope also that the right hon. Gentleman will recognise that the companies must remain indigenous, Scottish-based companies and that the only way of achieving that is by guaranteeing genuine preference to management-employee group bids such as in Strathtay and Tayside.

My hon. Friend the Member for Cunninghame, North (Mr. Wilson) made it clear that the Bill pays lip service to that concept, in the hope that the Government will be able to clothe what it is that they are really about with a measure of credibility. However, in a free market environment, without providing genuine safeguards against predators from elsewhere, the Bill can have no credibility. It represents a sell-out of the interests of the Scottish people and of the Scottish bus industry, and it should be opposed by every right hon. and hon. Member who is against such a sell-out being enforced against their wishes.

9.8 pm

Mr. Bill Walker (Tayside, North): I congratulate the hon. Member for Dundee, East (Mr. McAllion) on a thoughtful speech that clearly conveyed to me his genuine concern about what may happen. I accept that he is genuinely concerned, and it may surprise him to learn that in some respects, his views and mine are not very far apart. I contrast the quality of his speech with the appalling contribution by his hon. Friend the Member for Cunninghame, North (Mr. Wilson).

At this point, I must declare an interest. I have been talking to the Strathtay people. Neil Renilson, the director and general manager, happens to be a constituent of mine. I have conducted meetings with him and the employees and we have gone, fairly extensively, through their concerns. I have been interested in the genuine feeling among employees of wishing to become at least part-owners of the new company in future. That is very encouraging because I, like the hon. Member for Dundee, East believe that if there is to be competition on Tayside, we should not be served well if Strathtay were taken over by Stagecoach.

Incidentally, I have also been involved in meetings with Brian Soutar and Anne Gloag. The comments made by the hon. Member for Cunninghame, North were way off the mark and he was using parliamentary privilege from the Opposition Front Bench, unlike his hon. Friend the Member for Glasgow, Garscadden (Mr. Dewar), who is very careful about what he does on the Front Bench. He is never slow to criticise properly what he does not agree with and he is never slow in putting forward his views, but he does not use parliamentary privilege to name people in matters on which the depth of his knowledge is obviously so scarce and superficial that it can be very damaging. All that the hon. Member for Cunninghame, North had to say was a quote by a manager who did not work for Stagecoach, and that is appalling.

Stagecoach is a Scottish company and a big employer, which also employs many people in England. More importantly, it has operations based in my constituency, where the two directors live and work. I found it interesting that the hon. Gentleman brought up the old horny myth of Canadian money. If he had bothered to do any research, he would have discovered that the so-called Canadian money came in an initial loan from an uncle. There is nothing odd about that and the loan has long since been repaid.

That is an important point and I find it disturbing that the hon. Gentleman's comments suggested that

Stagecoach was somehow unfit to be a good employer. Is the hon. Gentleman aware that, at this very moment, negotiations are at an advanced stage and an employee shareholding scheme for all Stagecoach employees will be announced any day? Such schemes are carried out in enlightened companies and we should encourage them, not criticise them.

I may have views on the difference between the public and private sectors. However, if the hon. Gentleman is an honest man, he must accept that some parts of the public sector are not run as well as he or I might wish. I have been very critical of some aspects of the private sector. You will realise, Mr. Speaker, that I was not slow to say what I felt because I felt strongly about it. That led to prosecutions being brought. If the hon. Gentleman feels strongly about a matter and has hard evidence, he should use that evidence, but he should not use parliamentary privilege as he did.

Mr. Wilson: If the hon. Member for Tayside, North (Mr. Walker) is to continue in this bumptious vein, giving a patronising lecture on parliamentary privilege, will he point out one comment I made that comes within the category he is trying hard to define?

Mr. Walker: When he reads *Hansard*, the hon. Gentleman will realise that he made such comments. I am also concerned that there are some differences in attitude on the Opposition Front Bench about their basic policy. They tell us on one hand that it is important where a company's headquarters are located, yet the hon. Member for Cunninghame, North then tells us that it does not matter where the headquarters of a particular group are because, after all, that group is at the end of a phone. They cannot have it both ways.

Mr. David Marshall: It is unlike the hon. Gentleman not to respond fully to the questions put to him, and I do not think that he responded fully to the question put to him by my hon. Friend the Member for Cunninghame, North (Mr. Wilson). Can he specify exactly what my hon. Friend said about Stagecoach that involved parliamentary privilege? I thought that my hon. Friend merely spoke the truth, and I do not think that anything in his remarks would need to be covered by parliamentary privilege.

Mr. Walker: No doubt the hon. Gentleman will read *Hansard* tomorrow. I shall invite the hon. Member for Cunninghame, North to repeat outside the Chamber exactly what he said today. I think that that is all I need to say. [HON. MEMBERS: "What did he say?"] Hon. Members can read *Hansard* tomorrow.

Mr. Hood: Is the hon. Gentleman referring to an implication by my hon. Friend that Stagecoach had been prosecuted? Is the hon. Gentleman aware that the company has been prosecuted on at least three occasions?

Mr. Walker: I did not specify that the company had been prosecuted; the hon. Member for Cunninghame, North did. He named the directors of Stagecoach and then gave his views and comments. He cited as his source and authority a manager who was not working for Stagecoach. I am merely saying that one should be very careful, and that Front Bench spokesmen have special responsibilities. I was watching the expression on the face of the hon. Member for Garscadden while the hon. Member for Cunninghame, North was speaking. But we can deal with these matters when we read *Hansard* tomorrow.

It is interesting that the hon. Member for Dundee, East and I should share such concerns. It would not be right for Strathtay, for instance, to be purchased by Stagecoach. That would not be good for competition in the hon. Gentleman's constituency or in mine. We should certainly be united in our views on that. If we are to have competition, we must have real competition, and he and I know that we now have competition, with the three large companies. All three companies have served Tayside well and I hope that they will continue to do so.

Too often, the Opposiion have overlooked the fact that this is a unique opportunity for employees to become shareholders in the company in which they work. There is a big difference between being an employee of a locally run, local authority-owned concern or of a nationally run concern owned by the public purse, and being an employee of a private company in which one can improve one's position by constantly improving one's shareholding. Companies operating such schemes find that they aid motivation and the smooth running of the concern.

More important, such a system gives employees a say at the annual general meeting, which someone working for a concern run by the local authority, by the Government or by a quasi-governmental body never has. There is a big difference, and that is why I welcome the statement by my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State that we shall be encouraging employee-management buy-outs and placing emphasis on the employee. I hope that the employee-management buy-outs succeed everywhere, but if they do not, I hope that consideration will be given first to Scottish-based companies and secondly to companies that have an employee shareholding scheme. We shall thus increase employee participation and shareholding, which all hon. Members would want us to do.

I am sure that the people of Scotland will welcome this Bill, just as they have welcomed many other Bills on which the Opposition have voiced doctrinaire objections. More important, the employees in the industry will welcome the benefits that will accrue to them which did not exist under the previous arrangements.

9.19 pm

Mrs. Ray Michie (Argyll and Bute): If we must have bus privatisation in Scotland, I support the management-employee buy-out option. I believe that it is the only way to ensure commitment and a standard of service. I welcome the Secretary of State's assurance that the Government will assist staff contemplating a bid to obtain professional and financial advice, provided that that is timely. It is crucial that a realistic preference be given to management-employee bidders rather than to the highest bidder. I hope for something similar to the sale of the National Freight Corporation, which was sold to the employees at a discount.

The Minister referred to consideration for preferences, and mentioned one or two. I urge him to give consideration to a company that is prepared to say that it has a "public service" or "social" commitment to, for example, a less-populated area.

The entire exercise would, I feel, become null and void unless the Secretary of State took residual powers to stop a large predator company from buying up all 11 newly

[Mrs. Ray Michie]

privatised companies. Whether the company was Stagecoach, Icarus or any of the others, that would make nonsense of the whole enterprise. Despite what was said by the hon. Member for Cunninghame, North (Mr. Wilson), I consider it important that a Scottish company should be involved, rather than one south of the border.

Alternatively, perhaps the Secretary of State could set up a commission to which any takeover must first be referred. But unless he is able to provide real reassurance the exercise makes no sense. If the aim of privatisation is, as the Bill claims,

"to promote sustained and fair competition",

he must take note of the experience of England and Wales, which has led not to sustained competition but to natural monopolies, with the larger operators buying out the smaller ones and often driving them out of business.

Recent press reports suggest that competition is being affected by price-fixing deals and agreements to end competition. Sir Gordon Borrie, Director-General of Fair Trading, has found 115 cases of firms that are believed to be colluding to restrict competition in the wake of deregulation. Some are said to have arranged timetables to avoid competition, and others have fixed common fares. How will the Secretary of State stop that happening in Scotland?

Can the Minister also give an assurance about bus stations? If the Government's aim to promote competition is genuine, they must ensure that bus stations are not sold to one company. If there is not a station for all to use, the reliability of services is affected. Competing operators must surely be able to use a central base.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett *rose——*

Mrs. Michie: If the hon. Gentleman does not mind, I shall not give way. I have been accused before of giving way too often and then speaking for too long. *[Interruption.]* No, I will plough on.

There is a great fear about the future of rural services. I know that very well from my part of the country. Many people do not have cars and may find themselves isolated —as, indeed, they often do now. They are on the unprofitable routes. What does the Minister advise? If privatisation of the bus company will not improve the service to those people, what is the point? How can the Minister visualise an integrated transport system with bus meeting train, ferry or plane and through-ticketing systems covering the different forms of transport that have to be used on one journey? That will be difficult to achieve with all-round privatisation.

Will the Minister give an assurance that there is no hidden threat to rural railway lines in the north and west of Scotland? It was reported recently in the press that British Rail had produced a document that was supposed to show how routes could become more cost-effective. I am suspicious of that document. It contains a list A and a list B. List B refers to the rural routes of Ayr to Stranraer, Helensburgh to Oban, Helensburgh to Fort William, Aberdeen to Inverness and Inverness to Thurso. Is there some secret strategy to replace those lines with buses and is it all in preparation for the eventual privatisation of the railways?

Obviously, I must say something about Caledonian MacBrayne. I have said before and I say again, quite unashamedly, that I welcome any move of the headquarters to Oban. I appreciate that my Scottish Democrat councillor colleagues are concerned about unemployment if the HQ moves, but I hope that the Government would do what they could to alleviate any adverse consequences.

I welcome the causeway to Vatersay. That is excellent news for the many bachelors on the island, where there are very few women left. It was becoming a serious problem because more and more people were leaving that island.

The Secretary of State referred to Uig, a terminal in Skye. The correct pronunciation is "Ooig", not "Yuig". I hope that everyone will note that, because it sounds extremely ugly when it is mispronounced.

The hon. Member for Dumfries (Sir H. Monro) referred to the fact that Caledonian MacBrayne did not have proper timetables and that it was difficult to get to the Isle of Rhum. One reason for that is because there are no people left on the island, except employees of the Nature Conservancy Council, which now owns the island. It is of considerable regret and sadness to me that this island, which used to be populated with Gaelic speakers, can now attract only tourists who come to see our white-tailed sea eagle, which has been brought back to the area, or deer or whatever else, but not the people. The tourists are interested only in the animals and flora. No effort has been made to bring back the people who were cleared out years ago. That is cause for concern.

Caledonian MacBrayne's new board ought to be properly balanced. It should not consist solely of business men, accountants and a token islander. The majority of board members should come from as many islands as possible. They should include those with expertise in running a shipping line or a ferry service. It is essential that the board should genuinely represent the areas that it serves. It should not be peopled by characters who never set foot on a ferry unless they are going to the islands for their summer holiday.

It is wrong to limit the share of the surpluses that can be retained, with the balance having to be repaid to the Secretary of State. If the company does well, it should be allowed to reinvest the surplus, without a consequent loss of subsidy.

The Bill singularly omits to provide any assurance that islanders will be protected from having to bear the full cost of running the service, through increased fare and freight charges. I ask the Minister to think again about the road equivalent tariff—the RET. It works well in Norway, where fares are cheaper than in Scotland. The road equivalent tariff is flexible. Contrary to what the Secretary of State said in his statement a few days ago, a flexible RET system would include a distance element, whereby the longer distance ferry routes would not be penalised. The people in the north and west of Scotland want a flexible RET system.

Mr. William McKelvey (Kilmarnock and Loudoun): I have listened carefully to the hon. Lady, and what she has said is absolutely correct. Those were the findings of the Select Committee on Scottish Affairs. The reason why these matters are totally overlooked by Conservative Members is because that Committee no longer exists.

Mrs. Michie: I thank the hon. Gentleman for pointing that out. I should also mention that it had been this Government's intention to introduce the road equivalent tariff, but they walked away from it and discarded it.

It is essential that high standards of safety should be maintained. When a boat comes to the end of its working life, it must be replaced by a new one. We do not want to be fobbed off with second-hand vessels. We have been fobbed off with old rolling stock on the railways. Time and again we were fobbed off with old rolling stock from the midlands. It is absolute rubbish; it breaks down, day in and day out. We do not want the new Caledonian MacBrayne board to introduce such a policy. As for the buses, without firm guarantees about employee buy-outs, fair competition and opposition to a large private monopoly, the competition exercise will be a complete nonsense.

9.32 pm

Mr. Nicholas Bennett (Pembroke): I am delighted to take part in this debate on the Bill, especially as I am the joint secretary of the Conservative party's Back-Bench transport committee. I have taken an interest in the bus industry for nearly 30 years. I am a subscriber to the main magazine that is issued for the bus industry, and I am a member of a transport study group. I have taken a great interest in the deregulation and privatisation of bus services in England and Wales and in what has happened in Scotland as a result of deregulation.

I had a feeling of déjà vu as I listened to the speeches of Opposition Members, especially having read the reports of debates on previous transport Bills. It is worth referring to what Opposition Members have said about these transport Bills that were introduced by this Government. There was a debate in 1979 on what became the Transport Act 1980. In that debate, the hon. Member for Glasgow, Shettleston (Mr. Marshall) said:

"In five years' time nothing will remain of the existing public transport system. There will be a substantial loss of jobs in the transport industry."—[*Official Report*, 27 November 1979; Vol. 974, c. 1218.]

I welcome back to the Chamber the hon. Member for Shettleston. He is in time to hear one of his own quotes. Five years on, far from the industry collapsing, there had been a 40 per cent. increase in patronage of express coaches, fares had fallen sharply and the number of express services had increased. That was the result of the Transport Act 1980.

When he spoke in the debate on what became the Transport Act 1985, the hon. Member for Shettleston had the good grace to admit that he had been mistaken in 1980, but he continued on the basis of a gambler trying double or quits when he said:

"Privatisation will be a disaster for the bus industry."—[*Official Report*, 12 February 1985; Vol. 73, c. 237.]

We now know what has happened as a result of deregulation. The number of bus miles has increased by 13 per cent. and the number of routes has increased. There are 400 more bus operators and operating costs have been reduced. The Transport and Road Research Laboratory report on the first year said that deregulation of bus services had been an immense success.

When I tried to intervene in the speech of the hon. Member for Argyll and Bute (Mrs. Michie), I did not want to be unhelpful. I wanted to make a point about bus stations. After deregulation, when a bus company tried to bar other operators from using a bus station—I believe that it was in Southampton—the Monopolies and Mergers Commission did not allow the ban because our legislation was strong enough to oppose such monopoly. The hon. Lady can rest assured that any bus operator who wishes to use a bus station is entitled as a result of that ruling to use it.

The hon. Lady also mentioned a report in *The Guardian* of 8 December which said that 36 rail lines face the axe. I also read it and felt some anxiety as it mentioned the Swansea-Milford Haven line. I have tabled a question to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Transport to establish the status of those plans and to see what we can do about them.

When I intervened in the speech of the hon. Member for Cunninghame, North (Mr. Wilson), I mentioned the Bus and Coach Council conference at Eastbourne this year. The theme of the conference was, "Succeeding in the New World" and the magazine *Buses* for November 1988 reported:

"it was interesting to observe how bus-industry attitudes have changed in that time. Some years ago there was much evidence of concern about the future of a deregulated and privatised industry, but now it was evident that most of the assembled delegates were enjoying the new environment and their new role of entrepreneur. This was reflected particularly in the warm reception given to the new Minister of Transport"—

my hon. Friend the Member for Enfield, Southgate (Mr. Portillo). It is clear that the bus industry has welcomed what has happened as a result of deregulation. It has recognised the exciting new ventures which it has been able to operate because of commercialisation of the market.

Mr. David Marshall: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for giving way and flattered that he should take the trouble to read what I said—he must be the only one.

The hon. Gentleman has produced all manner of figures to back up his argument about deregulation, but figures can be used to demonstrate all manner of things. Does he ever go out into the real world and talk to passengers or would-be passengers? My experience is that people do not know when they will get a bus in many areas and where it will take them. In my opinion—it is only that—the situation now is much worse than it was before deregulation. Deregulation has not been an advantage either to the travelling public or to employees in the industry.

Mr. Bennett: The hon. Gentleman cites anecdotal evidence. We can all do that. I also am a bus user. I went recently to Glasgow to study the effects of deregulation.

Mr. Marshall: On a bus?

Mr. Bennett: I went on many buses. Many of them were bought from London Transport and are being operated with conductors. Competition is such in Glasgow that operators now ensure that they have conductors because that is what the public want. They realise that, as a result of deregulation, they now have to compete for the public market and purse.

Mr. McAllion: The hon. Gentleman is trying to make the case that deregulation has been an unmitigated success in terms of increased vehicle mileage, and so on. Does he not realise that in Scotland, in the first year after deregulation, the number of bus passengers fell? The customers were turning from the bus industry in its

[Mr. McAllion]

deregulated form. That is the one statistic to which the hon. Gentleman has not referred in trying to defend deregulation.

Mr. Bennett: The hon. Gentleman referred to bus passengers, and, as he knows, bus passenger usage has been falling for many years. However, using the Scottish example specifically, under deregulation there are far more services and far more operators and the passengers' choice has improved.

Let us consider the Scottish example. An article called, "Deregulated ramblings" by Alistair Douglas, published in December 1986, just as deregulation was being introduced, stated:

"I am convinced that deregulation will be beneficial to both passengers and operators in the end, but many lessons will have to be learned or relearned on the way . . . But deregulation provides a challenge which will stretch the ingenuity of operators and there are rewards to be won".

That was a fair warning in December 1986.

What has happened in Scotland? If one goes through the pages of the bus industry's largest selling magazine *Buses*, and looks at the Scottish column, one sees that in May 1987

"the Scottish Traffic Commissioner rejected Strathclyde Regional Council's plea to order a one-third reduction in the number of buses operating in Glasgow city centre. The Region's request had been opposed by the seven subsidiaries of the Scottish Bus Group".

They did not want a reduction in the number of buses. The Scottish Bus Group, a nationalised group, wanted that competition and wanted a fair crack of the whip, against the views of the Strathclyde regional council.

Mr. David Marshall: Does the hon. Gentleman agree that Strathclyde regional council was forced to appeal to the traffic commissioner simply because Glasgow city centre had been brought to a standstill by hundreds of buses containing no passengers blocking all the through routes of the city? Some order had to be brought into the chaos that had resulted from deregulation.

Mr. Bennett: The hon. Gentleman may say that, but what did the commissioner say?

"The commissioner's decision was based on the view that the increase in buses operating in the city since last August had not been the cause of severe traffic congestion or additional danger to other road users."

The hon. Gentleman says one thing, but the commissoner says the exact opposite.

Mr. Hood: What about the rural areas?

Mr. Bennett: I shall come to the rural areas in a moment.

In July 1987, the Scottish column in *Buses* magazine stated:

"Strathclyde Region have witnessed interesting developments in the provision of bus services, completely unconnected with the tussle between the Scottish bus Group and Strathclyde Buses Ltd, which deregulation has intensified."

It refers to Oban and the introduction of minibuses by Midland Scottish, and continues:

"Further south, the Gourock, Greenock and Port Glasgow area is now the scene of fairly fierce rivalry between a number of operators which has developed since last year."

Turning to more recent editions of *Buses*. issued this year, the Scottish column states:

"In the past few months increased competition has been experienced by Central Scottish in the Lanark sub-region of Strathclyde".

Mr. Bill Walker: My hon. Friend will be aware that my constituency covers 2,000 square miles of rural Scotland. Is he also aware that since deregulation something unique has happened? Not only has the service improved, but, more importantly, operators have been prepared to deviate from their routes to serve small hamlets that previously had never had buses.

Mr. Bennett: My hon. Friend makes an excellent point. One of the great advantages of deregulation has been the tremendous increase in the use of minibuses throughout England, Wales and Scotland to serve small communities, visiting council estates that had not had a bus service before. Not only the heavily populated areas of Scotland have experienced increased competition. Inverness has recently witnessed the full effect of deregulation.

The Orkneys are among the most depopulated and under-bussed areas in the United Kingdom. The September 1988 edition of *Buses* says:

"In Orkney, competition which developed on a tendered route in 1986 has continued for almost two years".

Labour Members said in 1985 that that competition would not last long but would collapse as one company took over the others. The article continued:

"a new bus war has just started with three operators having now registered commercial services on one of the main routes."

In Orkney—where there cannot be said to be rich pickings—there are three operators.

Mr. Hood *rose*——

Mr. Bob McTaggart (Glasgow, Central) *rose*——

Mr. Bennett: There is an embarrassment of riches before me. I shall take the point to be raised by the hon. Member for Clydesdale (Mr. Hood).

Mr. Hood: My problem differs from that of my hon. Friend the Member for Glasgow, Central (Mr. McTaggart). He has too many buses, whereas I have none. My constituency of Clydesdale, covers more than 1,000 square miles. There are rural areas where people are lucky if a bus comes every two or four hours. In parts of my constituency there is a better chance of seeing a Wells Fargo stagecoach than of seeing a Stagecoach bus.

Mr. Bennett: I cannot speak in detail about the hon. Gentleman's constituency. There has been an increase in the number of buses in my rural constituency. During the past few months, in Tenby and Saundersfoot—two of the smaller towns in my constituency—minibuses have been operating in new estates which previously had never seen a bus. Wherever we look, whether in Scotland or in England and Wales, deregulations has produced new ideas, new buses and minibuses.

Mr. Jimmy Dunnachie (Glasgow, Pollok): Glasgow, Pollock had a fair bus service until deregulation. A tour which used to take half an hour to reach Paisley now takes an hour. Buses used to travel at 10-minute intervals to each part of my area. How can the hon. Gentleman defend what has happened, when people have lost their previous service and now have a lesser one?

Mr. Bennett: The hon. Gentleman says that the buses now visit all sorts of areas. That sounds as though they

visit streets that were never previously served by buses. The hon. Gentleman knows that I believe in the market. If there is a market for bus services, a commercial, privatised bus service will provide them. Companies are kept in being by attracting customers.

Mr. Dunnachie: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. The hon. Gentleman says that the bus companies do not have to provide a service to people in the area—

Mr. Speaker: Order. That is not a point of order, although it may be a point of disagreement.

Mr. Bennett: Another interesting statistic has resulted from deregulation and privatisation in England and Wales. The number of vehicles built has increased. In recent years, there have been serious problems with the construction of new vehicles. I am glad to say that, because of privatisation, the number of minibuses built has increased. I pay tribute to the new companies which have come on to the market, especially Optare, which seems to run minibuses all over London as well. According to the latest edition of the bus industry's journal, there has been a large increase in the number of large vehicles built for use by bus services. We are seeing the regeneration of the bus industry throughout the United Kingdom and should welcome that as one way of providing new jobs and new services for the public.

The privatisation of bus companies in England and Wales over the past two or three years——

Mr. Dunnachie: Disaster.

Mr. Bennett: The hon. Gentleman shouts, "Disaster." Of the 46 national bus companies in England and Wales which have been privatised, 26 were sold through management buy-outs.

Let me quote the example of one of those companies, Badgerline, which is a management-employee buy-out. The managing director, Mr. Trevor Smallwood, who is this year's president of the Omnibus Society, said that the Transport Act 1985 had produced competition, efficiency and opportunity. His company has been in the forefront of providing new services and going into towns which previously had a monopoly provision from another operator.

The hon. Member for Cunninghame, North, who has sadly left us, made a speech of—[HON. MEMBERS: "Excellence".] Opposition Members say "excellence". It was excellent from the point of view of those of us who wish to be able to quote in future from the speeches of Front-Bench Opposition Members and provide reasons why people should not vote Labour. The hon. Gentleman spoke about class war. If a Conservative Member spoke about class or race war, he would rightly be hounded out of public life, but, apparently, to wage war against people of a different class is respectable and should be carried on. We shall remember those remarks and ensure that they are quoted in future. The idea that there is something morally correct about waging war on people who happen to be of a different social class is a disgrace and I am surprised that any Labour Member still trots out that 1930s Communist claptrap.

The hon. Gentleman went on to say that the Labour party was against competition. We are glad to hear that directly from a Labour Member; they are usually more circumspect. The hon. Member for Glasgow, Garscadden (Mr. Dewar) would not have said anything quite as rash as that. We are in favour of competition because the moral arguments are in favour of it. Competition and popular capitalism respond to the market. People want that market, those buses and that service.

That service and competition provide for the customer what the state has not been able to provide in the past few years. When 1992 comes, it is likely that European bus operators will have as much right to operate services in the United Kingdom as our operators will have to operate in European markets. We shall then see how well our privatised companies which serve the public are able to take on foreign competition from European operators.

I wish to quote some remarks from members of the Scottish Bus Group. It is interesting to see what Mr. Ian Irwin, chairman of the Scottish Transport Group, says. In *The Scotsman* of 1 December, he said:

"The interest already shown by the overwhelming majority of staff clearly indicates that they will be very serious contenders for the ownership of these Scottish-based private sector companies."

The general manager of Lowland said:

"We are absolutely delighted that Mr. Rifkind has accepted our strong argument that Lowland Scottish should be allowed to stand alone. Now we must convince him that a management-employee buy-out would work."

The general manager of Northern said about privatisation:

"I am confident that Northern can go from strength to strength."

The general manager of Western and Clydeside said:

"We could be bigger than ever."

The general manager of CityLink said:

"We think we have got a good company and we want it to stay in the current hands."

Even the hon. Member for Roxburgh and Berwickshire (Mr. Kirkwood) said:

"I am confident workers' buy-out could succeed, for if each member of staff was prepared to commit hard cash to the venture, then that, coupled with the assets like depots and vehicles, would give them a good start in trying to raise the necessary capital."

I end with a quote from a letter of 7 December from the director and general manager of Strathtay to myself. He said:

"The majority of the workforce at Strathtay are very keen to participate in share ownership through the privatisation process. A Savings Scheme ws set up following Mr. Rifkind's announcement in May that Scottish Bus Group was to be privatised, and 60 per cent. of employees are contributing sums ranging from £2—£20 weekly into the fund, which will be used to buy shares if a management-employee buy-out bid is successful."

Mr. Dunnachie: That was to protect jobs.

The letter continues:

"We believe that the objectives of broadening share ownership and developing the enterprise culture will be most effectively served by privatising Scottish Bus Groups Subsidiaries to management/employee buyouts rather than sale to third parties."

Mr. McKelvey: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Bennett: I do not think that the hon. Gentleman can ask me to give way when I am quoting from a letter.

Mr. Dennis Canavan (Falkirk, West): Give way.

Mr. Bennett: The hon. Member for Falkirk, West (Mr. Canavan) shouts from a sedentary position. As he has not been in his place for most of the debate, I shall not take his advice.

I shall finish quoting what Mr. Renilson wrote:

[Mr. Bennett]

"I believe that the privatisation of the Scottish Bus Group presents the Government with an excellent opportunity to genuinely broaden share ownership and change the attitudes of many bus company employees towards private enterprise. It would be a great shame if this opportunity were not exploited to its maximum benefit. In short the important objective is that privatisation allows for employees to become shareholders in the firm for which they directly work. That way the realities of living in a free market world and working for private enterprise business will be realised."

There can be no stronger support for the Bill than from the workers of the Scottish Bus Group, who wish to be privatised, to work for themselves and to provide a better service.

9.57 pm

Mr. Thomas Graham (Renfrew, West and Inverclyde): I am delighted to have the opportunity to participate in the debate. Whenever a Minister visits my constituency in his ministerial capacity, I find that a week or so afterwards further job losses are announced. There were the job losses at the royal ordnance factory and now we are faced with losses at Caledonian MacBrayne. The deregulation of the bus services in my area has brought a tremendous problem for the rural community that I represent. Bishopton people have written to the Secretary of State for Scotland to ask for an improvement to be made in their bus services. The present services are lamentable. If deregulation is a sign of success, I can assure the House that the folk of Bishopton do not like the service that they are receiving.

I find it incredible that folk can welcome the statement that has been made on Caledonian MacBrayne. I represent the area in which its headquarters is located, and I do not welcome it. I recognise that the Secretary of State can introduce privatisation, but it is abysmal that it is suggested that the headquarters should be moved from Gourock to Oban. I note that the hon. Member for Argyll and Bute (Mrs. Michie) is laughing smugly. It seems that she welcomes with open arms, with glee, the proposal to move from Gourock to Oban. She is delighted to see jobs being removed from an area which has some of the highest rates of unemployment in Scotland. It is unfortunate that some hon. Members are welcoming the removal of jobs from an area which is already denuded of employment and lying at the bottom of the pole, as it were.

I can assure the House that there were no discussions with the office workers and head workers of Caledonian MacBrayne. I made an effort to speak to them, however, and I can assure the House that none of them wants to move to Oban. The managing director does not wish to make the move. He believes that the move would be bad commercially and make an unbelievable nonsense of the organisation that Caledonian MacBrayne operates. He says:

"Oban has no staff base. There are communication difficulties and housing shortages in the area."

He thinks that 20 per cent. of the present staff would not agree to move to Oban. I know that none of the staff wants to make the move.

Mr. Wilson: Does my hon. Friend agree that the only way for that to make any sense would be if the Gourock to Dunoon and Wemyss bay to Rothesay routes were excised from the CalMac network? If that is so, does he agree that the hon. Member for Argyll and Bute (Mrs. Michie) should take the future of those routes and the interests of her constituents into account instead of simply putting her money on Oban?

Mr. Graham: I agree with my hon. Friend. The folk in Gourock and Inverclyde do not want to see CalMac split up. They want to see it in its entirety serving the islands of Arran, Rothesay and Dunoon. We do not want to see it split up. We believe that Caledonian MacBrayne is a good viable option.

It being Ten o'clock, the debate stood adjourned.

Ordered,

That, at this day's sitting, the Transport (Scotland) Bill may be proceeded with, though opposed, until any hour.—*[Mr. Heathcoat-Amory.]*

Question again proposed, That the Bill be now read a Second time.

Mr. Graham: My constituents do not welcome the Minister's involvement in the constituency. That means job loss after job loss. We also believe that the Caledonian MacBrayne work force has been loyal and has worked very hard to reduce the subsidy and ensure that it serves the islands. The work force gives its wholehearted commitment and dedication to ensuring that the islands receive a proper decent service.

I also remind the Minister that the headquarters contains one of the finest computer services in the country. That installation is one of the largest in the west of Scotland. My hon. Friend the Member for Cunninghame, North (Mr. Wilson) is correct. It is very easy to pick up the phone and contact the headquarters of Caledonian MacBrayne.

Caledonian MacBrayne and Gourock offer service which has been there since 1969. CalMac has provided 20 years' service to the people of the islands and there have been no complaints. There are more than 19,000 sq ft of offices and more than 19,000 sq ft of work shops, bakeries, engineering space, catering facilities and other stores, and roughly 75 per cent. of the work force live in my constituency.

The company uses local suppliers wherever possible for engineering, office and catering supplies and nearly all the overhaul work on the 31 ships is undertaken on the Clyde and involves local jobs. We are not talking about transferring 100 jobs from my constituency. The Government are threatening far more than 100 jobs.

Caledonian MacBrayne is an integral part of the Gourock area. The area needs the jobs and is desperate for them. We do not need bargaining and we do not need other hon. Members of Parliament jumping on to the weaknesses and backs of unfortunate workers. We are in Scotland to fight for jobs, not to see it denuded of them.

When the new board is set up, I believe that it will be the Government's puppet in the same way that the health boards have been. If the board does not have an opportunity to consider the commercial viability of removing from Gourock to Oban. The Gourock office offers much for the success of the Caledonian MacBrayne operation. If the headquarters are moved, the Government will do that to ensure that Caledonian MacBrayne does not operate successfully. If it does not operate successfully, the Government will sell it off to their friends in the private sector, who will strip the assets and do the business. We have had enough of asset stripping with the royal ordnance factories and we shall fight for the jobs. I hope that the Secretary of State will listen to common sense.

10.5 pm

Mrs. Margaret Ewing (Moray): I do not intend to speak with as much vehemence as the hon. Member for Renfrew, West and Inverclyde (Mr. Graham), but I wish to raise several points of concern about the Bill.

The Secretary of State laid great emphasis on his belief in viable and sustainable competition and said that 11 units would be established throughout Scotland. He appeared to assume that because there would initially be 11 units providing a great deal of variety, there would be permanent competition based on those units. We fear that the establishment of 11 units will not be a safeguard.

The Scottish Bus Group has drawn attention to the English and Welsh examples and we do not hold out much hope that the units will operate in the way that the right hon. and learned Gentleman suggested. The Scottish Bus Group said:

"The National Bus Company was split into 70 operating units which were sold off individually. But in a short time a process of acquisition and expansion led to the emergence of five largish groups . . . The danger is that a similar pattern would emerge in Scotland leading to increasingly competitive bus wars between such groups which would create even stronger commercial logic for the companies not to service the remoter areas."

Our deep concern is that in both the medium and long term, predators will attempt to take over the 11 units so that rather than their providing real competition we will be deprived of any competition. The history of takeovers in Scottish industry is not happy. Many companies were taken over without reference to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission and without concern for the future of the employees. We are concerned that the competitive element should be safeguarded, but there is nothing in the Bill to ensure that that happens.

If there is over-fierce competition and one group wishes to take over another, there will be a concentration on the profitable routes—which are not those in the rural communities. The hon. Member for Renfrew, West and Inverclyde spoke about the difficulties of the people of Bishopton with bus transport since deregulation. I represent villages as remote as Tomintoul and Dufftown, and the problems in my constituency are even more severe. Just as Caledonian MacBrayne is seen as a lifeline to the islands, my constituents and those of other hon. Members representing remote areas see the public service bus as their lifeline. They do not understand why they should suffer because of the Government's ideological stance.

It is important that the elderly and the poor in our rural communities should not be cut off from the basic amenities and facilities that everyone else takes for granted on their doorsteps. They have to travel vast distances to gain access to hospitals and other services. I want to ensure that my constituents are not deprived because of over-concentration on profitable routes within the city communities.

It is all very well for hon. Members to talk about the eventual arrival of minibus services, post bus services and so on, but that is little consolation for those who face major problems and the possibility of further cuts in rail services. It may be that the leaked documents, denied by British Rail, do not show a severe cut in services, but when British Rail begins to talk about cost effectiveness we must question the future for such routes as the Aberdeen to Inverness line, which runs through my constituency. There is genuine concern about the Bill's implications for rural communities.

The Secretary of State had a great deal of fun talking about the position in Grampian. It is another example of intellectual somersaults in the Scottish Office, where one incident is somehow translated into being ideological support for the Government's activities. For example, the hon. Member for Stirling (Mr. Forsyth) this week took an opinion poll supporting parental involvement to mean support for school boards. *[Interruption.]*

Madam Deputy Speaker (Miss Betty Boothroyd): Order. There are a number of conversations going on in the House which show great discourtesy to the hon. Lady.

Mrs. Ewing: Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker, for drawing the attention of hon. Gentlemen below the Gangway who have just arrived for the debate to the irritation of the noise during this important debate on Scottish legislation.

It involves an intellectual somersault to take what happened in Grampian region as proving that there is ideological support in that region for privatisation of the bus group. A conscious decision was taken by the regional councillors to safeguard the jobs of 600 employees in the area in the face of the likelihood of yet more legislation with which Scotland disagrees being railroaded through the House by hon. Members who do not represent Scottish constituents. The genuine and responsible approach taken by Grampian regional council is done a great disservice by attempts to turn it into praise for the Scottish Office and this legislation.

We are worried about the jobs of people employed in the bus industry, our rural communities and safeguarding the proposed elements of competition. We do not believe that there are enough guarantees in the Bill. We shall certainly be interested to see what happens in Committee, but, because of our basic opposition to the privatisation of the Scottish bus service, we shall vote against the Second Reading.

10.11 pm

Mr. Jimmy Wray (Glasgow, Provan): To look at the Bill, I would think that the great train robbers wrote it. All it does is pass power to one person—the Secretary of State for Scotland.

Clause 1 gives the Secretary of State power to go in and take over. Clause 2 gives him power to dispose of all the assets. Clause 3 allows him to direct the Scottish Transport Group what to do. Clauses 4 and 5 enable him to transfer the assets wherever he sees fit. The shipping transfer, and even the accounts, are also his responsibility. Clause 10 gives him the opportunity to guarantee Treasury borrowing.

We are not talking about any chickenfeed. We all know that the Government are sitting like vultures, raping the land and public assets. They are ready to take anything that makes a profit. We are not talking about chicken feed when in 1986 the Scottish Transport Group had a turnover of £180 million. We are talking about a profit of £4·5 million in 1986. Then the Government introduced deregulation. They do not understand the harm that it has done. If they look at the figures hard enough the evidence is clear. The Scottish Transport Group has even stated that, since deregulation in 1987, the £4·5 million profit of

[Mr. Jimmy Wray]

1986 has been reduced to a loss of £400,000. All the pirates and operators ganged up on it and put a stranglehold on it.

The Secretary of State has been taking advice from no one. How hypocritical his statement was when he said that he was placing an emphasis on the employees. He did not go for advice to the employees. He did not consult them. Who did he go to? Did he go to the Scottish Transport Group which did not want him to break it up? No, he sought the advice of Quayle Munro the merchant bankers, who told him that the only way to make a quick buck was by dividing the group. He was talking in February of this year about splitting it into 10 units, but he has now decided to split it into 11.

In 1984, the Government brought out a White Paper on buses, and deregulation took place in 1986. All the London buses—the scrap buses—came to Glasgow and people were falling off them in Sauchiehall street. It was impossible to get parts for them. We know of the great private company Kelvin transport, which ended up in the dust bucket with debts of £3 million.

Last week, the *Evening Times* let us know clearly what the private operators feel about the consumers and commuters; they refused to come out over the festive season. The *Evening Times* had an editorial about this, but it did not tell us anything that we did not know. These people thought that they would become millionaires overnight, but when the future of the buses was being discussed, nobody gave any consideration to the poor people from areas such as mine, where there are families with 10 children who see the town only once a month. The mother takes the children on a rota basis because she can afford to take only one or two of them at a time. That is what deregulation brought to the people of Scotland and the people of Glasgow.

We know how bad the situation is. We know that, when the Scottish Transport Users Consultative Committee gave advice to the Government, they did not heed it. The council said that deregulation, and the privatisation of bus groups in Scotland or anywhere else, would not help to improve services. Hundreds of services in Strathclyde have disappeared. All sort of strange tenders came in, and the Strathclyde bus group got its fair share of them. It then had to rescue some of the private operators who could not manage the services that they had won on tender. That is the kind of rubbish results we have had from privatisation, which never brought any good to anybody except the vultures looking for profits. The Scottish Consumer Council advised the Secretaries of State for Scotland and for Transport that services were disappearing, with the result that fewer people were using the buses.

Clauses 4 and 5 set out share schemes for employees, but the Secretary of State for Scotland did not make it clear what percentage of shares employees will get. He did not appear to understand that rural transport suffered badly as a result of deregulation. Will he make any changes when he privatises CalMac? What will happen to the 10,000 employees? Where will they go? What will happen as a result of clause 147? Who will get the big pay-offs and the golden handshakes, and what will be the cost that the taxpayers will have to meet? I hope that, after tonight, the Secretary of State will have a rethink, and will bring to a standstill the privatisation of the Scottish people's public assets.

10.19 pm

Mr. Alistair Darling (Edinburgh, Central): The Scottish Transport Group has its headquarters in my constituency and at the time of deregulation I was chairman of the Lothian region transport committee, so I think that I know something about the subject—more, I suspect, than the hon. Member for Pembroke (Mr. Bennett), who is no longer in the Chamber, having done his duty to the Conservative Whips and made his contribution. Most of his knowledge seems to be gleaned from reading a magazine. It is difficult to find out what it is like waiting for a bus at 11 o'clock at night in Scotland by reading a magazine that is written several hundred miles away.

Deregulation is where all this nonsense started, for it was the essential prerequisite of privatisation. The Government said that it was not, and the more they said that, the more obvious it became to the rest of us, and to the general public, that that was what deregulation was all about. Deregulation enabled bus companies—I use that term to describe former municipal undertakings, as well as Scottish Transport Group undertakings—to get rid of unprofitable services. There was a mechanism allowing local authorities to subsidise unprofitable routes, and I shall say more about that later.

Under deregulation, the Government deliberately allowed companies to unload unprofitable routes so that on privatisation, they would not be burdened with providing those services. The one ingredient that has been missing at times in the debate, most importantly from Conservative Members, is a definition of what exactly a bus service ought to be. Is it something that provides a social service and transport for people living in the country or is it a business and purely a means of making a profit and looking after shareholders? Therein lies the fundamental difference between the Government and ourselves.

We believe that a bus service should be just that—a service. One of the few points upon which I and the Under-Secretary, the hon. Member for Edinburgh, West (Lord James Douglas-Hamilton), agree—or at least, he agrees about this in private—is that bus services are a service. In my maiden speech, I made the point that, when I was chairman of the transport committee, the hon. Member for Edinburgh, West was a regular caller at my door, asking whether I could do something about this or that bus service, because it had been withdrawn from his constituency. He would say to his constituents, "Isn't this awful? Isn't this terrible?" I believe that he forgot to tell them—I am sure that it was an oversight—that he voted for the very measures that brought about that state of affairs. As the hon. Member knows, deregulation proved a disaster, and had Lothian regional council not been prepared to spend substantial sums keeping unprofitable services on the road, many areas—including several that the hon. Member for Edinburgh, West represents—would have been without bus services.

The Secretary of State said that many local authorities are better off. I can tell him that Lothian regional council was spending about £2 million a year more operating the new deregulated system than it spent when it ran the bus services itself. The reason is obvious. Under the old

system, the surpluses made from the profitable routes were used to keep socially necessary services on the road. Under the new regime, that is not possible and will cause a great deal of difficulty. It is nonsense and hypocritical to say that, just as local authorities are willing to subsidise, and must subsidise, the STG and the former municipal undertakings, they will now be invited to subsidise private operators—who, in some cases, are no better than cowboys—to keep services on the road. The public purse will be raided yet again to keep certain services operating, which is wholly objectionable.

When deregulation was introduced, there was a great deal of talk about competition, just as there has been tonight. There was not really much sign of competition, and I shall give the House an example. In Midlothian on one occasion, Eastern Scottish, a Scottish Transport Group subsidiary company, announced that it proposed withdrawing 12 routes. The local authority was left with no option but to put those routes out to tender, because they were all socially necessary and served villages having no other method of transportation, because car ownership was minimal and train services did not exist in most areas.

What happened when the services were put out to tender? Only one company tendered for the services, and that was Eastern Scottish, which had withdrawn the service only two weeks before. In other words, Eastern Scottish asked to be paid by the local authority to provide services that it had not been willing to provide. It had the local authority over a barrel, because no other company was willing to operate those routes. That is what will happen in the event of privatisation. Private companies because local authorities know that they cannot leave their people isolated and cut off.

Mr. Tam Dalyell (Linlithgow): As the Member for the area concerned, may I confirm that everything that my hon. Friend the Member for Edinburgh, Central (Mr. Darling) has said is quite right.

Mr. Darling: I am grateful to my hon. Friend.

Lothian and Strathclyde regional councils have had to pay substantial sums to keep unprofitable services on the road. There is not the slightest doubt that, as local authority expenditure is pressed and as the effect of the poll tax is felt, local authorities will come under substantial pressure to cut expenditure. One item of expenditure that could be cut—although I hope that this will not happen—is the subsidising of unprofitable bus routes.

It will be interesting to see whether the hon. Member for Edinburgh, West goes to Lothian regional council and asks for his bus routes to be kept on the road at night and yet says, at the same time, that he wants the councils to reduce their poll tax. That is the double-talk that we have come to expect. I hope that the Minister will deal with that later and will tell us what he expects local authorities to do to keep services on the road within his constituency.

The bus service is a service, and is valued by the elderly, by people who want to go out at night, by people who need to see relatives in hospital and by people who do not want to drink and drive. One would have thought that the Government would want to encourage that.

Deregulation has not been the success that the Government talked about. The Secretary of State said that it was a success because millions more miles were run. The answer is perfectly obvious. At peak times, on profitable routes, there are more buses chasing each other. I do not dispute that, if one wants to go on a bus on one of the main routes, there is a greater choice and more buses. However, the evening service in the area that I and the hon. Member for Edinburgh, West represent is far worse than it was before deregulation. If the hon. Member and the Secretary of State ever went on buses, they would know that evening services are poor and not half the services that they were before deregulation.

Ownership is crucial. It is a point on which the Secretary of State has had some difficulty, as he had when we debated the privatisation of electricity yesterday. I want to refer to management buy-outs, because the Secretary of State paid lip service to them and said that he hoped that there would be management buy-outs and, better still, that there would be management and employee buy-outs. However, the history of management buy-outs is not especially successful.

In the English bus companies, managements bought out services and were quick to realise the assets. In one case, the management was quick to sell out to a Gibraltarian company. Once ownership and control pass outside the jurisdiction of Parliament, there is little chance for us to influence the way in which companies operate and conduct business. That is why we object to ownership passing abroad. That was the issue with Scottish and Newcastle Breweries and Scottish electricity.

I do not object to employees having a great say and substantial control of the industry in which they work. That is a thoroughly good thing. However, the Secretary of State did not promise to give employees a major stake or guarantee that they should have, for example, 51 per cent. of the industry in which they work. If he had said that, our attitude might be different. Of course, he will not say that, because he is in the business of looking after people who want to invest in the bus companies to make a return for themselves and other shareholders.

Incidentally, it is no wonder that we hear so much from people who are likely to be in the driving seat—managing directors, and those who represent Scottish Bus Group—and who say that they have no objection to privatisation. Of course they do not; some of them see a good opportunity to make a fast buck. Eastern Scottish, for instance, happens to own a rather large piece of real estate in central Edinburgh, which could easily be sold off and the assets then switched to shareholders in Scotland, England or abroad.

The same thing as happened in England will happen again. Assets were stripped. Many of those who want into the industry will come in not because they want to operate buses but because they want to get their hands on the assets the companies will own. That is the real attraction for many of these investors. They have no interest in whether the No. 23 bus runs after 10 pm, but they have a great interest in what they will own and what they will be able to do with a large site in the centre of Edinburgh. The position is the same in other parts of the country.

Another important point about ownership and the location of offices is their responsiveness. I do not think for a minute that someone in London who had bought Eastern Scottish would care if there was much public outcry about the sale of valuable land, or about services not running. If the Secretary of State is determined to press ahead with privatisation, as I am sure he is, why does he not do something that would be revolutionary and extraordinary, and give the employees at least 51 per cent.

[Mr. Darling]

of the company? He will not, because he does not believe in employees' rights, any more than anyone else in the Government.

The Government are opening the nation's tills and allowing their supporters and allies to run away with the nation's assets. It is no coincidence that companies such as Stagecoach are warm backers of the Government and friendly towards the Government's policies. Of course, they want a slice of the action; they are looking after their own pockets, not the bus services. There will be cowboys and people who are unfit to run a bus service. Some will drive their coaches down roads and motorways at 90 mph. There will be companies such as Stagecoach, which has been prosecuted for breaches of the road traffic regulations. That is the story of privatisation, because these companies' greatest priority is to make a return on their capital. The last time I looked at Stagecoach's timetable, I saw that the company runs a bus service from Edinburgh to Perth, calling at Dunfermline, within an hour. How is that possible within the speed limit?

The Secretary of State was also at pains to say that he wanted to return the bus service to the private sector. It is worth looking at why it was taken into the public sector in the first place. If the right hon. and learned Gentleman examines the minutes of the body that was the predecessor of the corporation of his home town of Edinburgh, he will see that, at the beginning of the century, Edinburgh's private bus operators were taken into municipal ownership because they were failing to provide a service. I suspect that that was done by people who were more in turn politically with the Secretary of State than with me.

If privatisation goes ahead, any hope of an integrated public transport policy will go out of the window. One of Edinburgh's difficulties is the city centre congestion caused by the large number of cars seeking to enter the centre. *[Interruption.]* The Secretary of State and his junior Minister, the hon. Member for Stirling (Mr. Forsyth), shout, "The western relief road." That would have done nothing but add to the congestion. It should be obvious to most people that if we had a public transport system that carried a large number of people quickly and cheaply in and out of the city centre, the problems of car parking and congestion would not exist.

Other European cities recognise that fact. Amsterdam recognises that its centre should be protected and has a cheap and efficient tram and bus service that allows the speedy transit of many people into and out of the city. London is a superb example of public transport breaking down and of people leaving home at 4 am to get to work in their cars. It is happening in Edinburgh, Glasgow and throughout the country—public services are falling apart at the seams because of the lack of public investment and the Government's doctrinaire attitude to public transport. For all those who rely on public bus services, privatisation presents the greatest threat that they have ever known.

The details of the Bill raise issues of principle. Part I deals with the disposal of the Scottish Bus Group. Its five clauses basically come to this: the whole lot is to be transferred to the Secretary of State and he will decide what to do about it. In other words, after the Bill leaves this place, no opportunity will arise for Members of Parliament to discuss on what terms the bus companies are to be sold off, or when. I suspect that—just as in the sale of MacBrayne Haulage to Kildonan—many of the companies will be sold at knockdown prices because the Government will be anxious to sell them off quickly.

After the Bill becomes law, I am sure that we shall see a procession of people coming down from the golf clubs and Conservative clubs, knocking on the door of St. Andrew's house and saying, "How about a slice of the action? We backed you; now you back us by handing over these bus companies nice and cheap." The Bill gives no protection to the public purse or to the travelling public. Instead, we see the vacuous statement that the Secretary of State must consider "sustained and fair competition."

I will tell the Secretary of State what happens in competition. When deregulation was being discussed, we were told that the Scottish Transport Group would not allow its subsidiaries to act as a monopoly. I know—and everyone who understands what was going on also knows—that that is precisely what happened. Lowland Scottish and Eastern Scottish never competed against each other in the tendering; the whole thing was run centrally. The more I was confronted with denials by individual directors, the more obvious it became what was happening.

When the companies are sold, they will slowly but surely amalgamate. Ultimately we shall have a monopoly—or perhaps, as in the case of the electricity industry, a duopoly—with the Scottish travelling public held to ransom in a stranglehold by the private sector, with any unprofitable but socially necessary routes subsidised from the public purse.

Part II of the Bill deals with Caledonian MacBrayne. Although my constituency cannot exactly be described as maritime, as someone who from the age of nought has been travelling on MacBrayne's boats—especially to the outer Hebrides—I know something about them. It is interesting to note that the reason the Government are not privatising all routes other than the Clyde routes is that no private sector operator would touch them, because a profit cannot be made from them.

The Secretary of State talks about investment in new piers, ferries and roll-on/roll-off facilities. No private sector investor would touch that. In many cases, the number of passengers and vehicles carried in the winter months would not provide a commercial return. It would indeed by monstrous if, after public money had been spent on building new vessels for Caledonian MacBrayne, they were handed over at a knockdown price to some private operator.

Incidentally, as I use the vessel comparatively regularly, let me support my hon. Friend the Member for Western Isles (Mr. Macdonald) in his campaign for a new vessel to cross from Ullapool to Stornoway. The present one is little better than a cattle ship. If we are to build causeways from Vatersay—which I thoroughly support—the replacement of the Suilven must be a priority. I hope that the Secretary of State will deal with that, and not then hand it over to some private operator.

The Clyde crossing is also an important issue. It illustrates exactly where public service and private enterprise mix—or do not mix, as the case may be. Let me take the Secretary of State back to what happened when privatisation of the Gourock-Dunoon route was considered. An inquiry was set up because the then Secretary of State was under considerable pressure to help those who operated Western Ferries. It is nonsense to have made Caledonian MacBrayne cut its crossings from Gourock

and Dunoon from two to one an hour, with the result that one expensive ferry is tied up for substantial parts of the day to make it more profitable for the private operator.

That private operator is operating three or four ancient vessels, purchased from a company that used to cross to the Isle of Wight. Caledonian MacBrayne was made to restrict its services simply to give the private sector operator a chance. That is not fair competition. It was rigged from the start to help the private operator. There was a negative public subsidy to keep a public asset tied up at a pier rather than providing the necessary service. As my hon. Friend the Member for Cunninghame, North (Mr. Wilson) said, it would be nonsense to take away that part of Caledonian MacBrayne because the result would be to step up subsidies for the outer-isle services. No doubt the Secretary of State would then say that it costs more because it is in the public sector.

The Bill is obnoxious and is flawed simply because it does not recognise the fact that transport is a public service. Many people rely on buses and ferries as part of their way of life and without them they will be marooned and substantially worse off. It is nonsense to suggest that the Bill will improve matters, except for one or two money-grubbing cowboys who will seek to profit out of it. Those are the people the Government seek to protect. The Secretary of State knows that, as does the Under-Secretary. We will oppose the Bill because it undermines a public service which most people in Scotland want to see remain intact. It is one of the reasons why the Conservative party is currently placed so low in the polls.

10.41 pm

Mr. David Marshall (Glasgow, Shettleston): The Secretary of State and his fellow Tories have made much of employee-management buy-outs in the Scottish Bus Group and in the public transport sector in our cities. The Secretary of State also referred to the Transport and General Workers Union's support for such buy-outs. I declare an interest as a TGWU-sponsored Member of Parliament and I can tell the Secretary of State that the union and its members—the bus workers in the Scottish bus industry—did not decide to opt for such a buy-out by choice. Given freedom of choice, their decision would have been to remain as they are now. However, the Government do not believe in freedom of choice, except for the rich. Therefore, the bus workers have opted for what they see as the next best option. They have opted that way largely out of fear for what will happen to them as a result of the Bill. They are afraid of what will happen to their wages and conditions of work and to their jobs. If they fall into the hands of some of the asset-stripping predators waiting in the wings, who knows what will happen to them? They have every right to be afraid.

I shall look at the much-mentioned and much-maligned Stagecoach company. In Scotland, Stagecoach is a non-union company—if I am wrong I am happy to be corrected and I will apologise—but in England it allows trade union membership. However, it pays lower wages and offers poorer conditions than those in the Scottish Bus Group, but the fares are basically the same. Therefore, Stagecoach is not passing on the benefit of its saving in operational costs to the fare-paying passenger by offering lower fares and better services. It is more concerned with making higher profits and exploiting its employees.

I seek positive clarification from the Minister on several issues which are important to employees in the industry. Is the Minister prepared to include within the articles of sale of the companies the proviso that the successful purchaser must continue with membership of the present pension scheme, which is known as TOPS—the transport operators pension scheme? Will there be any difference in the treatment of pension rights for existing and new employees, or will there simply be no legal requirement to provide a pension scheme? Will workers who have left the industry after years of loyal service—many of them on health grounds—and who have earned entitlement to a pension, have that pension safeguarded? Those are important points. I am sure that the Minister will deal with that when he replies to the debate.

On the question of financial assistance to employee-management buy-outs, the Secretary of State boasts that up to 75 per cent. of professional fees, subject to a maximum payment of £48,750, can be provided. If, however, the bid is successful, that assistance has to be repaid. The Secretary of State gives it with one hand and claws it back with the other. The only beneficiary of that type of assistance will be the ever-increasing number of consultancies that are springing up all over the place. In the main, consultants are the friends of this Government.

My hon. Friend the Member for Cunninghame, North (Mr. Wilson) referred to the 5 per cent. discount on the highest bid that was made available for employee-management buy-outs when the National Bus Company was sold. The Secretary of State has not said whether that discount will apply to Scotland. Even if it will, it is totally insufficient to deter a determined asset stripper who is willing to bid over the odds and more than recoup the extra cost by selling off the assets, which are often on prime sites in our towns and cities.

Bearing in mind the fact that, of the 72 national bus companies, only two were the subject of successful management-employee buy-outs at the time of the original sale, if the Secretary of State will not agree to the suggestion of my hon. Friend the Member for Edinburgh, Central (Mr. Darling) to give 51 per cent. of the shares to the employees of the Scottish Bus Group, I appeal to him—if he genuinely supports employee-management buy-outs—to consider that one of the best ways to achieve it is to offer to them at least a 10 per cent. discount on the highest bid.

Furthermore, how many companies will any bidder be allowed to buy? When the 72 NBC companies were sold, no bidder was allowed to buy more than a maximum of three companies. Only 11 companies are to be sold in Scotland; only one company should therefore be sold to any one bidder. What safeguards does the Secretary of State intend to provide to prevent the regrouping of the Scottish Bus Group under single ownership after privatisation? What will happen if some of the companies fail to find a bidder, especially those companies that operate in rural, remotely populated areas? Will they be kept in public ownership, or will they be given away—perhaps by means of a "buy one, or buy two, and get one free" offer?

Another aspect of the Bill that concerns me greatly is its effect on the bus and coach building industry in Scotland. Traditionally, Walter Alexander and Company of Falkirk has been the main supplier to the Scottish Bus Group and other Scottish bus companies, but already, as a result of deregulation, it is suffering declining orders. Imported buses and minibuses are coming on to the streets in even greater numbers. A privatised Scottish Bus Group will no doubt go down the same road. It will buy even more foreign vehicles. No longer will there be the traditional loyalty and connection between the Scottish Bus Group and Walter Alexander. The Bill will result in the loss of many jobs in the industry.

The Scottish Bus Group was not privatised at the same time as the National Bus Company, because the Government thought then that the result of deregulation would be that the Scottish Bus Group would swallow up most of the other independent and public operators in Scotland and thereby become a much more attractive and saleable commodity at a substantially increased price. However, that did not happen. The Scottish Bus Group lost several million pounds in the Greater Glasgow area as a result of getting it wrong, following deregulation.

The hon. Member for Pembroke (Mr. Bennett) referred to Glasgow. I am glad that he has returned to the Chamber after a considerable absence. We know what happened in Glasgow after deregulation. Hundreds of buses crowded into the city centre, chasing even fewer passengers. They brought the city centre to a standstill. The newspapers were full of pictures. National television showed what was happening. The only person who was unaware of it was the hon. Member for Pembroke.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: The hon. Gentleman says that I was the only person who was unaware of it, but when he intervened during my speech I told him that the traffic commissioner turned down that complaint.

Mr. Marshall: Yes. When I intervened I also put the record straight as to why Strathclyde regional council felt that it was necessary to approach the traffic commissioner. I think that he made the wrong decision, but that is a matter of opinion.

My hon. Friend the Member for Clydesdale (Mr. Hood) is correct. His constituents, together with those of many other hon. Members, lost out. Buses were withdrawn from rural areas so that they could be used on what were believed to be the most lucrative routes in the Glasgow area. It was the economics of the madhouse, and they ended the problem. I am sorry to say that the fact that such behaviour was not profitable, rather than the actions of the traffic commissioners, ended it all. Indeed, the Scottish Bus Group lost millions of pounds.

The hon. Member for Pembroke seemed to welcome the purchase of London buses and the reappearance of conductresses, or clippies. The purchase of 30-year-old, and even older, open-ended ex-London Routemasters was not welcomed in Scotland by those of us who are anxious about safety and reliability in public transport. Glasgow got rid of such buses in the 1960s, largely because too many passengers got injured boarding and alighting at stops and elsewhere, causing a hazard to traffic.

The clapped-out ex-London buses kept breaking down in many parts of Glasgow. That was another problem which the traffic commissioners examined. The buses should have been in a scrapyard, not on the streets of a major city. I agree with the hon. Member for Pembroke that the conductresses were popular, but competition has meant that they have almost disappeared. As many of us thought at the time, the move was simply a temporary publicity gimmick.

The main emphasis of the Bill is on profitability, not the provision of services. At the moment, local authorities can and do subsidise unprofitable but socially desirable routes. As there is a widespread population outwith the heavily populated central belt of Scotland, it is not unreasonable to forecast that the majority of rural routes will be deemed unprofitable by private operators or left to depend on the mercy of local authorities which the Government continually deprive of the resources necessary to provide proper services for their electors.

The Bill has little to do with transport or providing services—it is all to do with selling off publicly owned assets at knockdown prices and transferring 10,000 workers from the public to the private sector, and it is yet another attack on trade union organisation and the wages and conditions of workers.

From 1960 to 1969, I was a transport worker. I spent two years as a tramcar conductor—I think that I am the only ex-"cour" conductor in the House—and seven years as a bus conductor, all with Glasgow corporation transport. Bus workers everywhere do an excellent job on behalf of the nation. They work all manner of shifts, every day of the week and every week of the year, sometimes in the most atrocious weather conditions and in the most difficult social conditions. What is their reward for all this loyal service? A kick in the teeth by the Bill. They deserve much better.

The Bill will do nothing to benefit the economy of Scotland or to create jobs there. Indeed, it will cause jobs to be lost. For all those reasons, the Bill is bad and deserves our opposition.

10.53 pm

Mr. Thomas McAvoy (Glasgow, Rutherglen): I am quite convinced that what we heard from the hon Member for Pembroke (Mr. Bennett) was nothing less than a grovelling performance in an attempt to get some sort of job in the Government. I wish him every failure in that.

The performance of the hon. Member for Argyll and Bute (Mrs. Michie) at the prospect of jobs being gained in her constituency at the expense of another was quite disgraceful.

Many people will recall the moment of truth for the right hon. Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup (Mr. Heath) when, as Prime Minister, he faced the reality of privatising Rolls-Royce. If he had not nationalised it, the company would have been finished or, more likely, snapped up by foreign buyers. The Government that the right hon. Gentleman formed started off on similar lines to the present one. Public ownership was considered a bad thing but, to his credit, the right hon. Gentleman did what he had to do for the sake of the country when he was confronted by the Rolls-Royce crisis. The right hon. Gentleman recognised that the country could not be run with a dogmatic approach to managing the economy and providing public services.

The Secretary of State for Scotland is now facing the reality that the dogma of privatisation is not a talisman for economic prosperity. No doubt his continued advocacy of it has more to do with personal ambition. He knows that the Tory Back Benches are full of people with arrested mental development who jump up and get excited at the mention of privatisation.

The Secretary of State for Scotland is beginning to recognise reality. That is demonstrated by his comments on 30 November when he said:

"I made it clear that the Government had no preconception as to whether the privatisation of Caledonian MacBrayne would be a realistic option."

We are told continually that privatisaton is the answer to everything, and that there is no alternative, yet the right hon. and learned Gentleman is on record as questioning whether privatisation would be a realistic option. Let us not hear any more of the Tory claim that they have a superior method of running the modern economy. His attitude to CalMac demonstrates that the Secretary of State for Scotland has taken a small but significant step on the road to Damascus. Let us have no more hypocrisy.

The Scottish Transport Group, which employs 10,000 people and has a turnover of £180 million, is obviously an important factor in the Scottish economy in addition to its crucial social role in Scottish life. The objectives of the Bill have been well summed up by the Secretary of State, as follows:

"To manage its bus operations as it would do in the interests of private shareholders seeking in particular to retain customer goodwill".

That demonstrates the Government's priorities, not only in the Bill but in their general approach to the economy. The second objective is to provide services "subject to Objective 1." It is quite clear that the provision of services is subject to the interests of private shareholders.

The Secretary of State for Scotland takes the view that the travelling public will benefit from the greater sensitivity

[Mr. Thomas McAvoy]

to the market that a private company necessarily has. The intellectual poverty of such a banal statement does not square with the intellect of the Secretary of State. It seems that, in spite of his intellect, he is grovelling to the extremists on his own Back Benches. He is just another Tory politician on the make, prepared to sacrifice his credibility for his career.

Let us consider the service provided since deregulation. The Secretary of State for Scotland said:

"As he knows, Strathclyde regional council is perfectly able to provide public funds to support the continuation of routes that individual companies do not want to provide. The regional council is the appropriate authority to decide whether there is a social need for a bus service on a particular route."—[*Official Report*, 30 November 1988, Vol. 142, c. 709-21.]

If ever I was tempted to judge the Secretary of State as a politician who was fair and above board, that temptation left me when I heard that statement.

As a former Strathclyde councillor, I remember the agonies that I suffered in the preparation of the council's budget. Against the background of successive cuts in rate support grant, we had to rob Peter to pay Paul in trying to maintain Strathclyde's public services.

Strathclyde regional council is one of the best run councils in Scotland. Even the Secretary of State has paid tribute to its record. To claim that Strathclyde is perfectly able to provide public funds for the continuation of routes does not stand up to scrutiny, and the Secretary of State knows it.

I disagree with the comments of my hon. Friend the Member for Cunninghame, South (Mr. Lambie) about Strathclyde region. Strathclyde's Labour administration is doing a first-class job, in spite of the Government, and all Opposition Members should be giving it our support.

Deregulation is not working. The Scottish Consumer Council says:

"It is still too early to give a final verdict on the effects of deregulation. The situation is unstable and the forthcoming privatisation of the Scottish Bus Group throws everything in the air."

The Secretary of State has made great play of his enthusiasm for employee-management buy-outs. As has been said before, buy-outs have been preferred to control of the workers' future going to people who do not care. There is nothing wrong with employees buying out these companies—this is a means of common ownership which the Opposition welcome—but the motivation for employee buy-outs should not be employees' desperation to retain control over their future. They should be motivated by a thought-out, principled approach, encompassing economic and social factors.

The Secretary of State said that the Unity Trust bank was supported by the trade union movement. He should note the role of the Co-operative bank in this venture. The background to Unity Trust shows the support that came from the trade union and co-operative movements. It is a bit late for the Tories to claim the credit for that development. The Secretary of State should take steps to ensure that the pattern of employee buy-outs in Scotland differs from that in England. These buy-outs, if motivated by a commitment to the community of which they are part, would be crucial in maintaining jobs, standards and services.

The Bill will do nothing for the travelling public and employees unless control is gained by employee buy-outs. The Secretary of State has done little to encourage them. Many of us remain suspicious that he will be content to allow the Tories' friends in commerce and industry to acquire these companies, with all the dangers for employees and the public associated with the Tory dogma of privatisation. For all those reasons, we shall oppose the Bill.

11.1 pm

Mr. John McFall (Dumbarton): It is getting late, but my constituents would not forgive me if I did not raise the points which they have made to me in the past few months about the Bill. They will be affected by the geographical subsidiaries, Central and Kelvin, which will be amalgamated and privatised. The service will become even worse in my constituency.

When I go around my constituency, I am asked, "Are the Government interested in public transport, or is it a thing of the past?" Sadly, it appears from some comments that it is a thing of the past. We have had two doses of the Government's attempts at transport in Scotland. We had deregulation. My experience, and that of my constituents, was dismal. As one elderly constituent said to me, "Since 1979, the Prime Minister has wanted to put us back on our feet. She has—because there are no buses left in the area." That was the result of deregulation in my area. Because of their stoicism, my constituents have told me that they have more chance of catching the flu than of catching a bus.

What do we have to add to deregulation? Bearing in mind that deregulation involved bidding for contracts, we now have privatisation as well. That is not deregulation which just invites tenders for routes; it involves opening up to the market everything to do with buses, with the attendant issues of bus networks, costs, frequency of service and safety. Where is the social dimension?

On 30 November, the Secretary of State talked about the social dimensions:

"Strathclyde regional council is perfectly able to provide public funds to support the continuation of routes that individual companies do not want to provide. The regional council is the appropriate authority to decide whether there is a social need for a bus service on a particular route."—[*Official Report*, 30 November 1988; Vol. 142, c. 721.]

The right hon. and learned Gentleman was telling us that social need was not met through privatisation. To meet it, we have to go to the local authority, which has been deprived of money year after year. Where is the social concern in the Bill? There are implications for local authorities in respect of assistance for the elderly, the handicapped and school transport and integration with fare-paying passengers.

What chance is there of a social dimension with the Scottish Bus Group working to a profit target? What faith should be put in the Secretary of State's statement about employee participation? Despite several opportunities, the Secretary of State has still given no commitment about employee participation. He said:

"It will be encouraged by the provision of financial assistance to management-employee teams wanting to bid for their companies and offering the prospect of locally based management with real employee participation."

As my hon. Friend the Member for Glasgow, Shettleston (Mr. Marshall) said, the Secretary of State gave no figures to support that. The Secretary of State's statement contains no commitment.

The Secretary of State went on to say that the Government cannot guarantee that employee management

"will be the end result, because that will depend on the proposals eventually put before us."—[*Official Report*, 30 November 1988; Vol. 142, c. 708-21.]

There is no commitment in that respect, just as there is no commitment to the social dimension.

We should remember that when we consider what happened to the 72 component companies of the National Bus Group in England when only two went to employee participation buy-out. That again shows why we do not have any faith in the Secretary of State's statement.

Safety is an important aspect, but it has not been mentioned tonight. We should remember the Clapham Junction rail accident this week and the King's Cross and Herald of Free Enterprise accidents. Surely safety should have been an issue to be considered in Scotland's transport policy.

The environmental aspect has not been mentioned either in this debate. We have been told that the Prime Minister is interested in the green vote, but what about the greenhouse effect, lead-free petrol, overcrowded roads and an integrated transport policy? No reference has been made to that because the Government have a quick-buck mentality. This is a quick sell-off and the Government have no concern for anything that is left behind.

Finally, I shall deal with the rural dimension of the Bill and its effects on my constituency. I visited ScotRail last week and it informed me that tourism is the mainstay of Scottish rural routes. However, according to *The Guardian* last week, British Rail is now considering whether a bus service would be a better use of Government subsidy. Two routes in my constituency—the Helensburgh to Fort William route and the Helensburgh to Oban route—could disappear as a result of that. If that happens, those areas and communities dependent on tourism will decline. The life of the community is therefore in peril.

There are no Labour district councillors in Helensburgh; they are all Conservative district councillors and there is an independent regional councillor. If I stand in Helensburgh town centre with a petition, I shall find 100 per cent. support because the Helensburgh public want to retain their communities, as they have repeatedly told me. They know that the bus service would not work. They need a rail service to retain the rural dimension. In effect, they are saying that they need an integrated transport policy.

What attention have the Government paid to such a policy? When was the last time that the Secretary of State met the chairman of ScotRail or the chairmen of the bus companies to discuss an integrated transport policy? The Bill makes no mention of an integrated transport policy. There is no commitment to such a policy, to communities or ordinary people. People's interests have been set aside in this sale in the pursuit of ideological goals and cuts in public expenditure. The Government are saying that they do not want to spend any more or to give any commitment to a public sector service in Scotland, whether rural or urban. In other words, they are casting aside people's social concerns.

The Bill shows a total lack of concern for social, environmental and transport issues. It will do nothing for the ordinary person, the community or the country, and that is why it deserves to be rejected tonight.

11.10 pm

Mrs. Maria Fyfe (Glasgow, Maryhill): Like my hon. Friend the Member for Glasgow, Shettleston (Mr. Marshall), I have an interest to declare. I, too, am a Member sponsored by the Transport and General Workers Union.

I have another interest to declare, which is shared by only one other person in the Chamber at this moment, and that is you, Madam Deputy Speaker. My second interest is that I am a female. That being so, I want to talk about safety, a topic which has not yet been mentioned. The male Conservative Members present do not have sufficient imagination to understand what it is like to travel alone, late at night, in a lonely area. They do not know what it is like to sit alone in a bus station late at night. They do not know what it is like to be afraid and to be wondering constantly how long it will be before the bus arrives. A woman on her own may be confronted by drunks fighting or by one man making a pest of himself. It is sad that women live with these fears daily. They often do not have cars of their own, so they must rely on public transport.

Some hon. Members might wonder what my remarks have to do with privatisation. The answer is simple. In the drive for profits, services are cut and the staffing of stations is reduced. Travellers are less safe when there are fewer staff at stations, and that will be the result of the quest for profits. Everyone in Scotland knows that. The Conservative parliamentary women's committee has been formed presumably so that it can deal with issues that concern women, and it is sad that no Conservative Member on the committee is present to protect the interests of women travellers.

Mr. Ian Bruce (Dorset, South): Will the hon. Lady accept my assurance that in my constituency, where there has been deregulation, we have seen many new operators with minibuses? Women say how safe they feel when they are close to the drivers, who have a supervisory role. The instances of attacks on women and muggings of young men have decreased greatly since deregulation.

Mrs. Fyfe: I do not think that that intervention answers the problem.

Mr. Hood: Does my hon. Friend agree that the Yorkshire Ripper was a driver?

Mrs. Fyfe: I shall not give way again because time is short.

The fact is that women feel a lack of security and are afraid to travel alone at night in lonely areas. Only a few months ago a woman was murdered on a train—*[Interruption.]* I do not know why Conservative Members find that funny. It is not funny to travel alone and to be frightened. The response of Conservative Members shows their insensitivity.

The hon. Member for Pembroke (Mr. Bennett) talked about the Bill and linked it with popular capitalism. He has failed to notice that privatisation is not the least bit popular in Scotland, especially in the form contained in the Bill. The great majority of the Scottish population do not want it.

When a family is able to run a private car, it is usually used by the husband for his journeys to and from work. His wife will get around by using public transport, along with her children, whatever the inconvenience may be. In the search for profits, companies will cut services, alter

[Mrs. Fyfe]

routes and remove buses from routes. Women with children to look after, or elderly parents, will suffer all the inconvenience, while others seek to make a fast buck.

When the public are dissatisfied because of a lack of service, who will be accountable? Conservative Members have failed to answer that question. The type of complaints about private sector bus services in my constituency is almost unbelievable. A bus was removed from service on a route that served a hospital. Passengers have had to wait three hours in some instances when travelling from one place to another. It is impossible to travel by bus to some local hospitals.

In my constituency a young boy travels from his home to his secondary school and he has been refused access to a particular company's buses because one driver claimed that his behaviour was unacceptable. Oddly enough, the boy's behaviour is acceptable on every other bus he travels on. When his father protested, the bus company did not have the courtesy to answer—*[Interruption.]*

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. I would appreciate it if those hon. Members who wish to carry on conversations would do so on the other side of the swing doors.

Mrs. Fyfe: Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker. Your having to intervene demonstrates the incredible lack of interest on the Conservative Benches. *[Interruption.]*

To finish my point, that boy's father has written to the bus company three times, but it did not have the courtesy to answer. He came to me and asked me to take up his case. All I could do was write to the company and hope that it would respond to me.

Mr. David Tredinnick (Bosworth): Will the hon. Lady give way?

Mrs. Fyfe: The hon. Gentleman has just come into the Chamber, so I will not give way.

When the Secretary of State for Scotland announced the privatisation, he referred to the consultation with Quayle Munro, the accountants. I asked him whether he had ever discussed safety and convenience for women and children passengers. He said that he had not done so, because he did not believe that that had any relevance. He had better wait and see, because the complaints will be legion and I will deliver to him every complaint from the women of Scotland as I receive them.

11.16 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Scotland (Lord James Douglas-Hamilton): I congratulate the hon. Member for Cunninghame, North (Mr. Wilson) on his strong support for our decision on Vatersay, which will be very important for the Western Isles. However, I take issue with him on one of his earlier points. He said that safety had suffered as a result of deregulation. The evidence does not bear that out and, despite the increase in vehicle miles run by buses since deregulation, there has been a fall in the number of casualties in accidents involving public service vehicles between 1985-86 and 1986-87. Nor is there any evidence to suggest that vehicle quality has deteriorated.

The hon. Member for Cunninghame, North said that bus services should be provided in the social interest. Of course the subsidy arrangements provided in the Transport Act 1985, following deregulation, allow regional and islands councils, quite rightly, to subsidise any bus services that they consider to be socially necessary. Councillors have the necessary powers to maintain the rural bus network and fill the gaps in the commercial network where they consider that there is a social need.

The hon. Member for Edinburgh, Central (Mr. Darling) also raised the question of socially necessary services. I assure him that the need for regional councils to subsidise bus services is taken into account in the rate support grant calculation, both in reaching decisions on expenditure provision and in grant distribution. That will certainly continue in future. He omitted to say that, when I made representations to him after the withdrawal of bus services from my constituency, he acceded to a large part of my representations.

Mr. Darling: Of course I did, because I believe in providing a public bus service as a service. I was happy to accede to the hon. Gentleman. I was also happy to tell his constituents why it had all come about. Will the Under-Secretary of State tell me why the leader of the Conservative group on the Lothian regional council, Mr. Brian Meek, believes that one of the elements of high spending in Lothian regional council is the amount of money it spends subsidising the bus service? Is he saying that Brian Meek is wrong?

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The hon. Gentleman should be clear about the fact that there are socially necessary services. He and I both recognise that, and I have no regret about approaching him.

The hon. Member for Moray (Mrs. Ewing) raised the question of rural bus services. Research on the effects of bus deregulation shows that rural bus networks have been largely maintained both in extent and in frequency.

I wish to answer many of the points raised, but first I shall briefly explain the Government's objectives. First, we want to complete the dismantling of control over the Scottish bus industry so that it is free to respond to the needs and demands of consumers. Deregulation was the first step in that process and, two years on, the bus network remains and the number of vehicle miles provided has increased. Where bus operators have seen opportunities to provide more services, they have been free to do so and there has been a net increase in the number of vehicle miles. Where services have been lost, it is because local authorities felt that it would not be justifiable to provide, at public expense, the continuation of such services. Where services were considered to be socially necessary, they have been retained at a reduced cost overall. New services have been provided.

In a freer bus market it is anomalous for the dominant position to be held by a publicly owned bus company with more than half the total market. It is also anomalous for such a company to be centrally controlled in a market designed to encourage local responsiveness, because the whole purpose of our policy is to do just that. The Bill provides powers for a freer amd more responsive market. The Scottish Bus Group will be divided into 11 units, with nine local operating units. Our aim is to create new, locally based companies that will not only be for the benefit of the bus traveller, but will boost enterprise in Scotland. The enthusiasm of management and workers to take part in that process shows that there is a spirit of enterprise.

Our second objective is to make suitable arrangements for the continuation of the important lifeline ferry services on the west coast of Scotland provided by Caledonian MacBrayne. Every Scottish Member will be aware of the verse:

"The earth is the Lord's and all it contains
Except for the Islands, and they are MacBrayne's."

It is unthinkable that we should be other than totally committed to the continuation of at least the present quality of service. Our careful examination of CalMac's operations show that, for the most part, its routes are and will continue to be loss-making. For that reason, it is not a straightforward case for privatisation and it will be transferred to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State.

Mr. Wilson: While the Minister is in the mood to quote Hebridean folklore, perhaps he would say whether he is aware that the word "Tory" in Gaelic means "thief".

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: I am not sure that the hon. Gentleman has his facts right—it certainly does not spring from what I am saying. CalMac is providing a lifeline service to the islands, which will most certainly continue.

My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State will set up a new board for CalMac and give it a clear directive to examine how its operations can be provided in a more cost-effective way while maintaining at least the present standard of service. During recent years there has been substantial investment in CalMac and future arrangements will ensure that our commitment to improve support for ferry services will continue to be honoured.

The hon. Member for Glasgow, Shettleston (Mr. Marshall) raised the question of pensions, about which there has been some concern. It is a complex issue and discussions have already started. I am glad to tell the hon. Gentleman that the Scottish Transport Group has appointed an expert pensions adviser who is already holding discussions with the unions. Suitable arrangements will be made to safeguard pension rights and to provide for their continuation. It will be for the privatised companies to establish new pension arrangements for their employees.

When making bids, prospective purchasers will be asked to state their proposals for pensions. The terms of new pension arrangements may be different from those of the Scottish Transport Group. The group will provide transitional arrangements to ensure continuity of pension provision until new schemes are provided in the privatised companies. Arrangements will be made to secure in full the rights of existing pensioners and accrued rights under deferred pensions. That means that all existing pensioners will continue to receive the same pension as they would have had if the Scottish Transport Group had continued.

For existing employees all accrued entitlements up to an employee's date of leaving the STG pension scheme will be fully protected in accordance with existing provisions with regard to future pensions increases. Employees will have a choice either to opt for a transfer value to be paid into their new scheme or to have deferred pension rights under their existing accrued entitlements.

New pension arrangements will require to be established also for those employees of Caledonian MacBrayne who are currently within STG pension arrangements.

Mr. David Marshall: I am grateful to the Minister for his answer on employees who have already earned a pension entitlement and left the industry. Is he saying that existing employees, after their transfer to a new company and after a transitional period, could well have their pension scheme changed to a scheme inferior to the one they enjoy or to no scheme?

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: I said that employees will have a choice between opting for a transfer value to be paid into the new scheme or to have deferred pension rights under existing accrued entitlements, depending on which is more favourable to the employee concerned. It is important that an expert pensions adviser is now in touch with the trade unions on that point and is following it up.

A further important issue which has been raised is management-employee buy-outs. My hon. Friends the Members for Dumfries (Sir H. Monro) and for Tayside, North (Mr. Walker) provided strong support for that, as there has been throughout Scotland. We wish to encourage such buy-outs and preference will be given to bids incorporating a real degree of employee participation. The Secretary of State has already announced the financial assistance that will be available. That is a maximum assistance of £48,750. Seminars will be held with managers on the general principles of these buy-outs as well as video presentations——

Mr. McKelvey: It disturbs me that the Minister says that consultations will be held with managers on manager-employee buy-outs. I should have thought that, in a democracy, we should talk to the workers.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The hon. Gentleman is right. Seminars will be held with managers on the general principles and a video presentation will be given to the work force at all depots.

I shall show the House how strong is the feeling in favour of management-worker buy-outs. The general manager of Strathtay is reported in *The Scotsman* as saying:

"We consulted with the staff throughout the company, held meetings at all the garages and the view came back loud and clear that they wanted to attempt to mount a bid."

Lowland's general manager said:

"We are absolutely delighted that Mr. Rifkind has accepted our strong argument that Lowland Scottish should be allowed to stand alone. Now we must convince him that a management-employee buy-out would work."

The general manager of Northern Scottish Omnibuses said that the intended to lead a management-employee buy-out. Mr. James Moffat, general manager of Highland Scottish Omnibuses, said that staff had started a savings scheme with a view to taking part in a buy-out. For Eastern, Mr. Gall said that the company was encouraging its people to support a buy-out bid because it is the best deal for everybody and a sound proposition. *The Scotsman* reported:

"Mr. Shoat, the Scottish TGWU secretary, said that he hoped that Unity Trust, the trade union bank, might provide help for employees trying to put together buyout packages."

Mr. Wilson: The Minister is quoting from *The Scotsman*, and I am sure that he will not wish to be selective. He will also wish to quote from Mr. Hamish Morrison, the chief executive of the Scottish Council (Development and Industry), who said:

"Simply to offer assistance with drawing up a bid, with no guarantee that management and employees will not be outbid by competitors with deeper pockets, is wishful thinking."

[Mr. Wilson]

Would the Minister care to address that concern?

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The hon. Gentleman leads me directly to the question of preference. My right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State said today that the price would not be the only factor in deciding what bids to accept. He would have to take into account as the main test the promotion of sustained and fair competition, the extent of employee participation and price. Management-employee buy-outs, by their nature, create a large number of companies, which add to competition, and that will be borne in mind.

My right hon. and learned Friend made it clear that Scottish-based companies with a significant measure of employee participation will satisfy some of the competition and participation objectives, but it is essential that the price is relevant to the value of the assets. The House will be aware of the strong interest that we have in seeing the spread of employee ownership and participation in management-employee buy-outs, but not regardless of cost.

Mr. Robert Hughes: Will the Minister give an undertaking that the bids for each and every one of the 11 companies will be made public so that we can judge the effectiveness of the Minister's decision making?

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: I shall look at that point.

Many hon. Members have expressed concern about ownership safeguards. One of the main objectives of privatisation is to boost enterprise in Scotland through the creation of locally based companies. One of the best ways to do this is through management-employee buy-outs, which we are keen to encourage. However, no guarantees can be given about the eventual outcome of the bidding process, nor about what happens to companies after privatisation. One Scottish company bought four English companies at the NBC privatisation, and we cannot deny English companies the same right to bid in Scotland.

The best defence against takeover is for a company to be well run and successful, and we had this very much in mind in deciding on the units for sale and their size. Legislation already exists to control anti-competition practices. Therefore, any proposed mergers of companies after privatisation will be subject to competition legislation.

The hon. Member for Cunninghame, North asked about asset stripping, and other hon. Members expressed concern about this. Specialist advice on property matters will be sought. Arrangements will be made in each case to ensure that either the future development value of bus companies is reflected in sales proceeds or that the conditions of sale ensure that an appropriate share of future development value is recouped if a property is sold within a specified time. We shall be careful to ensure that there is no scope for asset stripping.

This is an obvious point, but we are committed to an upgrading of the ferry services. Expenditure has been more than £22 million on capital works, including pier works and ships, and since 1979 we have spent some £78·7 million in direct support of ferry travel, which is a substantial amount.

The hon. Member for Glasgow, Maryhill (Mrs. Fyfe) asked about consumers making their views known. They can do so through the Shipping Services Advisory Committee, and the Scottish Transport Users Consultative Committee. My hon. Friend the Member for Dumfries raised this point as well. From recent discussions with the islands' community representatives, I am aware of how strongly they feel about the value of these bodies in making representations, and I see no reason to change the consultation arrangements when CalMac is taken into the ownership of my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State. It is vital that the views of consumers are taken into account. It is our intention to appoint members of the new CalMac board with first-hand knowledge of the islands and their needs. I emphasise the importance that the Government place on the responsiveness of the company to the community that it serves.

The hon. Member for Renfrew, West and Inverclyde (Mr. Graham) made a sincere and passionate speech on behalf of his constituents at Gourock. The points that he mentioned will be looked at, but there are sound reasons for moving the headquarters to Oban.

Mr. Graham: Why?

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: They will be nearer the centre of operations, and many people recognise that advantage. Nevertheless, that decision will require careful consideration, and the Government will look to the new board to deal positively with that issue, taking into account all relevant considerations in relation to the Clyde.

The privatisation of the upper Clyde will inevitably lead to a shift in the company's sphere of influence. I appreciate the hon. Member's fears that there will be a reduction in the number of jobs in his constituency, but two important factors must be taken into account. First, there are the commercial aspects of CalMac's operations to be considered and the greater emphasis on Western Isles services in the future. Secondly, the jobs in question will not be lost to Scotland. The leader in the *Glasgow Herald* commented:

> "The proposal to shift the centre of administrative operations to Oban makes sense. In a unitary state, the furthest flung areas have as strong a claim to efficient public services as anywhere else."

Mr. Graham *rose*——

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: I have given way frequently, and I shall make this the last occasion.

Mr. Graham I feel sure that I am not hearing the Minister right. I believe he said that a board will be established having decision-making powers. But now he is saying that the board must move from Gourock to Oban —so there will be nothing but hard-line guidance.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: When the hon. Gentleman reads *Hansard* tomorrow, he will see what I said. His points will be carefully considered, but it is very much our hope that the headquarters will move closer to the centre of operations.

As to the Gourock-Dunoon and Weymss bay-Rothesay services, there is no doubt that the situation in respect of the Gourock-Dunoon crossing is anomalous. It is an unsubsidised private sector crossing competing with a subsidised public sector crossing on a similar route. The vessels Jupiter, Juno and Saturn making that crossing are shared with the Weymss bay-Rothesay crossing and are interchangeable. There seems a good case for the private

sector to take on those crossings, and we shall ask the board to investigate with the private sector the possibility of transferring those routes.

The hon. Member for Argyll and Bute (Mrs. Michie) asked about RET. It has been thoroughly considered in the past, and the Secretary of State announced the reasons for his position on 21 February 1984. A flexible RET system is something of a contradiction in terms, as fares are meant to reflect the cost of travelling the same distance by road, and remove charges from controversy.

The hon. Member for Argyll and Bute asked also about rural railway lines. The Bill's scope does not include them. The hon. Lady said that rural lines are under threat, but I reassure her that British Rail has no plans to close railway lines in Scotland. She was referring to something that was purely press speculation.

The Bill is important for Scotland's public transport. We believe that it will make Scottish bus services more competitive and responsive to their customers. We believe that it will provide a boost to enterprise in Scotland, giving working men and women the opportunity to have a stake in their industry.

Mr. McKelvey: On a point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. I notice that the Strangers' Gallery has been cleared. Is there a reason for that?

Madam Deputy Speaker: There is, to my knowledge, no reason for it. I can still see people in the Strangers' Gallery, but if right hon. and hon. Members are concerned, I shall call for a report immediately.

Later—

Madam Deputy Speaker: I understand that members of the public were being moved to another gallery to give them a better view.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Hon. Members can be reassured that nothing they said caused them to be moved.

Caledonian MacBrayne, with a new independent board, will continue to provide the important lifeline services to the islands to which we are committed, but it will do so with ever-increasing responsiveness.

This Bill is yet another example of the Government's determination to give the Scottish people control of their destiny.

11.40 pm

Mr. Dennis Canavan (Falkirk, West): On a point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. Will you confirm that this debate can continue indefinitely, despite the fact that the Minister has sat down?

Madam Deputy Speaker: That is quite correct. I was under the impression that all hon. Members knew the Standing Orders of the House.

Mr. Canavan: I had no intention of participating in the debate until I heard the ludicrous and unsatisfactory speech made by the Minister. In previous encounters with him I have described him as the most incompetent Minister in the Scottish Office, which is saying something.

I shall encourage many of my hon. Friends to speak in this debate, which can go on indefinitely. At Scottish Question Time, English infiltrators come in to disrupt our proceedings, but at least tonight we can inconvenience them by keeping them out of their beds.

I must declare a constituency interest. I travel on buses occasionally: I take the bus from my house in Bannockburn to the station, to get to London. I know that, once upon a time, the Minister's ancestors came to Bannockburn for adventurist militaristic purposes, and that he has benefited greatly from that. His ancestors came on horses; after this Bill, even he might have to do so—*[Interruption.]* —or, as some of my hon. Friends have suggested, he might come by stagecoach.

The Scottish Midland bus group and Scottish Bus Group are in my constituency. The latter until recently serviced buses throughout Scotland——

Mr. Alex Salmond (Banff and Buchan): I know that the hon. Gentleman will want to reinforce that point before the English Members who have crowded into the Chamber to hear his speech leave again because they think he will go on for some time. I know, too, that the hon. Gentleman will want to make a point about the mental health of the Minister responsible for health in Scotland, who claims massive minorities for legislation like this.

Is the degree of public support for this Bill equivalent to the 19 per cent. who support the poll tax, the 23 per cent. who support student loans and the 33 per cent. who support opting out? Or is it more equivalent to the 61 per cent. who are dissatisfied with the Secretary of State for Scotland, the 71 per cent. who are dissatisfied with the Prime Minister or, in my opinion, the 99 per cent. who are dissatisfied with the hon. Member for Stirling (Mr. Forsyth)?

Mr. Canavan: I am one of the constituents of the hon. Member for Stirling. I remember him coming out in support of the Transport and General Workers Union at Bannockburn bus garage and saying that he would be in favour of a trade union workers' co-operative taking it over.

I should be interested to know whether the Minister —the hon. Member for Stirling—still supports the TGWU at that garage, of whether he is now intent, like the Duke of Hamilton's brother and the Secretary of State for Scotland and all the rest, on selling off the Scottish Bus Group to the richest buyer who comes along. I am waiting for the hon. Member for Stirling to come in on this, but he will be a wee bit embarrassed, because he would not be the hon. Member for Stirling if it were not for the Tory influence through the establishment and the old boy network whereby Sheriff Principal Taylor put a gerrymandering exercise into effect and made Stirling a winnable seat for the hon. Gentleman, and brought him here not just as a Member of Parliament but as Minister for this, that and the other. That is the way in which the Tory party is operating in Scotland at present, not just gerrymandering but mishandling many important public services—health, education and the public transport services that we are discussing tonight.

Mr. Jim Sillars (Glasgow, Govan): Did the hon. Gentleman hear the Minister say in his winding-up speech —I was fascinated and hung on every word—that the Bill was part of the Tory party's plan to give the Scottish people their rightful destiny? Would he care to comment on exactly how the Tories interpret their right to give the Scottish people their rightful destiny, in relation to their mandate?

Mr. Canavan: I do not understand how on earth the present Government claim to have a mandate for anything from the people of Scotland. If they are delivering anything at all to the people of Scotland, it is poverty, deprivation and increasing injustice—and, in this instance, a rundown in our public transport services which, although not perfect, have served the people of Scotland very well over many years.

A straw poll, or even an accurate opinion poll—or a local or general election—on public transport alone would, I think, reveal that the vast majority of people in Scotland were in favour of public ownership. That would be not for doctrinaire reasons, but for the simple reason that in their experience it has served them, their families and the work force. It has served many shoppers and commuters who cannot afford the chauffeur-driven cars that Ministers have, and thus rely on reasonable standards of public transport with reasonable fares. If that involves subsidy or cross-subsidy, I am very much in favour of it.

Mr. David Marshall: Will my hon. Friend give way?

Mr. Canavan: Yes, I shall give way to my hon. Friend, who has much more knowledge of public transport than I have, having been brought up with it.

Mr. Marshall: My hon. Friend referred to the problems that the Bill would pose for companies in his constituency. Earlier I mentioned the firm of Walter Alexander, coach and bus builders, which is in his constituency. Clearly he is more familiar with the firm's problems than I am. Would he care to elaborate on the problems that the Bill will cause for it?

Mr. Canavan: I understand that my hon. Friend began his working life as a bus conductor.

Mr. Marshall: A tram conductor.

Mr. Canavan: A tram conductor. My hon. Friend was also educated in my constituency, at Larbert high school and other illustrious educational establishments in the area. I know that as a result he can speak with great eloquence and expertise about public transport in Scotland. I have the Scottish Midland bus group in my constituency and the Walter Alexander coachbuilding company. The Bill will obviously have a knock-on, or should I say knock-off, effect on the coach building industry.

A year ago I led a delegation from Scottish Bus Group Engineering Ltd, one of the subsidiaries of the Scottish Transport Group. The Minister will remember that because I went along with local authority and trade union representatives on behalf of the work force at the Scottish Bus Group which is located in Glasgow road, Falkirk. We feared that the Scottish Bus Group was planning to close down the operation in Glasgow road, Falkirk because privatisation was, as I described it at the meeting with the Minister, "just around the corner".

The Secretary of State is conversing and perhaps conspiring with the Government Whip. He probably wonders what time the debate will finish. The cards are in our hands for a change, and I will carry on regardless. If the Secretary of State wants to get his troops home early to their beds tonight, we deserve a better reply to the debate than that we received from the Duke of Hamilton's wee brother. He has probably never been on a bus in his life. I have certainly never seen him on a bus in Bannockburn. *[Interruption.]* Perhaps the Minister will correct me later if I am wrong.

Mr. Sillars: On a point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. I am trying to listen to the hon. Member for Falkirk, West (Mr. Canavan) who is making a valuable contribution to the debate. May I remind you that earlier this evening you asked several Conservative Members who continued to talk through speeches to remove themselves from the Chamber and talk elsewhere?

Madam Deputy Speaker: I need no reminding. Three times this evening I have asked hon. Members who wish to carry on conversations to do so on the other side of the swing doors.

Mr. Canavan: I was talking about the Government's lack of mandate in Scotland for their transport policies particularly the Bill. As you probably know, Madam Deputy Speaker, I have been rather outspoken about the abuse of patronage powers by the Government and the increasing abuse of those powers since they were rejected by 76 per cent. of Scottish people at the general election. I have referred to the Secretary of State using his patronage powers as a job creation scheme for failed Tory Members of Parliament, whether it is Michael Ancram, John MacKay——

Mr. Bill Walker: On a point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. Like you, I have been trying to relate the hon. Gentleman's speech to the contents of the Bill. I can see nothing in the Bill about the jobs that the hon. Gentleman has mentioned.

Madam Deputy Speaker: The hon. Gentleman knows that Second Reading debates are fairly wide-ranging. I am therefore very tolerant.

Mr. Canavan: For once, the hon. Member for Tayside, North (Mr. Walker) has made a fair point. I do not intend to elaborate on the use of the patronage powers with regard to Alex Fletcher, Anna McCurley and Peter Fraser. Last week, I met John Corrie who was kicked out by my hon. Friend the Member for Cunninghame, North (Mr. Wilson). John Corrie told me that he had been appointed a member of the Transport Users Consultative Committee for Scotland. [HON. MEMBERS: "Chairman."] Yes, chairman. I could not believe it. I asked him, "When were you last on a bus?" but he ran away from me on his horse. *[Interruption.]* I was on a bus last week. I frequently travel by bus. I have little option.

We ought to investigate in Committee how people like John Corrie are appointed to such positions. I do not criticise the man personally; all of us have our attributes, but for his constituents, he certainly kept his light hidden under a bushel. That is why my hon. Friend the Member for Cunninghame, North is now sitting on the Opposition Front Bench.

The Government are using their powers of patronage in a very despotic manner in an attempt to disestablish public transport and to appoint people who have no experience of public transport matters to such positions.

Mr. Salmond: I suspect that John Corrie's interest in public transport is similar to Michael Ancram's sudden interest in public housing. Does the hon. Member believe that the support for this measure in Scotland is greater or

less than the 19 per cent. that was accorded to the Conservative party in the most recent Scottish opinion poll?

Mr. Canavan: I think that support in Scotland for this measure is even less than the abysmal 19 per cent. support for the Tory party in the most recent opinion poll. Support for the Tory party in Scotland will, I suggest, become even weaker as the weeks and months go by.

Earlier, before I was so rudely interrupted by some Conservative Members, I was reminding the Minister about a delegation that visited him at St. Andrew's house about a year ago. It consisted of representatives from the Central regional council and members of the Transport and General Workers Union and other trade unions at Scottish Bus Group Engineering Ltd. in Falkirk. I think I told the Minister after that meeting that never before—I have been a Member of Parliament for 14 years and I have led delegations to Ministers in Governments of both political complexions—had any Minister's performance been so incompetent. He sat there, as he did tonight, and just read the brief that had been prepared for him by civil servants.

My local government friends were there, as were my friends and comrades from the trade union movement. *[Laughter.]* Hon. Members laugh. [HON. MEMBERS: "Not at you."] People's livelihoods were at stake. I went along to the Minister, but all I got was a lot of guff. It was all prepared. We were told, "Oh, you must understand this, that and the next thing. All this has been written down by the Scottish Office." It was utterly incredible. I do not know whether it is possible for the Minister to reply later with the leave of the House, but his previous reply was as unsatisfactory as what he said at St. Andrew's house.

Mr. David Lambie (Cunninghame, South): Before my hon. Friend finishes his speech, would he care to comment on the Government's decision to transfer CalMac's headquarters to Oban? Like my hon. Friend the Member for Renfrew, West and Inverclyde (Mr. Graham), I think that it is a bad decision. When the Select Committee on Scottish Affairs investigated road passenger transport and ferries, it visited Tromso in Norway. Tromso is inside the Arctic circle, and the Norwegian Government built a new university there, which resulted in it becoming a centre of economic activity.

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. This is very interesting but it is an intervention, not a speech.

Mr. Lambie: I am not making a speech. I am drawing my hon. Friend's attention to the fact that, when the Norwegian Government made Tromso the centre for a university, they made it a centre of economic activity in northern Norway, which draws people to the area. If the Government are to transfer the CalMac headquarters, why do they not transfer them from Gourock to Stornoway, and make Stornoway a centre of economic activity? That would revitalise the whole of the Western Isles. Would my hon. Friend care to comment on that point, which I think legitimate?

Mr. Canavan: I do not want to digress at this time of the morning, and I shall come a little nearer home. I remember when we had a Labour Prime Minister who took the Gourock-Dunoon ferry to the Labour party conference at Dunoon. He did not manage to sink that boat. I am sorry that my right hon. Friend Lord Callaghan is not here.

The Government are shifting the CalMac headquarters from Gourock to Oban because the old Tory Member for the area has been displaced by the new hon. Member for Argyll and Bute (Mrs. Michie). They are playing the old patronage game again. The Tories are desperate to win the seat back again, so they are shifting everything to Oban so that they can get MacKay back here. He would be an even bigger disaster than the Minister.

I have seen a lot of incompetent Ministers of various political complexions in my time, and I have just told the Minister what I think of him, but at least he is a nice man. He always has a nice smile when we go to see him. He gives nothing, though. MacKay is a horrible creature. He does not even smile and gives nothing. If fact he kicks us in the teeth. He has certainly kicked working-class people in Scotland in the teeth for many years.

Mr. Salmond: On a point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. The hon. Member for Falkirk, West (Mr. Canavan) has had to put up with a great deal of provocation during the debate, but is it really in order for the hon. Member for Crawley (Mr. Soames) who has just left the Chamber, to sit through the debate waving his socks at the hon. Member for Falkirk, West?

Madam Deputy Speaker: I thought that I had extremely good eyesight, but I never saw that.

Mr. Canavan: I am not worried about socks; I am more worried about the tackety boots that will be on my poor head tomorrow morning.

Before all the interventions, rude, helpful or otherwise, I was telling the House about a delegation which I led to the Prime Minister. After the delegation to St. Andrew's house, which had a most unsatisfactory outcome, I decided to take on the Prime Minister herself. The Prime Minister was on record as saying that any hon. Member who was faced with a closure in his or her constituency was entitled to an audience with her. Because of the proposed closure of Scottish Bus Group Engineering Ltd. in my patch, I decided to take the matter up with the Prime Minister. I asked whether the delegation could include representatives from the trade union and from the local authority.

In view of her public commitment, the Prime Minister had to accede to my request and meet me, but my constituents and I were bitterly disappointed when she refused to meet representatives of the trade union representing the work force and representatives from the central regional council and from Falkirk district council who were experienced in such situations and wanted to provide support in the form of increased public investment at local authority level to keep the plant going.

Imagine my surprise a year ago, when the Prime Minister's private office wrote to me saying, "Dear Mr. Canavan, I am sorry but the trade unionists and those horrible local authority people cannot come along." However, I was invited to meet the Prime Minister, and who did I see in the waiting room but the Under-Secretary of State, the hon. Member for Edinburgh, West (Lord James Douglas-Hamilton), who was acting as the Prime Minister's lap dog. I went in and I was surprised when the Prime Minister offered me a cup of tea. She even offered me milk to put in it, which was incredible considering what she did about the bairns' milk in schools many years ago. I do not take milk in my tea.

[Mr. Canavan]

I sat down with the Prime Minister. I thought that I would get some support for the Scottish bus industry from the Minister. I thought that he was there with his mandate on behalf of the people of Scotland. I thought that his main remit, his main criterion, and his top priority would have been to present the case of the people of Scotland, including my constituents, as the Scottish Bus Group Engineering Ltd. workplace in my constituency was not just a parochial interest, but had repercussions throughout the Scottish economy in that the service offered by my constituents was of great advantage to consumers throughout the rest of Scotland.

I could not believe it—the Minister sat there and supped his tea, with milk and sugar. He smiled at the Prime Minister and reiterated the Government's case. He did nothing to fight for Scottish jobs in my constituency or elsewhere. I had had great respect for the hon. Gentleman. I know that he came from a great fighting clan which turned up on horseback before the buses came to Bannockburn. Some of the Douglases and Hamiltons changed their jerseys at half-time to ensure that they were on the winning side. Robert the Bruce gave out land throughout Scotland. Some of the Douglases—not the working-class Douglases, but the Hamiltonian Douglases—have benefited ever since. They have never needed the buses, or their horses, except to hunt the poor wee foxes at weekends.

It is incumbent on the Minister to tell us in more detail why we should support this nasty legislation, which, like the poll tax, is an attack on most of the lower income groups in Scotland. Has he looked into the effect on the Scottish bus building industry? I say "bus building" rather than "coach building" because I am proud to represent the constituency of Falkirk, West, which has the best bus builders in the world. If the people of Scotland and England do not recognise that, many people throughout the world certainly do. Walter Alexander of Glasgow road, Camelon, is winning export orders in places such as Singapore and Hong Kong and helping to lower the trade deficit.

The Secretary of State does not realise the Bill's international repercussions. He is drafting in all the English Tory Members. They are coming out of the woodwork. Normally, they are pleased to come into the Chamber at Scottish Question Time for a 45-minute stint of "Ha, ha, jolly, jolly, hockey sticks" and ex-public schoolboy behaviour. But I shall keep them from their beds tonight. I hope that some of my hon. Friends will speak after me to punish those Tory Members and ensure that they do not get back to their dormitory and matron. It is about time the matrons and the other English Tories realised the Bill's knock-on effects on Scottish, British and international industry.

My constituents are building double-decker buses. Even in London, public transport leaves much to be desired. We must wait for the findings after the catastrophic accident this week before we make pronouncements about the reasons. People in the south of England could learn a lesson from some aspects of public transport in Scotland.

Mr. Salmond: I discovered recently from a Grampian Television programme that the hon. Member for Tayside, North (Mr. Walker) was an international bus consultant. Does the hon. Gentleman suspect, as I do, that the hon. Member for Tayside, North might be the guiding hand behind this legislation?

Mr. Canavan: The main contribution of the hon. Member for Tayside, North to transport was crash-landing his glider many years ago. I am sorry about the physical hurt that that caused him. I am also sorry about the physical harm that was caused to Lord Hailsham recently and about the accident involving the former Member for Glasgow, Central, the late Tom McMillan.

In the south of England, the standards of public transport are unacceptable and abominable compared with what I would tolerate in my constituency. I would go as far as to say that Tom McMillan would not have died if the standards of public transport in London had been the same as those in Scotland, where, in many areas, those open back-door buses are not acceptable. Getting rid of those buses would improve safety standards and improve job prospects for the workers at Walter Alexander in my constituency.

Insufficient tribute is paid to the worldwide reputation of the Scottish bus-building industry. Many people take double-decker buses for granted and we tend to look on double-decker buses as the norm. A great deal of scientific expertise goes into the building of a double-decker bus and into establishing the exact centre of gravity to minimise the possibility of tilting. It is also necessary to measure the height of the bridges on the routes along which such buses pass.

The cowboy operators who will take advantage of the Bill will not necessarily give the same priority to public safety and the satisfactory construction of buses. My constituents are very concerned about reducing the number of accidents from both the consumer and producer point of view.

Several hon. Members have referred to the effect of the legislation on fares. Will the Minister tell us what is his estimate of the effect on public transport fares? It is all right for the Minister, who has a chauffeur-driven car at his disposal. I must say in the Minister's defence, however, that very occasionally—*[Interruption.]* He is one of the best of a rotten bunch. I say in the Minister's favour—I have a good word to say about everyone——

The Parliamentary Secretary to the Treasury (Mr. David Waddington) *rose in his place and claimed to move,* That the Question be now put.

Question put, That the Question be now put:—

The House divided: Ayes 256, Noes 191.

Division No. 18] **[12.20 am**

AYES

Adley, Robert	Batiste, Spencer
Aitken, Jonathan	Beaumont-Dark, Anthony
Alexander, Richard	Bellingham, Henry
Alison, Rt Hon Michael	Bendall, Vivian
Allason, Rupert	Bennett, Nicholas *(Pembroke)*
Amess, David	Benyon, W.
Amos, Alan	Bevan, David Gilroy
Arbuthnot, James	Body, Sir Richard
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*	Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Arnold, Tom *(Hazel Grove)*	Boscawen, Hon Robert
Ashby, David	Bottomley, Peter
Aspinwall, Jack	Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Atkins, Robert	Bowis, John
Atkinson, David	Boyson, Rt Hon Dr Sir Rhodes
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*	Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Baldry, Tony	Brazier, Julian
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*	Bright, Graham

Brown, Michael *(Brigg & Cl't's)*
Browne, John *(Winchester)*
Bruce, Ian *(Dorset South)*
Buck, Sir Antony
Budgen, Nicholas
Burt, Alistair
Butcher, John
Butler, Chris
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Chalker, Rt Hon Mrs Lynda
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chapman, Sydney
Chope, Christopher
Churchill, Mr
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clark, Sir W. *(Croydon S)*
Colvin, Michael
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre F'rest)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, Rt Hon John
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Critchley, Julian
Davies, Q. *(Stamf'd & Spald'g)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Devlin, Tim
Dickens, Geoffrey
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Tony
Dykes, Hugh
Eggar, Tim
Emery, Sir Peter
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatf'd)*
Evennett, David
Favell, Tony
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Fishburn, John Dudley
Fookes, Miss Janet
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Franks, Cecil
Freeman, Roger
French, Douglas
Fry, Peter
Gardiner, George
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Gill, Christopher
Glyn, Dr Alan
Goodhart, Sir Philip
Goodlad, Alastair
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Gow, Ian
Gower, Sir Raymond
Grant, Sir Anthony *(CambsSW)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth N)*
Grist, Ian
Ground, Patrick
Grylls, Michael
Hamilton, Hon Archie *(Epsom)*
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, John
Hargreaves, A. *(B'ham H'll Gr')*
Hargreaves, Ken *(Hyndburn)*
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, Christopher
Hayes, Jerry
Hayhoe, Rt Hon Sir Barney
Hayward, Robert
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Heddle, John
Hicks, Mrs Maureen *(Wolv' NE)*
Hicks, Robert *(Cornwall SE)*
Hill, James
Hind, Kenneth
Holt, Richard
Hordern, Sir Peter
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'd-on-A)*
Howarth, G. *(Cannock & B'wd)*
Howell, Rt Hon David *(G'dford)*
Howell, Ralph *(North Norfolk)*
Hughes, Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, David *(Wirral W)*
Hunt, John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hunter, Andrew
Irvine, Michael
Jack, Michael
Janman, Tim
Jessel, Toby
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Robert B *(Herts W)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Key, Robert
King, Roger *(B'ham N'thfield)*
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Dame Jill *(Edgbaston)*
Knowles, Michael
Knox, David
Lang, Ian
Latham, Michael
Lawrence, Ivan
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Peter
Lord, Michael
Luce, Rt Hon Richard
Lyell, Sir Nicholas
MacKay, Andrew *(E Berkshire)*
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, Sir Michael
McNair-Wilson, P. *(New Forest)*
Maginnis, Ken
Malins, Humfrey
Mans, Keith
Marland, Paul
Marshall, Michael *(Arundel)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Mates, Michael
Maude, Hon Francis
Mawhinney, Dr Brian
Mayhew, Rt Hon Sir Patrick
Meyer, Sir Anthony
Miller, Sir Hal
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, Sir David
Moate, Roger
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Moore, Rt Hon John
Morris, M *(N'hampton S)*
Morrison, Sir Charles
Morrison, Rt Hon P *(Chester)*
Moss, Malcolm
Moynihan, Hon Colin
Neale, Gerrard
Needham, Richard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Michael
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Onslow, Rt Hon Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Paice, James
Patnick, Irvine
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Porter, Barry *(Wirral S)*
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Michael
Price, Sir David
Raffan, Keith
Redwood, John
Renton, Tim
Rhodes James, Robert
Riddick, Graham
Ridsdale, Sir Julian
Rifkind, Rt Hon Malcolm
Roberts, Wyn *(Conwy)*
Roe, Mrs Marion
Rost, Peter
Rumbold, Mrs Angela
Sackville, Hon Tom
Sayeed, Jonathan
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Shephard, Mrs G. *(Norfolk SW)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shepherd, Richard *(Aldridge)*
Shersby, Michael
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Sir Dudley *(Warwick)*
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Hon Nicholas
Speller, Tony
Spicer, Sir Jim *(Dorset W)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Squire, Robin
Stanbrook, Ivor
Steen, Anthony
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Stewart, Andy *(Sherwood)*
Stewart, Ian *(Hertfordshire N)*
Stokes, Sir John
Stradling Thomas, Sir John
Summerson, Hugo
Taylor, John M *(Solihull)*
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thompson, D. *(Calder Valley)*
Thorne, Neil
Thurnham, Peter
Waddington, Rt Hon David
Walker, Bill *(T'side North)*
Waller, Gary
Wells, Bowen
Wheeler, John
Widdecombe, Ann
Wiggin, Jerry
Wood, Timothy
Woodcock, Mike

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. David Maclean and
Mr. Michael Fallon.

NOES

Abbott, Ms Diane
Adams, Allen *(Paisley N)*
Anderson, Donald
Archer, Rt Hon Peter
Armstrong, Hilary
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnes, Harry *(Derbyshire NE)*
Beckett, Margaret
Beggs, Roy
Bell, Stuart
Bennett, A. F. *(D'nt'n & R'dish)*
Bermingham, Gerald
Bidwell, Sydney
Blair, Tony
Boateng, Paul
Bradley, Keith
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, Gordon *(D'mline E)*
Brown, Nicholas *(Newcastle E)*
Brown, Ron *(Edinburgh Leith)*
Buchan, Norman
Buckley, George J.
Caborn, Richard
Callaghan, Jim
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Campbell, Ron *(Blyth Valley)*
Canavan, Dennis
Clark, Dr David *(S Shields)*
Clarke, Tom *(Monklands W)*
Clay, Bob
Clelland, David
Cohen, Harry
Cook, Frank *(Stockton N)*
Cook, Robin *(Livingston)*
Corbyn, Jeremy
Cousins, Jim
Cox, Tom
Crowther, Stan
Cryer, Bob
Cummings, John
Cunningham, Dr John
Dalyell, Tam
Darling, Alistair
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(Llanelli)*
Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*
Dixon, Don
Dobson, Frank
Doran, Frank
Douglas, Dick
Duffy, A. E. P.
Dunnachie, Jimmy
Dunwoody, Hon Mrs Gwyneth
Eadie, Alexander
Evans, John *(St Helens N)*
Ewing, Harry *(Falkirk E)*
Ewing, Mrs Margaret *(Moray)*
Fatchett, Derek
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fields, Terry *(L'pool B G'n)*
Fisher, Mark
Flannery, Martin
Flynn, Paul
Foot, Rt Hon Michael
Foster, Derek
Foulkes, George
Fraser, John
Fyfe, Maria
Galbraith, Sam
Galloway, George
Garrett, John *(Norwich South)*
Garrett, Ted *(Wallsend)*
Gilbert, Rt Hon Dr John
Golding, Mrs Llin
Gordon, Mildred
Gould, Bryan
Graham, Thomas
Grant, Bernie *(Tottenham)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Grocott, Bruce
Hardy, Peter
Hattersley, Rt Hon Roy
Heffer, Eric S.
Henderson, Doug
Hinchliffe, David
Holland, Stuart
Home Robertson, John
Hood, Jimmy
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Howells, Geraint
Hoyle, Doug

Hughes, John *(Coventry NE)*
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport E)*
Hughes, Sean *(Knowsley S)*
Illsley, Eric
Ingram, Adam
Janner, Greville
Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd S W)*
Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Lambie, David
Lamond, James
Leadbitter, Ted
Leighton, Ron
Lestor, Joan *(Eccles)*
Lewis, Terry
Litherland, Robert
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Lofthouse, Geoffrey
Loyden, Eddie
McAllion, John
McAvoy, Thomas
Macdonald, Calum A.
McFall, John
McKay, Allen *(Barnsley West)*
McKelvey, William
McLeish, Henry
McNamara, Kevin
McTaggart, Bob
McWilliam, John
Madden, Max
Mahon, Mrs Alice
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Marshall, Jim *(Leicester S)*
Martin, Michael J. *(Springburn)*
Martlew, Eric
Maxton, John
Meacher, Michael
Meale, Alan
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Michie, Mrs Ray *(Arg'l & Bute)*
Moonie, Dr Lewis
Morgan, Rhodri
Morley, Elliott
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(W'shawe)*
Mowlam, Marjorie
Mullin, Chris
Murphy, Paul
Nellist, Dave
O'Brien, William
O'Neill, Martin
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Patchett, Terry
Pendry, Tom
Pike, Peter L.
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Prescott, John
Quin, Ms Joyce
Radice, Giles
Randall, Stuart
Rees, Rt Hon Merlyn
Reid, Dr John
Richardson, Jo
Robertson, George
Robinson, Geoffrey
Ross, Ernie *(Dundee W)*
Ross, William *(Londonderry E)*
Rowlands, Ted
Ruddock, Joan
Salmond, Alex
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheerman, Barry
Sheldon, Rt Hon Robert
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Short, Clare
Sillars, Jim
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton & F'bury)*
Spearing, Nigel
Steinberg, Gerry
Strang, Gavin
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Thompson, Jack *(Wansbeck)*
Turner, Dennis
Vaz, Keith
Wall, Pat
Wallace, James
Walley, Joan
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wareing, Robert N.
Welsh, Michael *(Doncaster N)*
Williams, Rt Hon Alan
Williams, Alan W. *(Carm'then)*
Wilson, Brian
Winnick, David
Wise, Mrs Audrey
Worthington, Tony
Wray, Jimmy
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Ken Eastham and
Mr. Frank Haynes.

Question accordingly agreed to.

Question put accordingly, That the Bill be now read a Second time:—

The House divided: Ayes 257, Noes 189.

Division No. 19] **[12.33 am**

AYES

Adley, Robert
Aitken, Jonathan
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael
Allason, Rupert
Amess, David
Amos, Alan
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Tom *(Hazel Grove)*
Ashby, David
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkins, Robert
Atkinson, David
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Batiste, Spencer
Beaumont-Dark, Anthony
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Bennett, Nicholas *(Pembroke)*
Benyon, W.
Bevan, David Gilroy
Body, Sir Richard
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Boscawen, Hon Robert
Bottomley, Peter
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Bowis, John
Boyson, Rt Hon Dr Sir Rhodes
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brown, Michael *(Brigg & Cl't's)*
Browne, John *(Winchester)*
Bruce, Ian *(Dorset South)*
Buck, Sir Antony
Budgen, Nicholas
Burt, Alistair
Butcher, John
Butler, Chris
Butterfill, John
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Chalker, Rt Hon Mrs Lynda
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chapman, Sydney
Chope, Christopher
Churchill, Mr
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clark, Sir W. *(Croydon S)*
Colvin, Michael
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre F'rest)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, Rt Hon John
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Critchley, Julian
Davies, Q. *(Stamf'd & Spald'g)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Devlin, Tim
Dickens, Geoffrey
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Tony
Dykes, Hugh
Eggar, Tim
Emery, Sir Peter
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatf'd)*
Evennett, David
Fallon, Michael
Favell, Tony
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Fishburn, John Dudley
Fookes, Miss Janet
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Franks, Cecil
Freeman, Roger
French, Douglas
Fry, Peter
Gardiner, George
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Gill, Christopher
Glyn, Dr Alan
Goodhart, Sir Philip
Goodlad, Alastair
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Gow, Ian
Gower, Sir Raymond
Grant, Sir Anthony *(CambsSW)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth N)*
Grist, Ian
Ground, Patrick
Grylls, Michael
Hamilton, Hon Archie *(Epsom)*
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, John
Hargreaves, A. *(B'ham H'll Gr')*
Hargreaves, Ken *(Hyndburn)*
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, Christopher
Hayes, Jerry
Hayhoe, Rt Hon Sir Barney
Hayward, Robert
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Heddle, John
Hicks, Mrs Maureen *(Wolv' NE)*
Hicks, Robert *(Cornwall SE)*
Hill, James
Hind, Kenneth
Holt, Richard
Hordern, Sir Peter
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'd-on-A)*
Howarth, G. *(Cannock & B'wd)*
Howell, Rt Hon David *(G'dford)*
Howell, Ralph *(North Norfolk)*
Howells, Geraint
Hughes, Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, David *(Wirral W)*
Hunt, John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hunter, Andrew
Irvine, Michael
Jack, Michael
Janman, Tim
Jessel, Toby
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Robert B *(Herts W)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Key, Robert
King, Roger *(B'ham N'thfield)*
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Dame Jill *(Edgbaston)*
Knowles, Michael
Knox, David
Lang, Ian
Latham, Michael
Lawrence, Ivan
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lilley, Peter
Lord, Michael
Luce, Rt Hon Richard
Lyell, Sir Nicholas
MacKay, Andrew *(E Berkshire)*
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, Sir Michael
McNair-Wilson, P. *(New Forest)*
Malins, Humfrey
Mans, Keith
Marland, Paul
Marshall, Michael *(Arundel)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Maude, Hon Francis
Mawhinney, Dr Brian
Mayhew, Rt Hon Sir Patrick
Meyer, Sir Anthony
Michie, Mrs Ray *(Arg'l & Bute)*
Miller, Sir Hal
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, Sir David
Moate, Roger
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Moore, Rt Hon John
Morris, M *(N'hampton S)*
Morrison, Sir Charles
Morrison, Rt Hon P *(Chester)*
Moss, Malcolm
Moynihan, Hon Colin
Neale, Gerrard
Needham, Richard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Michael
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Onslow, Rt Hon Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip

Paice, James
Patnick, Irvine
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Porter, Barry *(Wirral S)*
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Michael
Price, Sir David
Raffan, Keith
Redwood, John
Renton, Tim
Rhodes James, Robert
Riddick, Graham
Ridsdale, Sir Julian
Rifkind, Rt Hon Malcolm
Roberts, Wyn *(Conwy)*
Roe, Mrs Marion
Rost, Peter
Rumbold, Mrs Angela
Sackville, Hon Tom
Sayeed, Jonathan
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Shephard, Mrs G. *(Norfolk SW)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shepherd, Richard *(Aldridge)*
Shersby, Michael
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Sir Dudley *(Warwick)*
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Speller, Tony
Spicer, Sir Jim *(Dorset W)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Squire, Robin
Stanbrook, Ivor
Steen, Anthony
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Stewart, Andy *(Sherwood)*
Stewart, Ian *(Hertfordshire N)*
Stokes, Sir John
Stradling Thomas, Sir John
Summerson, Hugo
Taylor, John M *(Solihull)*
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thompson, D. *(Calder Valley)*
Thorne, Neil
Thurnham, Peter
Waddington, Rt Hon David
Walker, Bill *(T'side North)*
Wallace, James
Waller, Gary
Wells, Bowen
Wheeler, John
Widdecombe, Ann
Wiggin, Jerry
Wood, Timothy
Woodcock, Mike

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. David Lightbown and
Mr. David Maclean.

NOES

Abbott, Ms Diane
Adams, Allen *(Paisley N)*
Allen, Graham
Anderson, Donald
Archer, Rt Hon Peter
Armstrong, Hilary
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnes, Harry *(Derbyshire NE)*
Beckett, Margaret
Beggs, Roy
Bell, Stuart
Bennett, A. F. *(D'nt'n & R'dish)*
Bermingham, Gerald
Bidwell, Sydney
Blair, Tony
Boateng, Paul
Boyes, Roland
Bradley, Keith
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, Gordon *(D'mline E)*
Brown, Nicholas *(Newcastle E)*
Buchan, Norman
Buckley, George J.
Caborn, Richard
Callaghan, Jim
Campbell, Ron *(Blyth Valley)*
Canavan, Dennis
Clark, Dr David *(S Shields)*
Clarke, Tom *(Monklands W)*
Clay, Bob
Clelland, David
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Cohen, Harry
Cook, Frank *(Stockton N)*
Cook, Robin *(Livingston)*
Corbyn, Jeremy
Cousins, Jim
Cox, Tom
Cryer, Bob
Cummings, John
Cunningham, Dr John
Dalyell, Tam
Darling, Alistair
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(Llanelli)*
Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham Hodge H'l)*
Dixon, Don
Dobson, Frank
Doran, Frank
Douglas, Dick
Duffy, A. E. P.
Dunnachie, Jimmy
Dunwoody, Hon Mrs Gwyneth
Eadie, Alexander
Evans, John *(St Helens N)*
Ewing, Harry *(Falkirk E)*
Ewing, Mrs Margaret *(Moray)*
Fatchett, Derek
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fields, Terry *(L'pool B G'n)*
Fisher, Mark
Flannery, Martin
Flynn, Paul
Foot, Rt Hon Michael
Foster, Derek
Foulkes, George
Fraser, John
Fyfe, Maria
Galbraith, Sam
Galloway, George
Garrett, John *(Norwich South)*
Garrett, Ted *(Wallsend)*
Gilbert, Rt Hon Dr John
Golding, Mrs Llin
Gordon, Mildred
Gould, Bryan
Graham, Thomas
Grant, Bernie *(Tottenham)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Grocott, Bruce
Hardy, Peter
Hattersley, Rt Hon Roy
Heffer, Eric S.
Henderson, Doug
Hinchliffe, David
Hogg, N. *(C'nauld & Kilsyth)*
Holland, Stuart
Home Robertson, John
Hood, Jimmy
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Hoyle, Doug
Hughes, John *(Coventry NE)*
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport E)*
Hughes, Sean *(Knowsley S)*
Illsley, Eric
Ingram, Adam
Janner, Greville
Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd S W)*
Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Lambie, David
Lamond, James
Leadbitter, Ted
Leighton, Ron
Lestor, Joan *(Eccles)*
Lewis, Terry
Litherland, Robert
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Lofthouse, Geoffrey
Loyden, Eddie
McAllion, John
McAvoy, Thomas
Macdonald, Calum A.
McFall, John
McKay, Allen *(Barnsley West)*
McKelvey, William
McLeish, Henry
McNamara, Kevin
McTaggart, Bob
McWilliam, John
Madden, Max
Mahon, Mrs Alice
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Marshall, Jim *(Leicester S)*
Martin, Michael J. *(Springburn)*
Martlew, Eric
Maxton, John
Meacher, Michael
Meale, Alan
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Moonie, Dr Lewis
Morgan, Rhodri
Morley, Elliott
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(W'shawe)*
Mowlam, Marjorie
Mullin, Chris
Murphy, Paul
Nellist, Dave
O'Brien, William
O'Neill, Martin
Patchett, Terry
Pendry, Tom
Pike, Peter L.
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Prescott, John
Quin, Ms Joyce
Radice, Giles
Randall, Stuart
Rees, Rt Hon Merlyn
Reid, Dr John
Richardson, Jo
Robertson, George
Robinson, Geoffrey
Ross, Ernie *(Dundee W)*
Ross, William *(Londonderry E)*
Rowlands, Ted
Ruddock, Joan
Salmond, Alex
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheerman, Barry
Sheldon, Rt Hon Robert
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Short, Clare
Sillars, Jim
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton & F'bury)*
Spearing, Nigel
Steinberg, Gerry
Strang, Gavin
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Thompson, Jack *(Wansbeck)*
Turner, Dennis
Vaz, Keith
Wall, Pat
Walley, Joan
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wareing, Robert N.
Welsh, Michael *(Doncaster N)*
Williams, Rt Hon Alan
Williams, Alan W. *(Carm'then)*
Wilson, Brian
Winnick, David
Wise, Mrs Audrey
Worthington, Tony
Wray, Jimmy
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Frank Haynes and
Mr. Ken Eastham.

Question accordingly agreed to.

Bill read a Second time, and committed to a Standing Committee pursuant to Standing Order No. 61 (Committal of Bills).

Mr. Sillars: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I do not imagine that I am the only right hon. or hon. Member who witnessed an altercation just before the Division, when the hon. Member for Wirral, South (Mr. Porter) took a totally unprovoked swing at the hon. Member for Glasgow, Hillhead (Mr. Galloway). I wonder whether you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, will rule on whether that was unparliamentary conduct.

Mr. Brian Sedgemore (Hackney, South and Shoreditch): Further to that point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I want to be helpful, because I witnessed three, or possibly four, criminal offences. I witnessed the offences of assault, battery, conduct likely to cause a breach of the peace, and possibly the offence of unlawful assembly. It occurs to me that there are three ways of dealing with those matters——

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Harold Walker): Order. I hope that the hon. Member for Hackney, South and Shoreditch (Mr. Sedgemore) will leave the matter for me to deal with. An allegation has been made that an hon. Member engaged in disorderly conduct. No such incident has been reported to me. If it occurred, it should have been raised at the time. I cannot rule retrospectively.

Transport (Scotland) Bill *[Money]*

Queen's recommendation having been signified—
Motion made, and Question proposed,

That, for the purposes of any Act resulting from the Transport (Scotland) Bill, it is expedient to authorise—

(a) the payment out of money provided by Parliament of—

(i) any expenditure of the Secretary of State in connection with the dissolution of the Scottish Transport Group;

(ii) sums required for fulfilling any guarantee given by the Secretary of State in respect of sums borrowed by Caledonian MacBrayne Limited, David MacBrayne Limited and any subsidiary of theirs;

(iii) any increase in payments out of money so provided arising from any increase in administrative expenses of the Secretary of State attributable to the provisions of the Act; and

(iv) any increase attributable to the Act in payments out of money so provided under any other enactment;

(b) any payment into the Consolidated Fund under the Act.—*[Mr. Fallon.]*

12.46 am

Mr. Brian Wilson (Cunninghame, North): We are not minded to wave this money resolution through and to make available on the nod the money that is required to put into effect legislation that my right hon. and hon. Friends have argued against for the past five and a half hours. It would be inconsistent if we were now to say that the Government are welcome to the money needed to implement legislation of which we strenuously disapprove.

Mr. James Wallace (Orkney and Shetland): I am interested to hear the hon. Gentleman deploy that argument. Can he give any indication as to why he and his right hon. and hon. Friends did not vote against the Electricity Bill money resolution last night?

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Harold Walker): Order. I hope that the hon. Member for Cunninghame, North (Mr. Wilson) will not explain what did not happen last evening, but will restrict himself to tonight's business.

Mr. Wilson: I almost said that I am grateful to you, Mr. Deputy Speaker—but that might have been misunderstood.

The reasons for the money resolution are spelt out in the sub-paragraphs. Sub-paragraph (i) refers to

"any expenditure of the Secretary of State in connection with the dissolution of the Scottish Transport Group."

That begs the question why the Scottish Transport Group is being dissolved and why money is required for that purpose. The reason why it is being dissolved is that the Scottish Bus Group, which is the major element in the Scottish Transport Group, is being privatised. So all that is left is the rump of the Scottish Transport Group, which is Caledonian MacBrayne—notwithstanding the threat that part of it, too, will be privatised. The notion of using public funds to break up the Scottish Transport Group, which has served the people of Scotland well and continues doing so, is unacceptable.

What will the expenditure be? What administrative tasks are involved? What will be the cost of those administrative tasks in the dissolution of the Scottish Transport Group, for the purpose of privatising the Scottish Bus Group?

Mr. Martin J. O'Neill (Clackmannan): One of the factors to be considered in that process, which my hon. Friend describes in a restrained and careful way—characteristically so, as another of my hon. Friends remarks—is that certain administrative tasks will involve the provision of funds for redundancy payments to large numbers of clerical and administrative staff. At present, they are located in Scotland's central belt, in respect of the CalMac operation. The management side, as represented by the Government, must tell the House——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. If the hon. Gentleman wants to make a speech, perhaps he will try to catch my eye later; otherwise, his intervention should be brief.

Mr. O'Neill: I am sorry, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I know that I interrupted my hon. Friend's speech at an early stage, but I felt I should make the point about the Minister's administrative responsibility for the redundancy payments to the people employed by CalMac. I am sorry, Mr. Deputy Speaker, for having done so in a way that was a wee bit overblown.

How much do the Government think will have to be paid to the people working in the central belt of Scotland for the transfer of CalMac's administrative functions to other parts of Scotland? Is not that important?

Mr. Wilson: My hon. Friend raises an extremely important point, for which I am grateful. This legislation will inevitably mean redundancies in Scottish Bus Group and CalMac. As my hon. Friend the Member for Renfrew, West and Inverclyde (Mr. Graham) so ably pointed out earlier, CalMac's particular problem is its ill-thought-out removal from Gourock to Oban. As a native of Argyll, I have nothing against Oban—many developments are appropriate for it—but uprooting people and telling them that, on pain of losing their jobs, they will have to move from Gourock to the very different environment of Oban is unacceptable. Redundancy payments will be involved, and we want to know what they will amount to.

Sub-paragraph (ii) of the resolution mentions

"sums required for fulfilling any guarantee given by the Secretary of State in respect of sums borrowed by Caledonian MacBrayne Limited, David MacBrayne Limited and any subsidiary of theirs".

On a nostalgic note, I was surprised to learn that the firm of David MacBrayne still exists. My impression was that it had been subsumed into CalMac. At one time there were three or four companies, but I do not want to go into the history of that now—[HON. MEMBERS: "Why not?"] I must not stray. First, there was the Caledonian Steam Packet Company. Those who are familiar with Clyde waters well remember it. Then there was David MacBrayne Limited, which operated the island ferry routes. Those of us with an interest in these matters remember that MacBrayne vessels always had red funnels, whereas Caledonian Steam Packet vessels had yellow ones.

Then, in the late 1960s, these two companies were brought together in public ownership as Caledonian MacBrayne Ltd. That, however, left two elements outside the operation. There were some smaller vessels: I can think of the Loch Arkaig which continued to ply to some of the small islands. These were purely passenger vessels. Then there were the cargo vessels. I remember in recent years the last of those vessels to operate were the Loch Carron and the Loch Dunvegan, carrying freight from the Clyde around the Hebridean islands. Before that, they were used to serve the distillery trade on the island of Islay and to carry heavy cargo to the islands. The point is that those vessels remained in the David MacBrayne company.

The fourth element was MacBrayne Haulage, which had also been part of David MacBrayne Ltd. When the main part went into the newly formed Caledonian MacBrayne Ltd, MacBrayne Haulage had to go somewhere else. It was formed as a separate company, still within the state sector and the Scottish Transport Group. So post-nationalisation there were three companies: Caledonian MacBrayne Ltd, David MacBrayne Ltd and MacBrayne Haulage.

The sad thing is that paragraph (a)(ii) of the money resolution contains no reference to MacBrayne Haulage. Hon. Members who were here earlier will be aware of the worrying story that has led to its no longer being mentioned in the resolution. In the most shameful and suspicious circumstances, MacBrayne Haulage was flogged off in a previous privatisation effort, and is now being sold on at a massive profit—as we said at the time would happen.

Mr. Alistair Darling (Edinburgh, Central): Is my hon. Friend aware that MacBrayne Haulage had debts at the time of its sale? Does anything in the money resolution allow the public purse to recoup the amount that might have been written off, or reduced, when MacBrayne Haulage was sold to Kildonan? It seems only right that if Billy Walker, or whatever his name is, has made a packet by flogging off public assets we ought to get the money back. It would be outrageous for the public purse to be stripped of so much—and I dare say that the same argument would apply to any debts to be written off relating to any MacBrayne vessels. There is substantial debt, not to mention the money that comes from the EEC.

Mr. Wilson: My hon. Friend strikes the nail on the head. When MacBrayne Haulage was sold off, of course there was debt attaching to it. But the entire circumstances surrounding the sale are, I believe, an embryonic public scandal. As I said earlier, I have asked for those circumstances to be referred to the Public Accounts Committee, and I hope that if any of its members are here they will take note of that and accede to any request that they investigate the matter.

That, then, is why MacBrayne Haulage is not in the picture. But, for the reasons mentioned by my hon. Friend the Member for Edinburgh, Central (Mr. Darling), I am concerned about this phrase in paragraph (a)(ii):

"sums required for fulfilling any guarantee given by the Secretary of State in respect of sums borrowed by Caledonian Mac Brayne Limited, David MacBrayne Limited and any subsidiary of theirs".

Mr. Tom Clarke (Monklands, West): My hon. Friend is developing his point extremely well, but could he give the House some information that so far has not been given? Could he tell us precisely what the MacBrayne debts might be?

As we are addressing ourselves specifically to the money resolution, may I ask my hon. Friend to consider paragraph (a)(iii), which refers to:

"any increase in payments out of money so provided arising from any increase in administrative expenses of the Secretary of State attributable to the provisions of the Act"?

Would that not be almost like a blank cheque, and is it not in stark contrast to the niggardly approach of the Scottish

[Mr. Tom Clarke]

Office to local government? The Scottish Office certainly would not provide such a blank cheque for anticipated administrative costs.

Mr. Wilson: I shall come to paragraph (a)(iii) in a moment and deal with my hon. Friend's points. First let us wrap up paragraph (a)(ii).

Let me make it clear that, as my hon. Friend the Member for Monklands, West (Mr. Clarke) suggested, I shall be pleased to give way to the Minister at any point if he feels inclined to put figures on the vague concepts that we have before us. What sort of sums borrowed by Caledonian Macbrayne Ltd., David MacBrayne Ltd. and their subsidiaries are we talking about? We know that Ministers still hope that in the future they will be able to sell Caledonian MacBrayne to the private sector. As MacBrayne Haulage had the benefit of a favourable financial deal, will the people who eventually buy any part of Caledonian MacBrayne—if they ever materialise—have a similar financial deal?

I shall now deal with sub-paragraph (ii).

Mr. John Home Robertson (East Lothian): Does my hon. Friend recall that the Minister inadvertently enclosed with a parliamentary reply that he sent to me some time ago information relating to the fact that P and O European Ferries was interested in taking over the entire CalMac ferries operation? Is my hon. Friend concerned that, since the Secretary of State is taking CalMac into his hands to sell off under whatever deal he may regard as suitable, he might give his friend Sir Jeffrey Sterling and the other fly-by-nights who operate P and O European Ferries an extremely attractive deal at the expense of the public purse?

Mr. Wilson: My hon. Friend is so right that he has persuaded me to stay with sub-paragraph (ii) for a while longer.

Sub-paragraph (1) provides expenditure for the dissolution of the Scottish Transport Group. The Government will then transfer the ownership of Caledonian MacBrayne to the Secretary of State and appoint a board. Nobody here knows who will be on the board, but we could dip into a hat and have a good guess.

Whatever other service was performed tonight by my hon. Friend the Member for Falkirk, West (Mr. Canavan), he told me something that I did not know and which I find extraordinary. He told me about the appointment of my predecessor to the post of chairman of the Scottish Transport Users Consultative Committee. That is fantastic. I could have understood the Government putting him in charge of belted Galloway bulls, but I was interested to find out that he will be in charge of the consultative system in Scotland. I shall be pursuing that further. As my hon. Friend the Member for East Lothian (Mr. Home Robertson) suggests, that is the sort of precedent with which we are dealing.

It is not just the Secretary of State who will be running the new company. I would perhaps have had a little more confidence if the Under-Secretary of State was to have his hand on the tiller. However, it will be the Secretary of State and the board he will appoint. I could take hon. Members on a Cook's tour of the Highlands and Islands and point out the public bodies where every post has been given to tame Tory nominees. I could point out health boards in places where there is no Tory support but where they have used their local stooges to fill the posts.

I have lived in the Highlands and Islands for most of my life and I remember when the political map of the Highlands and Islands was painted blue. One can look at the area covered by the Highlands and Islands Development Board. In my relatively short political memory, Moray, Nairn, Ross, Cromarty, Argyll, Banff, Inverness, Caithness and Sutherland have been held by Tory Members of Parliament at some time. At present there is not one Government representative in the vast land mass of the Highlands and Islands.

Mr. Tony Favell (Stockport): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Does this have anything to do with the money resolution? This is an absolute travesty——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I share the hon. Gentleman's concern. I was beginning to wonder quite what the relationship was. The hon. Member for Cunninghame, North (Mr. Wilson) ought to explain it, or turn to another matter.

Mr. Wilson: Apart from its having something to do with the money resolution, for these Tory appointees in the Highlands and Islands it has something to do with the jackpot. We wonder who the board appointees will be. The new board members of Caledonian MacBrayne will decide what is to be done in the future, particularly about the absurd proposition to sell off the Dunoon to Gourock and the Wemyss bay to Rothesay routes. In that context it is necessary to spell out some of the financial consequences of selling off these routes.

One does not have to be a mathematician or an arithmetician to understand that there is a global subsidy for Caledonian MacBrayne and that the most financially viable routes include the Clyde coast routes. That is why P and O is interested. However, P and O is not interested in boats that sail to Barra at 6 o'clock on a cold December morning. It is interested only in the short crossings on the Clyde. What will Caledonian MacBrayne be left with if the more profitable or the less loss-making routes are taken away from it? It will be left with those that sustain the higher losses.

The logic of that is inescapable. If any of the Caledonian MacBrayne routes on the Clyde is privatised, either there will be a diminution of service, if the subsidy remains the same, or the subsidy will have to be increased to maintain the remaining services.

Mr. Darling: My hon. Friend has referred to the Clyde crossings. The money resolution does not include the loan debt for the three vessels that currently serve the Clyde crossing—the Saturn, the Jupiter and the Juno. All those vessels were built in the 1970s. They were quite expensive because of their revolutionary design. Does my hon. Friend know how large that loan debt is? Even more important, does he know, if these vessels are to be replaced, as Caledonian MacBrayne is considering, what the loan debt will be if the ships are transferred to a shark who wants to operate the service for his own private gain?

Mr. Wilson: My hon. Friend has again made an extremely good point. These assets have been built up over many years with public money. New ferries are sailing on many of the routes. In many cases, European regional development fund money has been put into them. Are

these vessels to be handed over to the private sector and the sums borrowed by Caledonian MacBrayne to be written off—as paragraph (a)(ii) of the money resolution suggests? Will they be given as a free gift to those who acquire the vessels? We are talking about millions of pounds. If that ever happened—we intend to ensure that it never does—it would result in a further pillaging of the public purse.

Mr. Calum Macdonald (Western Isles): On the financing of the new ferries, did not the Government come up against this problem when they tried to work out a scheme for privatising Caledonian MacBrayne? Most of the money that was provided for the construction of the new ferries and for other infrastructure work came from the EEC. If Caledonian MacBrayne had been privatised, as the Government at one stage obviously intended and wanted to achieve, that money would have been lost. It would have been impossible for that money to be made available by the EEC and then go into the pockets of a private operator.

Is it not true that, when that point was raised in the House, the Government did not know that that would be the case and that the Opposition had to tell them about it? After months had been spent on trying to work out a solution to the problem and after spending enormous sums of money on an expert report to solve it, the Government have still not found a solution. That is why Caledonian MacBrayne is still in public hands.

Mr. Wilson: My hon. Friend is right again. People served by CalMac are indebted to him for mentioning European regional development fund money and asking what the EEC would make of the disposal of assets, that have been built up by grants made on grounds of peripherality and social circumstances, to the first chancer who wields a bit of influence with this shower in the Government. I do not think that the EEC would think much of that. It would not be a good precedent. That is one of the reasons why the CalMac privatisation has been abandoned, at least for the time being.

Mr. Macdonald: Does my hon. Friend agree that one of the outstanding projects is the supply of a new vessel for the Stornoway-Ullapool route? It will require a great deal of EEC assistance. It would be a disgrace if the money were provided and the vesssel ended up in private hands. Can my hon. Friend ascertain whether the Government have contributed their share? Perhaps tonight is a good opportunity for them to tell us about the vessel for that route.

Mr. Wilson *rose*—

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. Not in the debate on the money resolution.

Mr. Wilson: I am sure that if the Minister wanted, as an act of unrehearsed largesse, to promise a new Vote for a vessel for the Stornoway-Ullapool route, you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, would be tolerant of that initiative.

A few weeks ago, I attended a meeting in Oban at which opposition to this privatisation nonsense was rallied. I heard a representative of CalMac say that there were no plans to replace the Suilven, which plies the Stornoway-Ullapool route, until 1995. That was probably disappointing news for people who use the service. I must say that, out of route loyalty, I always use the ferry Hebridean Isles.

Mr. Dick Douglas (Dunfermline, West): Will my hon. Friend apply his mind to the important issue of the disposal of public money and the relationship between what will be left of the Scottish Transport Group, Caledonian MacBrayne and Western Ferries? It is proposed that they should coalesce. We have considered what will happen to the Gourock-Dunoon ferry service. A board is to be appointed by the Secretary of State. We do not know what its composition will be. A private company already exists. The Secretary of State's instructions to coalesce to determine what will happen to this vital route—

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Briefly, please.

Mr. Douglas: I am making a serious point.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman knows that interventions should be brief. If he wishes to make a speech, perhaps he will seek to catch my eye later.

Mr. Douglas: My hon. Friend is taking on board my point about the interrelation between the two companies and the fact that we have not considered the important aspect of safety. I am an old-fashioned Clyde builder, and am in no doubt that safety considerations have to be borne in mind.

Mr. Wilson: My hon. Friend makes a number of important points which flow directly from my reply to my hon. Friend the Member for Western Isles (Mr. Macdonald). I am informed that the Suilven is not to be replaced until 1995. Would it ever be replaced if the company were in private hands by then? From where will the money come for the replacement of the fleet?

The point raised by my hon. Friend the Member for Dunfermline, West (Mr. Douglas) is relevant because, on the Clyde coast and the Western Isles routes, we have only one precedent of a private operator of ferry services. Western Ferries operates the Gourock to Hunter's Quay route. Anyone who knows anything about that knows that Western Ferries has been plying on that route for 20 years with small, second-hand ferries which many people will not use because they much prefer the larger Caledonian MacBrayne ferries and because they are in no way comparable with the ferries that the public sector company has provided.

If for 20 years Western Ferries has been unable to replace a single, small vehicular ferry in the private sector, what possible prospect is there in 1995 of a privatised Caledonian MacBrayne, stripped of EEC aid because of the irresponsible conduct of Ministers in selling it off in the first place, providing a new ferry of that size and capacity?

Mr. Neil Hamilton (Tatton): The hon. Gentleman will be aware that Conservative Members have been listening with rapt attention and following with considerable interest the many compelling points that he has made in his usual lucid and eloquent way, but he must be aware that he has been speaking for about two thirds of the allotted time for the money resolution. We are concerned only that those of us who have open minds and want to hear the variety of views available from Opposition Members will be denied that opportunity. Will he tell us why he is filibustering to prevent—

Hon. Members: Order.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. The occupant of the Chair will make a judgment about whether hon. Members are in order. So far, the hon. Gentleman has very skilfully kept in order.

Mr. Wilson: The hon. Member for Tatton (Mr. Hamilton) is a fairly dismissable figure, and his interest in the matter is demonstrated by the fact that his first appearance in the debate was very recent. However, there will be many debates when the hon. Gentleman can depart early from his favourite bierkeller and participate in debates on Scottish matters. We shall welcome the hon. Gentleman. I am reminded of the joke that we can see a lump on the hon. Gentleman's sleeve where the armband used to be.

Mr. Darling: Sub-paragraph (ii) says that guarantees can be given by the Secretary of State. Does that not mean that it lies with the Secretary of State to guarantee sums to replace the boat operating on the Stornoway to Ullapool route, perhaps with a vessel similar in design to the Hebridean Isles, on which we met one summer morning two years ago? We commented on how uncharacteristic of Caledonian MacBrayne vessels it was—it was comfortable and pleasant. If the Government wanted, they could provide the guarantees necessary to replace that boat. The Scottish Transport Group promised me that it would be replaced in 1992, not 1995.

Mr. Wilson: I am open to correction, but I think that the date was as I heard it.

I have been trying for some time to move on from sub--paragraph (ii) and the specific shipping aspects of the money resolution. It was gross impertinence for the hon. Member for Tatton to suggest that there has been procrastination. There is much in the measure about which to talk and we intend to use every minute of our time to do so, without his unwanted interventions.

Mr. Macdonald: Will my hon. Friend give way?

Mr. Wilson: For the last time, on sub-paragraph (ii).

Mr. Macdonald: My hon. Friend is being hasty in trying to move from sub-paragraph (ii). He mentioned cross-subsidisation, the loss of routes threatened by privatisation and the effect on other Caledonian MacBrayne routes that remain in public hands. My hon. Friend said that there would be one of two effects—diminution of service or fare increases. He is wrong. There will be both effects.

Does my hon. Friend agree that there will also be a third effect—the severe impact on the economy of the outer islands? That economy depends on the price of goods and quality of services provided from the mainland by Caledonian MacBrayne ferries. The islands suffer already from having to import all their goods and export all their products via the ferries. Any increase in fares and diminution in services must severely affect the economy of the Western Isles.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. This has been a wide debate, but it cannot go as wide as a discussion on the economy of the Western Isles. Perhaps the hon. Member for Cunninghame, North (Mr. Wilson) will address himself to the money resolution.

Mr. Wilson: I am tempted. A case can be made for saying that there is an impact, because nothing leaves or enters the Western Isles except by Caledonian MacBrayne ferry. Anything that the Government do to undermine that company is a threat to the economy of the Western Isles. There would not be much weaving, crofting, fishing or fish farming, an industry in which a large amount of public money has been invested——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I am interested not in those matters but in the scope of the debate on the money resolution. All that is outside the scope of the money resolution.

Mr. Wilson: I respect your ruling, Mr. Deputy Speaker. These matters were opened because of the broadness of sub-paragraph (ii), which refers to

"sums required for fulfilling any guarantee given by the Secretary of State in respect of sums borrowed by Caledonian MacBrayne Limited, David MacBrayne Limited and any subsidiary of theirs"

being written off by the Secretary of State at some future time.

There are so many issues on which I have not yet commented that I must move on to sub-paragraph (iii). It is the catch-all, as my hon. Friend the Member for Monklands, West said a long time ago. It states:

"any increase in payments out of money so provided arising from any increase in administrative expenses of the Secretary of State attributable to the provisions of the Act".

As one of my hon. Friends said, that is the original blank cheque. There is power to pay for anything that arises from the legislation. I return indignantly to the intervention by the hon. Member for Tatton. It was offensive and unacceptable to complain about reasoned and rational discussion of the measure taking place over a modest 45-minute period, given the powers involved in it.

This takes us back to the issue of bus privatisation. In the short term at least, that is undoubtedly where most of the expenses will arise. I hope that we shall hear from the Minister on this matter before the end of the debate. I recognise his suitability to deal with the legislation because he did once travel on a bus. That reminds me of a story about the Minister. When he got on the bus, the conductor said to him, "Where do you want to go?" and he said, "132, Belgravia". He was accustomed to taking taxis.

The breaking up of the Scottish Bus Group into 11 constituent companies, the marketing of those companies, the bureaucracy and the merging in some cases of the existing administration of bus companies had been mentioned before the daft notion was raised of moving the offices of Caledonian MacBrayne from Gourock to Oban. All of that is expensive.

Mr. Norman Buchan (Paisley, South): I am sure that my hon. Friend is as puzzled about this as I am. The Government point to the expense of public bodies and say that they should save money by passing it over to the private sector. Why does sub-paragraph (iii) state:

"any increase in payments out of money so provided arising from any increase in administrative expenses of the Secretary of State attributable to the provisions of the Act",

when the purpose of the Act is to make public bodies less expensive, as they are supposed to be uneconomic and inefficient, and, above all, to save money?

Mr. Wilson: As I would expect from my erudite colleague, he has made the precise philosophical point.

We know that this is not about saving public money; it is about selling public assets on the cheap, yet the Government will have to dole out money to pay for that. It is apparent from sub-paragraph (iii) that it will not even be a self-financing exercise and is therefore very misguided.

I regret that I have not been able to deal with sub-paragraph (iv) and I wish that we could return another evening to discuss that.

I shall end by dealing with paragraph (b). These moneys are to be spent on purposes that we regard as unworthy and unwanted in Scotland. The Bill is an imposition on the Scottish people. It is not an earth-shattering piece of legislation, but an irritating piece of legislation. That is why we oppose it and why we shall try to improve it in Committee.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Scotland (Lord James Douglas-Hamilton): Is the hon. Gentleman aware that subsidies are provided under the Highland and Islands (Shipping Services) Act 1960? That is different matter from this money resolution.

Mr. Wilson: There is a thin line between the general financing of Caledonian MacBrayne and the specific question of subsidies to Caledonian MacBrayne. It would be careless to us to assume that the residue of money—I hope that this will never happen if Caledonian MacBrayne——

It being three-quarters of an hour after the commencement of proceedings on the motion, MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER *put the Question, pursuant to Standing Order No. 14 (Exempted Business):—*

The House divided: Ayes 158, Noes 57.

Division No. 20] **[1.29 am**

AYES

Adley, Robert
Aitken, Jonathan
Alison, Rt Hon Michael
Amess, David
Amos, Alan
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Tom *(Hazel Grove)*
Ashby, David
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkinson, David
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*
Batiste, Spencer
Beaumont-Dark, Anthony
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Bennett, Nicholas *(Pembroke)*
Bevan, David Gilroy
Body, Sir Richard
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Boscawen, Hon Robert
Bottomley, Peter
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Bowis, John
Boyson, Rt Hon Dr Sir Rhodes
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Burt, Alistair
Butterfill, John
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Carrington, Matthew
Cash, William
Chalker, Rt Hon Mrs Lynda
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chapman, Sydney
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre F'rest)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, Rt Hon John
Cran, James
Davies, Q. *(Stamf'd & Spald'g)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Devlin, Tim
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Tony
Fallon, Michael
Favell, Tony
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Fishburn, John Dudley
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Franks, Cecil
Freeman, Roger
French, Douglas
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Gill, Christopher
Goodhart, Sir Philip
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Gow, Ian
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth N)*
Grist, Ian
Ground, Patrick
Hamilton, Hon Archie *(Epsom)*
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, John
Hargreaves, A. *(B'ham H'll Gr')*
Hargreaves, Ken *(Hyndburn)*
Harris, David
Hawkins, Christopher
Hayes, Jerry
Hayward, Robert
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Hind, Kenneth
Holt, Richard
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'd-on-A)*
Howarth, G. *(Cannock & B'wd)*
Hunt, David *(Wirral W)*
Hunter, Andrew
Irvine, Michael
Jack, Michael
Janman, Tim
Jones, Robert B *(Herts W)*
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Dame Jill *(Edgbaston)*
Lang, Ian
Latham, Michael
Lawrence, Ivan
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Peter
Lord, Michael
Lyell, Sir Nicholas
Mans, Keith
Marland, Paul
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Mawhinney, Dr Brian
Mayhew, Rt Hon Sir Patrick
Meyer, Sir Anthony
Michie, Mrs Ray *(Arg'l & Bute)*
Miller, Sir Hal
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Moore, Rt Hon John
Morris, M *(N'hampton S)*
Morrison, Sir Charles
Morrison, Rt Hon P *(Chester)*
Moss, Malcolm
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Michael
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Paice, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Porter, Barry *(Wirral S)*
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Michael
Redwood, John
Riddick, Graham
Rifkind, Rt Hon Malcolm
Roberts, Wyn *(Conwy)*
Roe, Mrs Marion
Sackville, Hon Tom
Sayeed, Jonathan
Shephard, Mrs G. *(Norfolk SW)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Sims, Roger
Smith, Sir Dudley *(Warwick)*
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Speller, Tony
Spicer, Sir Jim *(Dorset W)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Squire, Robin
Stanbrook, Ivor
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Stradling Thomas, Sir John
Summerson, Hugo
Taylor, John M *(Solihull)*
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thompson, D. *(Calder Valley)*
Thurnham, Peter
Waddington, Rt Hon David
Wallace, James
Waller, Gary
Wells, Bowen
Widdecombe, Ann
Wiggin, Jerry

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. David Maclean and
Mr. Kenneth Carlisle.

NOES

Abbott, Ms Diane
Anderson, Donald
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnes, Harry *(Derbyshire NE)*
Bennett, A. F. *(D'nt'n & R'dish)*
Buchan, Norman
Buckley, George J.
Campbell, Ron *(Blyth Valley)*
Canavan, Dennis
Clarke, Tom *(Monklands W)*
Clelland, David
Cohen, Harry
Cryer, Bob
Cummings, John
Darling, Alistair
Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*
Dixon, Don
Douglas, Dick
Evans, John *(St Helens N)*
Ewing, Mrs Margaret *(Moray)*
Foster, Derek
Foulkes, George
Fyfe, Maria
Galbraith, Sam
Galloway, George
Graham, Thomas
Haynes, Frank
Home Robertson, John
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Ingram, Adam
Leadbitter, Ted
Lewis, Terry
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
McAllion, John
McAvoy, Thomas
Macdonald, Calum A.
McKelvey, William
McLeish, Henry
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Martin, Michael J. *(Springburn)*
Maxton, John
Nellist, Dave
O'Neill, Martin
Patchett, Terry
Pike, Peter L.
Reid, Dr John
Ross, Ernie *(Dundee W)*
Salmond, Alex
Sedgemore, Brian
Sillars, Jim
Skinner, Dennis
Strang, Gavin
Turner, Dennis
Vaz, Keith
Welsh, Michael *(Doncaster N)*
Wilson, Brian
Wray, Jimmy

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Jimmy Dunnachie and
Mr. Jimmy Hood.

Question accordingly agreed to.

Resolved,

That, for the purposes of any Act resulting from the Transport (Scotland) Bill, it is expedient to authorise—

(a) the payment out of money provided by Parliament of—

(i) any expenditure of the Secretary of State in connection with the dissolution of the Scottish Transport Group;

(ii) sums required for fulfilling any guarantee given by the Secretary of State in respect of sums borrowed by Caledonian MacBrayne Limited, David MacBrayne Limited and any subsidiary of theirs;

(iii) any increase in payments out of money so provided arising from any increase in administrative expenses of the Secretary of State attributable to the provisions of the Act; and

(iv) any increase attributable to the Act in payments out of money so provided under any other enactment;

(b) any payment into the Consolidated Fund under the Act.

Statutory Instruments, &c.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Harold Walker): With the leave of the House, I shall put together the three motions on legal aid and advice, Scotland.

Motion made, and Question put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 101(5) (Standing Committees on Statutory Instruments, &c.).

LEGAL AID AND ADVICE, SCOTLAND

That the draft Advice and Assistance (Scotland) (Prospective Cost) (No. 3) Regulations 1988, which were laid before this House on 23rd November, be approved.—*[Mr. Neubert.]*

That the draft Advice and Assistance (Assistance by Way of Representation) (Scotland) Regulations 1988, which were laid before this House on 23rd November, be approved.—*[Mr. Neubert.]*

That the draft Legal Aid (Scotland) Act 1986 Amendment Regulations 1988, which were laid before this House on 23rd November, be approved—*[Mr. Neubert.]*

Question agreed to.

PETITION

Channel Tunnel Rail Link (Gravesham)

1.30 am

Mr. Jacques Arnold (Gravesham): I wish to present a petition signed by 3,178 residents of the villages of Istead Rise and New Barn within the Gravesham constituency. The signatories include County Councillor Marven and Borough Councillors Barnes and Turner, who represent the area on the respective councils.

The significance of the scope of the petition is apparent in that the 3,178 signatories come from villages that have only 3,713 electors on their rolls. That is a very clear expression of the intense feelings aroused. Following considerable confusion in presentation, British Rail has published draft proposals for routes 1 and 2 of its high-speed rail link, which would run above ground close to those villages. The routes would have a profound impact on the environment of the area.

The prayer of the petition consequently reads:

'Wherefore your Petitioners pray that your Honourable House urge British Rail to respect the wishes of those living in the affected area of Kent that no new railway line shall be built in the vicinity of Istead Rise and New Barn.'

To lie upon the Table.

Manchester International Airport

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Neubert.]*

1.41 am

Sir Fergus Montgomery (Altrincham and Sale): One lesson that I have learned is never to have an Adjournment debate after Scottish business.

I am most grateful for the opportunity to raise this important issue on the Adjournment, because Manchester airport is the biggest single employer in my constituency. More of my constituents work for Manchester airport than for any other single employer. The Government have often stated their intention to develop Manchester airport as an international gateway outside London to complement Heathrow and Gatwick and thus provide the necessary route infrastructure for British industry, commerce and leisure.

For some time we have been told of the congestion in the south-east, so I should think that anything that would take traffic from the south-east to the north would be welcomed. We are anxious that people flying to other continents do not have to take the shuttle to London, change planes and fly on from there. We want to increase the number of intercontinental flights in and out of Manchester. In that regard I am grateful to the Government for the enormous progress that has been made since 1979. However, like Oliver Twist, I am never satisfied.

On 28 and 29 November negotiations took place in Washington to consider outstanding licence applications by United States carriers to serve routes between Manchester and points in the United States and the reciprocal benefits that will be available for British airlines as part of a negotiated agreement between the United Kingdom and United States Governments. Hopes were high that the negotiations would be successful and that we would have new routes across the Atlantic using Manchester airport. Those routes would bring substantial benefits to the tourist industry outside London and to the northern business traveller crossing the atlantic. They would mean improved services and time saving and a boost to the regional economy.

Recently the university of Salford made a study to show a stimulus to the north-west in the order of an additional £40 million a year and the creation of about 3,000 permanent new jobs merely as the consequence of the three new routes across the Atlantic that have been applied for by United States carriers. Those are not idle requests. About a year ago, discussions between the Department of Transport and Manchester airport regarding the potential for new routes between the United States and Manchester led to a visit by a top-level team from Manchester airport to several United States airlines. Subsequently, three airlines—Pan Am, American Airlines and Northwest—all made applications to the United States Department of Transport to serve Manchester. These are three highly respected airlines with astute route-planning procedures which have identified the Manchester market as being a prime area of interest and which see an attractive commercial return.

More United States airlines are trying to get into Manchester airport than any other airport in the world. The reason is not hard to find. It is because demand so clearly exists. That demand is frustrated to the tune of 1 million passengers a year who cannot, on the availability of current services, travel directly from Manchester airport. That is wholly unacceptable when one considers that within two hours' drive of Manchester we have 60 per cent. of United Kingdom manufacturing industry and over 20 million people. As we see improvements in the national economy moving further and further north, as they are, through the manufacturing sector and the new vibrant financial and high-tech centres based in the north-west, we can anticipate a significant increase in trans-atlantic travel.

In the north-west we have been fighting the battle for Manchester airport for some years and we were hopeful that the negotiations in Washington would bear fruit. I am told that a great deal of creative thinking by the British Government was evident and a major exercise was mounted to achieve an appropriate settlement which would allow increased United States' access to Manchester airport. In return the Government rightly sought significant opportunities for British airlines from London airports as a balancing effect.

I am saddened that at this stage British airlines do not seem keen to pursue the opportunities which are already open to them for flights across the Atlantic from Manchester and that the focus of their attention should be on new services from London. That is a matter for regret, but I have to acknowledge and accept that the commercial decisions of the British airlines are affected by their specific equipment and crew resource levels. However, what should be recognised is that Manchester airport's successful foray to engender interest by United States airlines in services to Manchester presents a rare opportunity for British airlines to derive some advantage from a round of negotiations.

This opportunity must not be squandered. The national interest would be well served by the development of new routes into Manchester because of the enormous net economic benefit to the whole of the United Kingdom. The further benefits which can be achieved for British airlines from an agreement operating out of London is an added bonus. The British negotiating team—I confess that I was delighted to hear that the marketing director of Manchester airport was included in the Washington talks for the first time—must be given the full support of the Government to achieve a successful conclusion with a realistic balance of aviation rights and major economic benefits for this country.

I am told that the talks will resume on 4 January 1989 in London and it is essential that the settlement be completed to allow the airlines to start operating in the summer of 1989. Failure to reach an agreement could mean that the Americans would lose interest and not come back for a third time to seek rights into Manchester. I think the Minister will agree that it would be a considerable loss to the United Kingdom if United States carriers are forced to look elsewhere. For example, there are other countries that are only too happy to welcome United States airlines with open arms.

We need a settlement urgently which allows for growth in the services out of Manchester across the Atlantic with consequential benefits to British aviation. I believe that the will is there on all sides and the potential benefits are enormous. I ask my hon. Friend to tell the negotiators to do all they can to reach an agreement on this occasion to the benefit of all.

[Sir Fergus Montgomery]

Other major opportunities await Manchester airport. Singapore Airlines has applied for a daily service into Manchester—at the moment, it is restricted to only two services a week. This year, my wife and I went to the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association conference in Australia. We decided that the best way to get there was to fly by Singapore Airlines from Manchester direct to Singapore. On 6 July, I went to book seats on the Manchester-Singapore flight for Saturday 10 September, and we were wait-listed. That should prove the popularity of the route.

Hong Kong, which is served by British Airways, is seen by Cathay Pacific as a possible route, and it has applied for rights to fly from Manchester to Hong Kong. This application has also run into difficulty, and no progress has been made, even though the Hong Kong Department of Aviation approved traffic rights two years ago.

It is known throughout the aviation world that the Manchester case is an extremely good one. The level of interest engendered in Manchester airport in the past 12 months presents an opportunity that must not be lost. If the negotiations with the United States are successful and if Hong Kong and Singapore should reach similar conclusions—with benefits for British aviation and the economy—it will mean an enormous boost for the United Kingdom and particularly the north. Some 20 million people have high hopes and high expectations of getting equal treatment with those who live in the south-east. I hope that my hon. Friend will show the Government's wholehearted commitment to the north and Manchester airport in particular.

1.51 am

The Minister for Public Transport (Mr. Michael Portillo): I warmly congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Altrincham and Sale (Sir F. Montgomery) on having obtained this Adjournment debate. He has pursued this subject with tremendous commitment and has shown a deep understanding of the problem, which demonstrates his true interest in the subject and his genuine concern for the airport, for the region in which it is situated and for the United Kingdom as a whole. The quality of his speech was all the more striking because it was the first sensible speech that we had heard for a couple of hours, and that was welcome. I am grateful to my hon. Friend for providing me with this opportunity to remind the House of the Government's considerable successes in its policy of expanding services from the regional airports, and also to explain the reasons why progress on increasing United States services to Manchester has not been as speedy as we would all have liked.

In 1985 the Government published their White Paper on airports policy. This confirmed unequivocally our commitment to encourage the use and development of our regional airports so that they can meet the maximum demand they can attract. Such developments benefit passengers to and from the regions by offering them more convenient services. Better use is made of the existing infrastructure as our regional airports, and the road networks providing access to them, are generally less congested than those in the south-east. Thriving regional airports also provide direct and indirect employment in their local area.

Of course, for airports to expand, it is crucial to attract the airlines. Airports such as Manchester have been doing a very valuable job in encouraging airlines to recognise that there is a market that they can serve successfully at Manchester. Where traffic rights do not exist, airports should make it clear to airlines, and through them to foreign Governments, that such rights are worth negotiating.

The Government take the lead in negotiating air traffic rights for United Kingdom airlines to fly to international destinations, and for foreign airlines to fly to United Kingdom airports. As set out in the airports White Paper, we are committed to the creation of wider opportunities for airlines when conditions of competition are fair and British interests are not prejudiced. We have taken the lead in the move towards liberalisation of air services in Europe and we have successfully negotiated a liberal air services agreement with Canada. As a result, both Canadian and United Kingdom-designated airlines are completely free to operate services between any airport in either country's territory. That has already resulted in a significant increase in intercontinental services from our regional airports.

During 1988, Birmingham, Leeds/Bradford, Cardiff and Newcastle have all offered regular scheduled services to Toronto. Manchester has also offered services to other Canadian destinations, such as Calgary, Edmonton, Vancouver and Halifax.

Over the last decade, traffic at regional airports has grown by 92 per cent. compared with only 59 per cent. at the British Airport Authority's London airports. Growth at Manchester has been more than 150 per cent., and that airport now operates scheduled services to more than 60 foreign destinations. That includes services to eight points in North America and the Caribbean, and to another eight intercontinental destinations in Australia, India, the middle east and the far east.

The possibility to which my hon. Friend alluded, of introducing more liberal air service arrangements in respect of Singapore, is currently being examined at Government level. There will be a further meeting between United Kingdom and Singapore aeronautical authorities early next year.

Nevertheless, there are examples where, despite our endeavours, we have been unable so far to negotiate wider opportunities for airlines to serve our regional airports. The main example, of course, is the subject of tonight's Adjournment debate—access by United States airlines to Manchester airport. We must recognise that our aviation relations with the United States of America are very different from those with, say, Canada. We were able to persuade the Canadian authorities that a liberal air services agreement was in all our interests. However, the United States authorities take a far more protectionist attitude towards access to the major American market. The air services agreement between the United States and the United Kingdom is founded on the principle that there is a broad balance of opportunities for each country's airlines. If the Americans are given new rights at Manchester, balancing concessions are needed for United Kingdom carriers in the United States.

In 1986, as a gesture of goodwill, we gave American Airlines a temporary permit to operate services between Chiacgo and Manchester—a valuable new right, for which we still have received nothing in return. That gesture is not

something we can repeat if we are to retain the strong United Kingdom aviation industry of which we are rightly proud.

For a considerable time, the United States Government showed no interest in coming to the negotiating table to discuss further access to Manchester. They claimed that their airlines had no interest in such services. But Manchester airport successfully persuaded some United States carriers that Manchester and the north-west offered their own substantial market for additional United States services, and the American Government were finally persuaded to the negotiating table in March of this year.

At those talks, we offered the United States a very reasonable package, taking account of the benefits that will accrue to Manchester and the north-west from additional United States services. We were prepared to agree to the immediate commencement, in the summer 1988 season, of a daily direct Manchester to Boston service and daily one-stop Manchester to New York service, as well as putting the Manchester to Chicago service on a permanent footing.

However, the American team insisted that any package must permit the immediate commencement of all the services it sought, including two separate daily New York to Manchester services operated by two large United States carriers. That would have seriously jeopardised British Airways' daily service on that route—and Manchester airport, which was consulted frequently during the course of the negotiations, advised that the retention of BA's service was its top priority.

The United States Government then made it clear that they were not interested in further talks before 1989. Eventually, we persuaded them back to the negotiating table in late November, in Washington. We were disappointed that a final agreement did not emerge at those talks, but not, I must say, surprised—bearing in mind the fact that the United States authorities had clearly indicated that they would not be prepared to reach agreement in a single round of consultations.

However, those negotiations were of value. There was a useful exchange of views, and the two sides explored a number of new ideas for developing an appropriate package as the basis for agreement. A Manchester airport representative was included in the United Kingdom delegation throughout. At the conclusion of the talks, we agreed to meet again as soon as mutually possible. We proposed dates in December and early January, and 4 and 5 January was recently agreed, as my hon. Friend said. Meanwhile, both sides are further examining each other's ideas, and the Government hope very much that a satisfactory settlement will soon be reached.

There is, however, a very important point to bear in mind. The United States Government must be in no doubt that if agreement is to be reached, they must be prepared to pay a reasonable price. Our demands will not be excessive. We recognise the advantages for Manchester and the north-west and we shall take them fully into account. But there must also be advantages for United Kingdom airlines. The United States negotiators watched very closely the reactions of Manchester airport and its supporters to the breakdown of talks in March. They will also be monitoring this debate tonight. No doubt they are still hoping that the Government will acquiesce in the face of domestic pressure, and give them traffic rights to Manchester for little or nothing in return. If so, they are mistaken. There must be mutual benefits.

My hon. Friend is concerned that unless we reach a satisfactory settlement in January, the United States airlines will lose interest in Manchester and look elsewhere. The Government are equally concerned that there should be a successful outcome to the January negotiations. But if there is not, and if the United States airlines have a genuine interest in serving Manchester, they will no doubt press their Government to continue the negotiations. Looking elsewhere in Europe to mount services is unlikely to be an attractive alternative. The vast majority of countries demand reciprocal benefits for their airlines in exchange for wider access for foreign carriers. The British Government are far from being alone in pursuing that policy in their negotiations with foreign Governments.

Our policy reflects careful consideration and extensive consultations. We are not about to set it aside and ignore the interests of United Kingdom airlines in the very difficult and demanding United States aviation environment. Allowing access to Manchester for nothing in return would not be in anyone's long-term interest.

Of course the Government wish to increase traffic to the regional airports, of which Manchester is the leading candidate, but the interests of the nation as a whole and, ultimately, of the regional airports too, demand that we have a strong aviation industry. The agreement reached over Manchester must not ignore the interests of the United Kingdom aviation industry.

I hope that this short debate has been an opportunity for me to reassert to my hon. Friend the considerable importance that we attach to Manchester airport, the great pleasure we have derived from seeing it thrive and prosper and the great pleasure it would give us to be able to conclude an agreement that brought more services to Manchester, if that could be attained on terms that were of mutual benefit to the two countries involved.

Question put and agreed to.

Adjourned accordingly at two minutes past Two o'clock.

House of Commons

Thursday 15 December 1988

The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

PRIVATE BUSINESS

LONDON REGIONAL TRANSPORT (PENALTY FARES) BILL *[Lords]*

Order for Second Reading read.
To be read the Second time on Tuesday 20 December.

CITY OF LONDON (SPITALFIELDS MARKET) BILL *(By Order)*

Order for Third Reading read.
To be read a Third time on Tuesday 20 December.

AVON LIGHT RAIL TRANSIT BILL *[Lords] (By Order)*

Order for Second Reading read.
To be read a Second time on Tuesday 20 December.

ASSOCIATED BRITISH PORTS (NO. 2) BILL: AND NORTH KILLINGHOLME CARGO TERMINAL BILL

Ordered,

That the Committee on the Associated British Ports (No. 2) Bill and the North Killingholme Cargo Terminal Bill have leave to visit and inspect the sites of the proposed works at Immingham and North Killingholme, in the county of Humberside, and the physical hydraulic model of the proposed Immingham works constructed at Southall by the promoters of the Associated British Ports (No. 2) Bill, provided that no evidence shall be taken in the course of such visits and that any party who has made an appearance before the Committee be permitted to attend by his Counsel, Agent or other representative.—*[The Chairman of Ways and Means.]*

Oral Answers

HOME DEPARTMENT

Abortion

1. **Mrs. Ann Winterton:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many inquests were held in 1988 on babies born alive following abortions; and if he will make a statement.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Home Department (Mr. Douglas Hogg): I am not aware of any. Such information is not collected centrally.

Mrs. Winterton: Will my hon. Friend give his reasons for failing to hold an inquest into the death of the Carlisle baby, who, in July 1987, was delivered alive in the city general hospital Carlisle after 21 weeks' gestation but died, having struggled for three hours to live?

Mr. Hogg: I entirely understand my hon. Friend's concern. My right hon. Friend felt that there was no compelling reason to hold an inquest. In reaching that conclusion he had a number of considerations in mind —that this was a bona fide and lawful abortion; the reasons for carrying it out were compelling; the foetus was incapable of surviving; and it was desirable to spare the mother further distress.

Mr. Alton: How can the Minister say that, when the ground given for abortion was disability—a non-recurring possible skin complaint that was not life-threatening? Did he take into account the absence of resuscitation equipment in the hospital when the abortion took place? How does that square with the Infant Life (Preservation) Act 1929, which says that a child may not be aborted if it is capable of being born alive? This child struggled for life for three hours before being put in a black sack and incinerated.

Mr. Hogg: It is desirable to avoid emotive language in these painful subjects. Ministers gave the case careful consideration and came to the conclusions that I have outlined. I believe that they were right.

Sir Bernard Braine: Is my hon. Friend aware that in 1976 the Select Committee on Abortion recommended that no abortion should be carried out on a baby of 20 weeks' or more gestation unless resuscitation equipment and trained staff are available? Is he further aware that resuscitation equipment was available in the hospital for the Carlisle baby but that it was not used because it was in another building? Is that not of itself sufficient reason to order an inquest? Can an inquest be ordered to show the nation that regulations passed by the Department of Health and accepted by the hospital service were flagrantly broken? Is it not high time that we ended disgraceful happenings of this kind?

Mr. Hogg: I am conscious of the strong feelings that a number of hon. Members—most particularly my right hon. Friend the Member for Castle Point (Sir B. Braine) —have on this subject. This matter was given careful consideration by Ministers, including my right hon. Friend——

Sir Bernard Braine: The law was broken.

Mr. Hogg: The conclusion at which we arrived was the one that I have outlined to the House, and it would be wrong to depart from it now.

Mr. McAvoy: On what ground did the Home Secretary decide that there should be no inquest? This abortion contravened the Infant Life (Preservation) Act 1929, section 1(1)(b) of the Abortion Act and, against all requirements laid down by the Department of Health, no resuscitation equipment was available for this child. Given all those facts, surely this case should be investigated.

Mr. Hogg: I understand the hon. Gentleman's concern, which he has expressed most clearly. I do not accept that there was a breach of the 1929 Act. The Ministers who examined the case did so carefully, realising that many hon. Members felt strongly about it, but the conclusion that I have outlined to the House is the right conclusion.

Cruelty to Children

2. **Mr. Anthony Coombs:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he proposes to take any action to increase the penalties available to the courts for the offence of cruelty to children.

The Minister of State, Home Office (Mr. John Patten): The maximum penalty for cruelty to children has already been increased from two to 10 years' imprisonment. The Criminal Justice Act 1988 provides this higher penalty for offences committed since 29 September 1988.

Mr. Coombs: I welcome the measure, especially in view of recently reported appalling cases of child cruelty. Does my hon. Friend agree that there is a strong case, as put forward by the National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children, for intensifying prison treatment of people convicted of offences against children, to ensure that such offences do not occur when they leave prison?

Mr. Patten: I agree with my hon. Friend. He will be interested to learn that much of that work already goes on at Her Majesty's prison Grendon Underwood.

Mr. Loyden: What action does the Minister intend to take against the Secretary of State for Social Security for the crimes committed against the children of this country by freezing child benefit for two years in succession?

Mr. Patten: None, Sir.

Mr. Wilshire: Is my hon. Friend willing to reconsider the matter? Will he consider drawing a distinction between child cruelty within families, when deterrence is not necessarily the most significant factor, and individuals and organisations who systematically and deliberately organise child abuse? Will he take stronger action against groups such as the Children of God and practitioners of Satanism for whom the most severe punishment is not necessarily adequate?

Mr. Patten: I know about my hon. Friend's strong feelings about these issues. The Criminal Justice Act 1988 tightens the law in favour of children in several ways, not only that which I have already described but, for example, by making the possession of indecent photographs a criminal offence. It also introduces other provisions such as an appeal by my right hon. and learned Friend the Attorney-General against allegedly over-lenient sentences. It represents a formidable package which has received an all-party welcome.

Mr. Randall: Does the Minister agree that there is a need for more varied penalties for cruelty to children? What does he think of the NSPCC's recent suggestion that a child should not be punished for the evil that a parent might have done to it? Does he agree that there is a case for removing child abusers, rather than innocent children, from the home?

Mr. Patten: No one wants any child to be punished in any way because of the faults of anyone else.

Mr. Hind: In the light of the recent case referred to by my hon. Friend the Member for Spelthorne (Mr. Wilshire), when will my hon. Friend bring into operation those clauses in the Criminal Justice Act 1988 dealing with child pornography and allowing children to give evidence by way of video link?

Mr. Patten: We have already introduced a provision concerning the possession of indecent photographs. That has been an offence since 28 September this year. On 5 January 1989 we shall give powers to the courts to receive video evidence by children.

Broadwater Farm (Incident)

3. **Mr. Bernie Grant:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he intends to respond to the second report from Lord Gifford QC into the circumstances that led to the convictions of Mr. Silcott, Mr. Braithwaite and Mr. Raghip arising out of the incidents at Broadwater farm in 1985; and if he will make a statement on its conclusions.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Lord Gifford has written to me enclosing a copy of his report. This was an entirely unofficial exercise in which, with my right hon. Friend's approval, the Metropolitan police declined to take part.

Mr. Grant: Is the Home Secretary satisfied that the evidence on which the Broadwater farm three were convicted and on which their petition for leave to appeal was rejected, which is of confessions only, was obtained without undue duress, without unfair treatment, and under the provisions of the Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984? Have inquiries been made into the evidence that was obtained? If inquiries have not been made, will he make them now?

Mr. Hogg: The three men named in the question were convicted after a jury trial. That conviction was upheld in the Court of Appeal earlier this week. In those circumstances, I believe that most fair-minded people should accept that those men are guilty as charged.

Mr. Roger King: Will my hon. Friend join in congratulating those Metropolitan police officers who were recently awarded bravery awards for their heroic conduct during the Broadwater farm riots in 1987?

Mr. Hogg: The Metropolitan police behaved with great gallantry, and they will be grateful to my hon. Friend for his words.

Mr. Hattersley: I do not contest the idea that legal procedures, as now constituted, were scrupulously

followed in this case, but will the Under-Secretary comment on the increasing disquiet that underlies this case, of men and women being convicted on confessions alone? There is growing concern that that should not be the sole reason for a conviction. Is the Department prepared to study that matter?

Mr. Hogg: These matters are for the courts. The right hon. Gentleman would do his reputation, and that of his party, considerable good if he stood by the verdict of a jury when it is upheld in the Court of Appeal. Simply to try to go around the back door in such cases is not respectable.

Child Destruction

4. **Mr. Amess:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what was the average sentence for child destruction under the Infant Life (Preservation Act) 1929 for each of the last 10 years; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: There has been only one conviction for child destruction in the past 10 years. The sentence was life imprisonment.

Mr. Amess: Following that answer, does my hon. Friend recognise that many hon. Members are not satisfied that the intent of the Infant Life (Preservation) Act 1929 is being complied with? Does he further recognise that—with the advances in medical science meaning that the stage at which a baby is capable of being born alive is reducing all the time—the effectiveness of this Act needs to be reviewed urgently?

Mr. Hogg: My hon. Friend puts his point very firmly. The 1929 Act provides that at 28 weeks of development, there is a rebuttable presumption that the foetus is capable of survival. There is quite clear and compelling evidence that the rebuttable presumption should arise not at 28 weeks, but at 24 weeks, but the House may feel that this matter could be best tackled by private Member's legislation.

Mr. Ashton: While there has been one case of child destruction in the past 10 years, is it not a fact that, before we had the Abortion Act 1967, there was an average of 65 mother destructions each year? Women went to back-street abortionists, ran into trouble, had to be rushed into hospital and subsequently died. Will the Under-Secretary compare those figures with those of child destruction?

Mr. Hogg: I certainly shall.

Mr. Marlow: Is there not something wrong with a society where healthy human life can be destroyed purely because it is socially inconvenient? Is that not happening increasingly these days? Is it not against the law and is it not time that the Government did something about it?

Mr. Hogg: The 1929 Act is quite plain in its effect. The question really is about where the rebuttable presumption should arise. At the moment it arises at 28 weeks. There is good reason to suppose that it should arise at 24 weeks. It is a matter that causes the House much distress and would probably be best dealt with by private Member's legislation.

Forensic Science Service

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether he has any proposals to increase the level of service provided to police forces by the forensic science service.

The Secretary of State for the Home Department (Mr. Douglas Hurd): We plan to recruit 18 additional scientific staff to the Home Office forensic science service in 1989-90 and a further 10 additional staff in 1990-91.

Mr. Cohen: Will the Secretary of State confirm that in 1980 there were 445 staff in the forensic science service, yet last year there were only 437, despite the fact that reported crime in that period went through the roof? Are not many suspected criminals getting away with their crimes because the service cannot cope? Did not an expert witness to the Select Committee on Home Affairs say that morale in the service is bloody awful? When will the Secretary of State do something about it and put money and manpower into the service?

Mr. Hurd: Investment in the forensic science service has increased from £6·3 million to £13·75 million during our term of office. That is a real increase of 21 per cent. The hon. Gentleman's figures for staffing are slightly wrong. Staffing levels are broadly constant, but the workload—the number of exhibits going to the service—has increased substantially. I await the Select Committee's conclusion on the matter. As the hon. Gentleman knows, there has been a long period of discussion and consultation in the service about grading and complementing. The new structure has been introduced and promotions are being made to the new grades. Morale should improve because the period of uncertainty is over.

Mr. Ashley: Is the Home Secretary aware of the longstanding anxiety that the forensic science service is too closely intertwined with the police? Does he accept that what is required is an improved independent forensic science service that is available equally to the police and to defendants?

Mr. Hurd: I am aware of that argument, but I do not regard it as a priority. Inevitably, the forensic science service and the police are intertwined. They should be. My priority is to ensure that the service is organised in such a way as to give proper priority to those crimes which the police believe to be most important.

Mr. Corbett: May I give a modest welcome to the increase in staffing in the forensic science service? None the less, will the Home Secretary confirm that last year the management consultants, Touche Ross, recommended an immediate increase in staff of 27 to deal with the extra workload and with the introduction of DNA genetic fingerprinting? Given that the new staff will not be in place until next year or even the following year, as well as the fast rise in violent and sex crimes, the Home Secretary's complacency is astounding.

Mr. Hurd: The hon. Gentleman must have drafted his supplementary question before he heard my answer to the main question. There have been many reports and discussions in Committees. The forensic science service is just emerging from the period of discussion. Anyone who visits the six laboratories—no doubt the hon. Gentleman has visited at least one of them—will be impressed by the

way in which they are grappling with DNA and the workload and trying to perform to the best of their ability. I am anxious that the structure and gradings should be such that they can do that.

Rural Areas (Violence)

6. **Mr. Temple-Morris:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what steps his Department is considering to reduce violence in rural areas.

Mr. Hurd: We have strengthened the police, tightened the law on under-age drinking, reminded the justices of their powers to prevent disorderly drinking, encouraged the swift hearing of cases of this kind and made it an offence to carry a knife in a public place without good reason. We are preparing further guidance to local services.

Mr. Temple-Morris: My right hon. Friend will be only too well aware of the relative increase in violent crime in rural areas as opposed to their metropolitan counterparts. Will he consider taking action, or tell the House what action he is taking, in two areas: first, the Friday and Saturday evening drinking sessions that involve the young and the under-aged; and, secondly, police manpower? On the latter point, knowing that my right hon. Friend is a charitable man, may I ask him to respond generously to the application by West Mercia police for 40 additional police posts in 1989?

Mr. Hurd: Those are two pertinent questions. On the first one, the Licensing Act 1988 toughened the law against illegal under-age drinking. We have reminded the justices and the police of the powers available under existing laws —for example, to revoke in mid-course the licences of disorderly pubs. I hope that, as a result, the sort of incidents to which my hon. Friend refers will decline.

Rural forces have benefited from the substantial increases in police manpower, with 8,400 more police officers and civilians working with the police in non-metropolitan forces. I hope fairly soon to announce the allocation of the 1,100 additional police officers which I have already said will be the total for next year, and the West Mercia application is well in my mind. After that there will be a further substantial programme of increases.

Mr. Maclennan: How many police authorities are seeking increases in the manpower of their forces? By how much will the right hon. Gentleman's proposed increase fall short of what is being sought?

Mr. Hurd: Most of them are seeking increases, I believe. I am not, of course, responsible for figures in Scotland, but in England and Wales, most are doing so. I have 1,100 places to allocate for next year alone, which is a record on top of a record. Of that, 300 will go to the Metropolitan police and 800 to the provincial forces in England and Wales. Although that total will be a record on top of a record and although it will be a greater increase in real terms than any other public service is receiving, it will not, of course, meet all demands.

Mr. Allason: Is my right hon. Friend aware of the success of the experiment in Bournemouth on the introduction of video surveillance equipment in deterring miscreants and identifying criminals? Is he prepared to consider extending those experiments elsewhere, including my own constituency of Torbay?

Mr. Hurd: It is not for the Home Office to decide; it is a matter for local chief officers to decide, with their local authorities where necessary. I have noted what my hon. Friend has said. Not only in football grounds has such apparatus has been useful.

Mr. Hattersley: Does not the Home Secretary think that there is something incompatible between the complacency of his answers and his own statistics, which show that violent crime has increased by 13 per cent. and 15 per cent. on the past two sets of figures that he produced —a record on a record? That is not conducive to the smugness that he has displayed this afternoon.

Mr. Hurd: The right hon. Gentleman has the failing that he is always rather anxious to exaggerate the bad news and to explain away the good news. The good news yesterday was that there was a substantial reduction in the total of recorded crime and, in particular, a sharp reduction in the number of burglaries—a crime to which Opposition Members constantly drew my attention when the figures were becoming worse, but on which they are silent when the figures improve. If the right hon. Gentleman looks at the figures, he will see that there was a sharp rise in the reported level of violent crime last year and continuing this year, but that as the quarters of this year have proceeded, that rise is levelling out.

Mr. Key: As we approach the winter solstice, will my right hon. Friend comment on the effectiveness of the Public Order Act 1986? Is he aware that there is no desire or intention on the part of the communities in Wiltshire and elsewhere to witness confrontation between summer hippies and the resident population? Will he do all that he can to encourage those who seek trouble at the summer solstice to stay away?

Mr. Hurd: I agree with my hon. Friend. I regard him as the joint author of the clause in the Public Order Act that is called the "Hippy clause". I am glad that it has had a good effect in his county and elsewhere. The advice that he has given is sound.

Identity Cards

7. **Mr. Darling:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what consideration he has given to the introduction of identity cards in the United Kingdom after 1992; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hurd: I have asked the Association of Chief Police Officers of England, Wales and Northern Ireland for its views on the introduction of national identity cards and I am awaiting its response. We are also studying the recent recommendations of the Home Affairs Select Committee. Many people carry proof of identity in various forms, but it would be a different and substantial step to impose a univeral compulsory system with corresponding police powers.

Mr. Darling: The Secretary of State seems to be hazy and vague about the Government's proposals. Does he accept that many people would regard the introduction of compulsory ID cards—or even pressure to carry them on a voluntary basis—as an intrusion into civil liberties and

that they would deeply resent it? Will he take this opportunity to state categorically that there will be no requirement to carry ID cards in this country?

Mr. Hurd: I simply repeat my original answer, which met the hon. Gentleman's point. An increasing number of people carry proof of identity in various forms as a matter of convenience, but it would be a different matter to impose a universal compulsory system with corresponding police powers.

Mr. Andrew MacKay: Is my right hon. Friend aware that many of us who see considerable merit in identity cards would favour the Government initially facilitating the carrying of such cards on a voluntary basis, as once they had been used, they would become acceptable to the public?

Mr. Hurd: I note that observation, and it is certainly a possible way forward. I think that it would be sensible to await the considered view of the Association of Chief Police Officers, for which I have asked, because in the past the police have been reluctant to advocate a compulsory system, believing that it would not really be worth while. We need to take into account the point made by my hon. Friend, as well as the kind of documents that people will be carrying across Europe after 1992, but as I said—and as my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister said in July—we are not satisfied that the case has been made out for a compulsory system.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: Does the Home Secretary understand that some of us have a sneaking sympathy for the principle of identity cards, but that that is outweighed by our concern about the erosion of civil liberties that has taken place over the past few years? Does not the Home Secretary feel a twinge of conscience at some of the actions brought in the courts, at the complaints that he receives as a Member of Parliament and at the representations made by Back Benchers about the treatment of our constituents? Does he not understand that that is why we shall have to oppose the introduction of identity cards even though we may have some sympathy with the principle?

Mr. Hurd: The hon. Gentleman is getting involved in a very convoluted argument. I do not accept his view and I do not recall such cases. During the previous Parliament we approved a system for receiving and dealing with complaints against the police under independent supervision, and I believe that it is working well.

Mr. Wheeler: Does my right hon. Friend agree that the all party Select Committee on Home Affairs has recommended in its report a voluntary identity card for civil liberty reasons, because such a card will grant ease of travel within the European Community and will mean that the less secure British visitor's passport can be replaced by a better quality document that will be more widely accepted?

Mr. Hurd: I understand that that is the gist of the Select Committee's report. As I said in my original answer, I believe that the case for a voluntary system post-1992 needs studying.

The question of football hooliganism often arises in this context. The football clubs need to keep out of their grounds people who may not have been convicted of anything but whom they know to be troublemakers. The scheme in the proposed Bill will enable them to do that, but a national identity card scheme, however draconian, would be no help with that problem.

Carlisle Report (Resource Implications)

8. **Mr. Hinchliffe:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he will next meet officers of the National Association of Probation Officers to discuss the resource implications of the Carlisle report.

Mr. John Patten: We are considering the Carlisle report and look forward to receiving comments from the National Association of Probation Officers among many others. But it would be premature to make the assumptions which would be needed for a discussion of resource implications at the moment.

Mr. Hinchliffe: Is the Minister aware that the Carlisle report stressed the value and effectiveness of the work of the probation service? When will the Government recognise that probation care is often far more effective than imprisonment and allocate proper resources to the probation and after-care service?

Mr. Patten: The probation service—among many public services—has enjoyed a record improvement in its resources since 1979. Its cash resources have been increased by more than 60 per cent. in real terms, and its manpower has increased by one third. We look forward to the co-operation of the probation service, both in implementing any changes that occur as a result of the recommendations of the Carlisle committee and in putting into action the proposals of my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary for punishment in the community.

Mr. Allason: Is my hon. Friend aware that one aspect of the Carlisle report is bound to cause grave disquiet? It is proposed to divorce the responsibilities of the Parole Board—as a separate body—from the Home Secretary's decisions. Does the Minister have a view on that?

Mr. Patten: Thus far, we are still consulting. Clearly, it would be a major step for an executive body to be set up over which my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary had no control. My right hon. Friend and I are well aware of the strong public concern that those who commit serious and violent crime should stay in prison for a very long time.

Mr. Sheerman: May we have a straighter answer about the Government's attitude to the Carlisle report? Is the Minister discontented with that report because it has missed the opportunity to cut overcrowding in our prisons at a stroke by going for automatic parole after one third of a sentence has been served—a step which would reduce the prison population by 8,000 and solve many of the problems in our overcrowded prisons?

Mr. Patten: I am sorry that the hon. Gentleman should criticise my noble Friend Lord Carlisle of Bucklow and others for the hard work that they put into their excellent report. My right hon. Friend the Home Secretary has asked for observations from those who are interested by the end of March. This is a fundamental and important issue which deserves full consultation and discussion rather than ad hoc comments from the Dispatch Box before such a full consultation.

Mr. Lawrence: When my hon. Friend considers those matters, will he take into consideration that there is much dissatisfaction with the tendency to increase administrative release and to thwart the judiciary's wishes to sentence people to certain lengths of imprisonment?

Mr. Patten: My right hon. Friend and I are well aware of the disc[illegible]t about that trend not only among the higher judiciary and others but in society at large.

Broadcasting White Paper

9. **Mr. Sillars:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what discussions he has had with representatives of the Scottish broadcasting media regarding the Government's White Paper, Cm. 517.

Mr. Renton: We are in regular contact with representative organisations, such as the ITV Association, the Association of Independent Radio Contractors and the Cable Television Association, all of whom represent Scottish interests. Among other contacts this year, I have visited Scottish Television and Radio Clyde, and discussed Gaelic broadcasting with Comunn na Gaidhlig. *[Interruption.]*

Mr. Sillars: Perfectly forgivable. *[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Sillars: The Minister can relax; I shall address him in English.

Is the Minister aware from his conversations in Scotland of the anxiety that exists over the auctioning of the licences at the end of the day? Is he further aware that the Peacock committee was divided on that, and that the majority which went for auctioning nevertheless said that the licensing authority should be able to accept a lower tender if it thought that that was in the best interests of the area to be served? Before he reaches the definitive point of legislation, will he take that on board, particularly in relation to—*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. Will the hon. Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner) please take his seat?

Mr. Sillars: Will the Minister take that point on board, particularly in relation to Scotland where quality and commitment to national broadcasting are important?

Mr. Renton: I stress that it will be necessary for all those who apply for franchises under Channel 3, the regional channel, first to satisfy the Independent Television Commission of their ability to cross quality hurdles to show programmes of quality and of regional origin. We are in the consultative period on the White Paper on broadcasting and it was in that context that the other day, for example, I met the Independent Television Association, which has already raised many points with me which we shall be considering further.

Mr. Teddy Taylor: Since the SNP is now in favour of Scotland in Europe, would it be helpful if that party were to make it abundantly clear whether, given the legislation for which it voted, it is in favour of the sale of STV to French, Italian or Greek companies as proposed in the legislation?

Mr. Speaker: Order. That is a little wide of the question. The question should be to the Minister.

Mr. Renton: That will be one of the many difficult questions that the new Independent Television Commission will have to study when it comes into being.

Mr. Buchan: I presume that the organisation that the hon. Gentleman discussed gaelic broadcasting with was An Comunn Gaidhealach and presumably he showed it the bratach bana in the process. In considering the amount of programme time to be given to independent producers, will he recall that not all Scottish programmes are derived from Scotland? Will the percentage be based on the total or on the percentage produced in Scotland? Secondly, when talking about independent productions in Scotland, will he ensure that we are not planning to auction off only to the national large-scale organisations?

Mr. Renton: I am not certain that I heard all the hon. Gentleman's question. I took my pronunciation of Comunn na Gaidhlig from the hon. Member for Argyll and Bute (Mrs. Michie) who was responsible for bringing the deputation to see me. Thereafter, I think the hon. Gentleman was talking about the amount of independent production in Scotland geared to the Scottish audience. Border Television, about one third of whose audience is in Scotland, has increased its independent production facilities for use by others from about £40,000 a year to over £3 million. BBC Scotland is now producing 228 hours a year of network programmes and 584 hours of programmes specifically directed at the Scottish market.

Mr. Bill Walker: Is my hon. Friend aware that in Scotland, especially in the north-east, there is a fondness for Grampian Television? That lies behind part of the questions asked by Opposition Members. Is he aware that in the discussions that many of us had with the Scottish broadcasters there was an acceptance and an awareness of the opportunities that will arise as a result of cable and microwave broadcasting? That will make it possible to produce programmes with more Scottish content and more local programmes for different parts of Scotland, because the Highlands are different from the Lowlands or the Borders.

Mr. Renton: I agree with my hon. Friend on both points. I recently read an interesting study by Grampian which emphasised the extent to which programmes such as Scottish documentaries and local Scottish news are of particular interest to Scottish viewers. There is no doubt that the arrival of more microwave television, as suggested in the White Paper, will, on a local basis, provide great opportunities for distant communities in Scotland to receive more television services in the future.

Mr. Steel: Surely the Minister should have specific discussions with the Scottish broadcasting authorities because under the auction proposal small companies such as Grampian and Border will have no chance at all. There is spare capacity in Scotland and, therefore, there is a good case for awarding Channel 5 north of the border.

Mr. Renton: As I have already said, I have met representatives of Scottish Television recently. The managing director of Scottish Television was one of those who came to see me recently. If any Scottish organisations representing broadcasting want to come to see me in the coming weeks, they are welcome to do so.

Bail (Electronic Monitoring)

10. **Mr. David Davis:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when the proposed pilot projects to use electronic monitoring for people on bail will commence; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John Patten: We expect the projects to begin next summer.

Mr. Davis: I congratulate my hon. Friend on his humane innovation. Will he reassure the House that there will be no increase in the proportion of people receiving bail under the scheme who are accused of certain crimes of violence for which the scheme may not be appropriate? Will he reassure the House that people who break the terms of their bail under the scheme will be sent back to gaol by the courts?

Mr. Patten: I can give an assurance on both counts.

Mr. Madden: Does the Minister have any plans to place an electronic tag on Umberto Fiore who is wanted by the Italian authorities? They have been seeking to extradite him from this country for the past seven years in connection with the bombing of a train that resulted in the deaths of more than 80 people.

Mr. Patten: There has been no delay in the consideration of that case.

Kindertransport Group

11. **Mr. Dykes:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he has received any requests and representations from representatives of the Kindertransport group in connection with its planned 50-year commemorations in 1989.

Mr. Renton: In November my right hon. Friend received, and officials acknowledged, an invitation from the chair of the Kindertransport committee to open its planned 50-year commemorations in June 1989. My right hon. Friend will not be able to attend as he will be at a meeting of European Ministers of Justice in the Hague, but I am pleased to accept the invitation on his behalf.

Mr. Dykes: I thank my hon. Friend for his and the Home Office's response in encouraging and supporting the venture and for accepting the invitation. Does he agree that it will be a moving occasion—it will take place in Harrow leisure centre in June 1989—when Jewish refugees who were given permission to come into Britain 50 years ago by the then Home Secretary will be commemorating their survival of the evils of Nazism and the fact that the United Kingdom lived up to its honourable tradition of providing a haven for political refugees?

Mr. Renton: I thank my hon. Friend for the remarks at the beginning of his question. I am well aware not only of his work but of that of his wife in helping Jewish communities throughout the world. Like him, I hope that this will be a memorable and moving occasion to commemorate a time when Britain responded to its traditional obligation to look after refugees.

Criminal Offences (Under-age People)

12. **Mr. Gill:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he has given consideration to introducing legislation which would require parents to stand trial alongside under-age members of their family brought to court for criminal offences.

Mr. Hurd: Parents can already be required to attend the court with children under 17 and to pay fines, compensation and costs imposed on such children. I wish that this provison were better known, and more widely used.

Mr. Gill: Will my right hon. Friend consider making parents' attendance at courts in these circumstances mandatory? Does he agree that the quality of our society would be best improved by stressing the individual's responsibilities to it? Does he agree that for too long now we have stressed the individual's rights in, rather than his responsibilities to, society?

Mr. Hurd: I entirely agree with the latter part of my hon. Friend's question. The Prime Minister and I have been stressing those exact points and will continue to do so.

As regards my hon. Friend's first point, it is best left to the court. One can imagine family circumstances in which it would not be reasonable to make it mandatory to attend or to pay fines and compensations. But parents attend or pay now in only 21 per cent. of cases. My hon. Friend is right that that is too few; I hope the courts will seek to increase it.

Mr. Skinner: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker——

Mr. Speaker: Order. Not now.

PRIME MINISTER

Engagements

Q1. **Mr. Day:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 15 December.

The Prime Minister: This morning I presided at a meeting of the Cabinet and had meetings with ministerial colleagues and others. In addition to my duties in the House, I shall be having further meetings later today.

Mr. Day: Will my right hon. Friend agree to convey to the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland the warm congratulations of the House on his blunt demand that the Irish Government review their extradition procedures? Does she agree that the fight against terrorism demands the wholehearted support of all parties in the House—not the often half-hearted attitude manifested by the Opposition?

The Prime Minister: Yes, it will give me great pleasure to congratulate my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland. We have also had a clear assurance from the Taoiseach, repeated in the Dail this week, that the Irish Government's extradition procedures will be looked at again if they prove unsatisfactory, as they clearly have done.

I very much agree with my hon. Friend about the performance of Opposition Members. It is a great pity that we cannot rely on their support in the fight against terrorism.

Mr. Kinnock: The Under-Secretary of State for Health says:

"most of the egg production in this country is . . . infected with salmonella".

The Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food says: "it is not the case that most eggs are infected."

Will the Prime Minister clear up the confusion and tell us which of her Ministers is right?

The Prime Minister: We are aware of the deep problems facing the egg industry. We think that we have a duty to give greater publicity to the advice that the Chief Medical Officer has already given, which I repeated to the House at Tuesday's Question Time. We are already taking measures under the new code of practice of the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food to tackle the new strain of salmonella. We are also urgently considering the representations that have been made to us.

Mr. Kinnock: Is it not obvious from that answer that the concern expressed by the Prime Minister's right hon. and hon. Friends, as well as by Opposition Members, is well founded? Is it not also obvious that £500,000 is much too little to repair the damage done to the egg industry, and much too much to spend on saving the face of the Under-Secretary of State for Health?

The Prime Minister: The right hon. Gentleman knows from the answer that I gave last time that there is a problem, and that salmonella is connected with and has been traced to eggs. There have been about 49 cases affecting more than 1,000 people. It is our bounden duty to give the Chief Medical Officer's advice to everyone in a way that can be clearly understood. As I indicated, we are also considering other matters.

Q2. **Dame Jill Knight:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 15 December.

The Prime Minister: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Dame Jill Knight: Following yesterday's statement by Mr. Yasser Arafat, in which he recognised Israel's right to exist and unequivocally renounced violence and terrorism, does my right hon. Friend share the hope that the way is clear for an international conference to settle the problems of the middle east?

The Prime Minister: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for that question. I believe that Mr. Arafat's latest statement justifies our insistence since 1985 on three conditions being met before the PLO could enter into negotiations. They are, first, that the PLO recognises United Nations resolutions 242 and 338; secondly, that it recognises explicitly Israel's right to exist behind secure borders; and, thirdly, that it unconditionally renounces violence and terrorism. It seems that all three have been met, and I join my hon. Friend in hoping that that will enable negotiations to go forward within the framework of an international conference, which proposal we have also supported for a considerable length of time.

Mr. Ashdown: Has the Prime Minister read the report stressing once again the dangers of global warming that was published last week? *[Interruption.]* Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister did not hear me. I asked whether she has read the report once again stressing the dangers of global warming. Does she recall that a little over a month ago —*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. These interruptions take up a lot of time.

Mr. Ashdown: Does the Prime Minister recall that a little more than a month ago, she agreed with me that there is an urgent necessity for an energy conservation programme? Does she recall setting a target of 2 per cent. for energy conservation in Britain? Will the Prime Minister say now what the Government will do about that?

The Prime Minister: Yes, we recognise the dangers that could arise from the greenhouse effect. We acknowledge that joint efforts to tackle it are required on the part of all nations. It is only partly a matter of energy efficiency; it is also a matter of preserving tropical rain forests, which use up carbon dioxide better than anything else, and of replacing some coal energy production by nuclear energy. Yes, it is important to achieve energy efficiency. Most people are aiming to do that, because it leads to lower costs. However, it is not the only factor, and many additional aspects must be tackled jointly with other countries. The subject is also tied up with chlorofluorocarbons, which can aggravate the greenhouse effect. We shall have a conference on that aspect in this country next March.

Mr. Bowis: Is my right hon. Friend aware that it will be widely welcomed if she is able to announce that her Government will make a contribution to the mayor of Wandsworth's appeal for the victims of the Clapham Junction rail disaster and their families?

The Prime Minister: I understand that the mayor of Wandsworth has set up a disaster fund. Her Majesty's Government will contribute to it the sum of £250,000. We hope that that will encourage others to make further contributions.

Grangemouth

Q3. **Mr. Harry Ewing:** To ask the Prime Minister if she has any plans to visit Grangemouth.

The Prime Minister: At present, I have no plans to do so.

Mr. Ewing: If the Prime Minister does not want to visit my constituents, may I, in all seriousness, ask if two of my constituents may visit her at 10 Downing street? Both have been widowed for a long time, and I wrote to the Prime Minister about one of them. Neither of them will be allowed to transfer from the widowed mother's allowance to the widow's pension. Both have to live on £35 a week less than they did before the recent changes in social security regulations. As I admit to complete failure in my attempts to tell them how to survive on £35 a week less, may I have those widows meet the Prime Minister—so that she may tell them how their families can survive over Christmas on £35 a week less than they had in the past?

The Prime Minister: The hon. Gentleman knows that a decision on any particular case is made not by the Government but by independent statutory authorities within the framework of legislation passed by the House. He is also aware that the guarantee that those pensions will be protected against inflation is now firmer than at any time in history, and that more generous income support has been provided than ever before. I hope that he will tell that to the lady concerned.

Q4. **Mr. Carrington:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 15 December.

The Prime Minister: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Carrington: Is my right hon. Friend aware how much pensioners in my constituency are now looking forward to Christmas? They received their Christmas bonus last week, and are secure in the knowledge that heating costs for the winter are included in their income support. If we have a particularly cold spell this winter, more people than ever before will receive additional assistance to pay their heating costs.

The Prime Minister: My hon. Friend is correct. The Christmas bonus is now an annual event, as it was not under the last Labour Government, when pensioners did not always receive their bonus. The uprating of benefits in line with inflation is now not only annual but related specifically to the RPI, and is more assured than ever before. The heating allowance has now been included in income support, so pensioners can be sure of receiving it, and there is a better severe weather payment than ever before. That is all because increasing prosperity has enabled us to be more generous to such people.

Mr. Sillars: May I refer the right hon. Lady to the Government's political guarantee to 16 and 17-year-olds that they will obtain YTS places? If they do not do so, they are rendered penniless. Why does the right hon. Lady not make that political guarantee a legal guarantee, and thus give 16 and 17-year-olds real rights?

The Prime Minister: In my answer to a question a few days ago, I made it perfectly clear that there are more YTS places than there are applicants for them. As that is true in all regions, I cannot see what the hon. Gentleman is complaining about. He must be hard put to find a critical question.

Q5. **Mr. Nicholas Bennett:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 15 December.

The Prime Minister: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Bennett: Has my right hon. Friend seen today's announcement of the latest substantial fall in unemployment, which brings the figure down by 1 million from July 1986? It is down for the 28th consecutive month. Has she also noticed that in Wales, which has had 20 per cent. of all inward investment, the figure has fallen faster than in the United Kingdom as a whole?

The Prime Minister: Yes, unemployment is indeed falling everywhere, but, as my hon. Friend says, Wales is doing particularly well, as are the west midlands and the north-west. The position relating to the long-term unemployed is particularly encouraging, with a record fall of some 450,000 in the past two years, and there are more people at work than ever before.

Q6. **Mr. Buchan:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 15 December.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Buchan: In the course of her busy day, has the Prime Minister had a chance to read the statement issued by the right hon. Member for Shropshire, North (Mr. Biffen), in which he calls into question her nuclear policies and, among other things, describes her mean-minded response to Mr. Gorbachev's offer of unilateral reduction last week as "a bronchial whisper"? Will she shout her response a little louder?

The Prime Minister: I had a chance to read the statement, and the hon. Gentleman will not be surprised to learn that I disagree with it. As he is aware from the figures on conventional weapons that I gave last time, the Soviet Union still has between two and three times as many tanks and weapons as we have. It has reduced its weaponry by about 10 per cent., but its superiority is still enormous.

We shall keep our independent nuclear deterrent. We remember when we gave up chemical weapons unilaterally and the Soviet Union stepped up chemical weapon production, both in modernisation and amount. Hope is not a basis for a sound defence policy.

Q7. **Mr. Bill Walker:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 15 December 1988.

The Prime Minister: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Walker: Has my right hon. Friend seen the interesting and very acceptable news from Europe about whisky: that 40 per cent. is to be the correct proof for whisky throughout Europe? Is not that, in conjunction with the Scotch Whisky Act, clear evidence that this Government and the Conservative party are the best custodians of Scotland's interests?

The Prime Minister: Yes. The recent agreement in Brussels, after six years of detailed and difficult negotiations, mark a major step forward for the Scotch whisky industry. The regulation provides a clear definition of whisky and minimum alcohol strengths for all spirits, including the 40 per cent. alcohol by volume for all whisky that was sought by the Scotch Whisky Act, which was sponsored by my hon. Friend in the last Session. I agree with him that this shows the Government's determination to safeguard this major exporting industry.

Mr. Ernie Ross: Will the Prime Minister go a little further than she went when she replied to her hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Edgbaston (Dame J. Knight)? Given that the American Administration is to meet the Palestine Liberation Organisation at ambassadorial level, and given also that the PLO has met all the commitments that the right hon. Lady set down, will she now instruct her right hon. and learned Friend the Foreign Secretary to meet the Palestine Liberation Organisation at that level to encourage the process of moderation that will eventually lead to the resolution of the middle east conflict?

The Prime Minister: We have no immediate plans to do so, but I remind the hon. Gentleman that my hon. Friend the Minister of State recently met the PLO representative because he had already accepted the three points that were later accepted by Mr. Arafat. I agree that this is a considerable step forward, and we most certainly wish to encourage it.

Mr. Speaker: Business questions.

Mr. Dennis Skinner: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: No. I shall take points of order after business questions.

Mr. Skinner: My point of order relates to a Home Office question.

Mr. Speaker: I shall take it after business questions.

Mr. Dobson: Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. My hon. Friend the Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner) is seeking to raise a point of order that arises directly——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I know, because the hon. Gentleman has told me about it.

Mr. Skinner *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: I shall take points of order later. *[Interruption.]* We take points of order after Question Time. These are business questions.

Mr. Skinner: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Dobson: I understood, Mr. Speaker——

Mr. Speaker: Order. The same rules must apply to every hon. Member. The House knows that points of order are taken after Question Time and business questions. [HON. MEMBERS: "Not always."] The Secretary of State is here.

Mr. Skinner: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: I shall not take it until after business questions.

Business of the House

3.33 pm

Mr. Frank Dobson (Holborn and St. Pancras): Will the Leader of the House tell us the business for next week?

The Lord President of the Council and Leader of the House of Commons (Mr. John Wakeham): Yes, Sir. The business for next week will be as follows:

MONDAY 19 DECEMBER—Until 7 o'clock, private Members' motions.

Motion for the Christmas Adjournment. It will be proposed that the House should rise on Thursday 22 December until Tuesday 10 January.

Proceedings on the Consolidated Fund Bill.

TUESDAY 20 DECEMBER—Until 7 o'clock, motions on social security uprating and re-rating orders. Details will be given in the *Official Report*.

Motion on the Scottish Affairs Select Committee.

Motions on the Welsh rate support grant report and supplementary reports. Details will be given in the *Official Report*.

Motion on the Ministerial and Other Salaries Order.

WEDNESDAY 21 DECEMBER—Second Reading of the Official Secrets Bill.

Debate on a motion to take note of EC documents relating to structural funds. Details will be given in the *Official Report*.

THURSDAY 22 DECEMBER—Adjournment debates.

It may be for the convenience of the House if I indicate that, subject to the progress of business. The business for the first week after the Christmas Adjournment will be as follows:

TUESDAY 10 JANUARY—Second Reading of the Social Security Bill.

Motion relating to the Social Fund Cold Weather Payments (General) Amendment Regulations.

WEDNESDAY 11 JANUARY—Second Reading of the Employment Bill.

Motions on Scottish rate support grant and revenue support grant orders. Details will be given in the *Official Report*.

THURSDAY 12 JANUARY—There will be a debate on a motion to approve the Chancellor of the Exchequer's Autumn Statement.

FRIDAY 13 JANUARY—There will be a debate on AIDS on a motion for the Adjournment of the House.

[Debate on Social Security Orders on Tuesday 20 December:

Social Security (Contributions and Allocation of Contributions) (Re-rating) Order 1988

Social Security Benefits Up-rating Order 1988

Debate on Welsh Rate Support Grant Reports on Tuesday 20 December:

Welsh Rate Support Grant Report 1989-90 (HC 32)

Welsh Rate Support Grant Supplementary Report 1988-89 (HC 33)

Welsh Rate Support Grant Supplementary (No. 2) Report 1987-88 (HC 34)

Welsh Rate Support Grant Supplementary (No. 3) Report 1986-87 (HC 35)

Debate on Scottish Orders on Wednesday 11 January:

Rate Support Grant (Scotland) (No. 2) Order 1988

Revenue Support Grant (Scotland) Order 1988

Wednesday 21 December 1988

Relevant European Community Documents

(a) 7937/1/88	*Reform of the structural funds*
(b) 10025/86	*European Regional Development Fund*
(c) 10308/87	*European Regional Development Fund*
(d) 7002/87	*Social and Economic situation in the Regions*
(e) COM(88)501	*The Future of Rural Society*
(f) Unnumbered	*Reform of the Structural funds*

Relevant Reports of European Legislation Committee

(a) HC 43-xxxvi (1987-88) para 1 and HC 15-i (1988-89), para 2

(b) HC 22-iii (1986-87) para 4

(c) HC 43-xix (1987-88) para 4

(d) HC 43-ii (1987-88) para 6

(e) HC 43-xxxviii (1987-88) para 6

(f) HC 43-xxvii (1987-88) para 6.]

Mr. Dobson: I thank the Leader of the House for his statement.

The Opposition welcome the decision to hold a debate about the Government's failure to set up the Select Commttee on Scottish Affairs. Even at this stage, I express the hope that the Government will see sense and agree to set up the Select Committee. It might help the Leader of the House if those Tory Members who recently have been making such a song and dance about their rights to put down questions on Scotland and take part in debates on Scotland recognised that as well as rights they have duties —duties to the people of Scotland and to the Standing Orders of the House—one of which is to establish a Select Committee on Scottish Affairs. If they are so keen to take part in debates on Scottish affairs, they should take their places on the Select Committee on Scottish Affairs.

Will the Leader of the House ensure that the House has an opportunity to debate the placing of the order for the next generation of battle tanks before the Government decide to buy American tanks? That decision has far-reaching consequences affecting not only our defence capability, but the future of a vital British manufacturer and the balance of trade. As the Leader of the House knows, there is concern on both sides of the House about that order.

Will the Leader of the House confirm that the Government have abandoned all thought of introducing in the House of Lords the Bill to require everyone who wants to watch a football match to join a football club? That measure is far too controversial not to be debated first in this House.

Will the Leader of the House tell us when we can expect a debate on the Fennell report on the King's Cross fire on a substantive motion in prime Government time? The recent horrific accident at Clapham has made it all the more necessary for Ministers to answer to the House on such aspects as the role and staffing of the railway inspectorate of the Department of Transport for which they are directly responsible. It is not good enough to suggest that we debate it late at night, on an Opposition day or on a Friday.

Mr. Wakeham: The hon. Gentleman has asked me four questions about next week's business. I think that he welcomed the announcement that I had arranged for a

[Mr. Wakeham]

debate on the Select Committee on Scottish Affairs, although I could not be quite sure. I hope that he has some better arguments to put forward than those in his question, or the debate will be over relatively quickly.

The hon. Gentleman's question about tanks concerned a very important matter. I can only repeat what I said a week or so ago, that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Defence has told the House that we hope to make a decision before the end of the year. I do not think I can add to that.

As I said to the House last week, the Bill relating to football, has not yet been published. I have undertaken to have the matter discussed through the usual channels, but I must repeat that it is for the Government to determine into which House a Bill is introduced.

With regard to the debate on the Fennell report, I am sorry that the arrangements we proposed for a debate proved unacceptable to the Opposition. It is an extremely important matter which should be debated, but I cannot undertake to arrange a debate in the form requested by the Opposition in the immediate future.

Mr. Robin Maxwell-Hyslop (Tiverton): When will the House have an opportunity to debate—on a motion to approve, not on a motion to take note—the important report of the Joint Committee on Private Bill Procedure? Does my right hon. Friend realise that we need to take early decisions on this matter so that local authorities do not have to go to the expense of preparing Bills that will be out of order if the Joint Committee's recommendations are accepted? There is strong pressure on both sides of the House to take decisions on this matter.

Mr. Wakeham: I agree that this is an important matter, and we shall address it. It is an important matter for consideration outside the House as well as inside. I have undertaken to have a debate as soon as I can arrange it so that we can hear the views of the House, exceptionally, before the Government announce their views.

Mr. David Steel (Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale): The right hon. Gentleman announced that the House will discuss the Ministerial and Other Salaries Order on Tuesday. Has he seen early-day motion 200 on this subject?

[That this House does not approve the draft Ministerial and Other Salaries Order 1988, which was laid before this House on 8th December on the grounds that the Order provides for an increase in the salary of the Parliamentary Under-Secretary at the Department of Health, the honourable Member for South Derbyshire whose performance of her Ministerial duties, in general, and whose damaging remarks on the risks of contracting salmonella from the consumption of eggs in particular, have rendered her unfit to continue to hold Ministerial office.]

Does the right hon. Gentleman accept that many of us on both sides of the House are minded during that debate to raise the issue of the position of the Under-Secretary of State for Health, unless something is done about it between now and Tuesday? Many of us will decide to vote against the order on the grounds that the Government should be aware of the well-known slogan, "Careless talk costs lives." In this case, careless talk is costing jobs and causing bankruptcies. It has caused hundreds of chickens in my constituency and, no doubt, many others to be slaughtered this week. On any basis of the doctrine of ministerial responsibility, the hon. Lady should, by now, have been relieved of her job.

Mr. Wakeham: I cannot accept the right hon. Gentleman's strictures. I have seen the early-day motion. Whether what the right hon. Gentleman and others wish to say in the debate is in order is not a matter for me, but I have taken note of his comments.

Sir Philip Goodhart (Beckenham): Because more than twice as many people are killed on our roads this week as died in this week's horrific rail disaster, may we early in the new year have a debate on the admirable North report, which details many ways of improving road safety and which has been published for more than six months?

Mr. Wakeham: This is an important matter and I recognise the need for a debate. I cannot promise my hon. Friend a debate in the immediate future, but I shall bear in mind his sensible suggestions.

Mr. Dave Nellist (Coventry, South-East): Has the Leader of the House seen early-day motion 201, which commemorates 12 months of the uprising, the intifada, in the occupied territories of the West Bank and Gaza?

[That this House notes the speech of the Palestine Liberation Organisation Chairman, Yasser Arafat, at the Geneva meeting of the United Nations, and the declaration, at its Algiers summit, by the Palestinian National Council, of an independent Palestinian state; recognises the enthusiasm with which the proclamation was welcomed in the occupied Territories, and the sympathy generated throughout the international labour movement; condemns the repression by the Israeli Government of the uprising in the Territories, which, in the 12 months since 8th December 1987, has resulted in over 300 Palestinians shot dead, many thousands injured and arbitrarily detained, homes bulldozed and semi-permanent mass curfews and sieges; contrasts the growing international support for the cause of the Palestinians, based on the heroism of the workers and youth in Gaza and the West Bank, with the deep unease of past methods of terror campaigns, hijackings and guerillaism, and welcomes the recognition by the Palestine Liberation Organisation's leaders that those past methods have not, and would not have, forced Israel into submission; and whilst noting the four decades of United Nations deliberations, and the 150 resolutions carried on the Palestinian question, and understanding the deep wish of the Israeli Jewish workers for peace and a secure future, believes that the future success for the Intifada will be inextricably linked to a fruitful appeal to the Jewish workers for the unity of Jew and Palestine in striving for a Socialist Federation of Israel and Palestine committed to the guarantee of democratic and national minority rights.]

Given the events late last evening, are not the Prime Minister's answers earlier today entirely inadequate? Will the Leader of the House arrange for the Foreign Secretary to come to the Dispatch Box to make a statement on what practical and direct help will be given to the Palestinian people? Those people have suffered more than 300 deaths, thousands of injuries and arbitrary detentions and had their homes bulldozed and whole villages and areas put under semi-permament mass curfew and sieges.

Mr. Wakeham: The hon. Gentleman does not do himself much credit by making such remarks about my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister. Of course, we share

the concern expressed in the early-day motion at the continuing violence in the occupied territories and the repressive measures used by the Israelis in response to it. We welcome Mr. Arafat's clear statement in Geneva which has opened the way to a dialogue between the United States and the PLO and the PLO's eventual participation in peace negotiations. I should have thought that the hon. Gentleman would think that there had been a substantial move forward in the past few days.

Mr. Robert McCrindle (Brentwood and Ongar): In view of the threats to the continued survival of independent financial advisers stemming from the statement yesterday by the Securities and Investments Board, may we expect an early statement from one of the Ministers at the Department of Trade and Industry? Does my right hon. Friend agree that, in the interests of investor protection and in the aftermath of the Barlow Clowes affair, it is important that we should do everything that we can to encourage the continued existence of independent financial advisers? Will he persuade his hon. Friends at that Department to stop washing their hands of this important matter, which stems, after all, from Government legislation in the shape of the Financial Services Act 1986?

Mr. Wakeham: My hon. Friend certainly raises an important point, but I do not accept the strictures on my right hon. and hon. Friends in the Department. I shall refer his point to them and, if a statement is necessary, they will certainly make one.

Mr. Jack Ashley (Stoke-on-Trent, South): Is the Leader of the House aware that a recent survey showed that more than 50 per cent. of people in Britain are opposed to the integration of mentally handicapped people in the community? For a civilised society, that shows abysmal intolerance and misunderstanding. As mentally handicapped people already suffer from a handicap and a lack of resources without this stupid prejudice, may we have a debate to discuss their plight?

Mr. Wakeham: I cannot promise the right hon. Gentleman a debate in the near future. I recognise that this is an important matter, but I do not accept that his views are right. Obviously this is a matter for debate at the right time.

Mr. Nigel Forman (Carshalton and Wallington): Is my right hon. Friend aware that many of us on both sides of the House would appreciate an early debate in the new year on the important subject of the future of television and broadcasting, especially as recently there was a debate on a similar subject in the other place?

Mr. Wakeham: I recognise that that is an important matter and one which the House will want to debate. I cannot promise my hon. Friend a debate immediately in the new year, but I shall certainly bear the matter in mind.

Mr. Eddie McGrady (South Down): Is the Leader of the House aware, in view of his passing interest in horse racing, that Downpatrick race course is the only race course in the United Kingdom and Ireland which does not receive any Government benefit? Will he provide time early in the new year for the small amendments required to the Horse Racing and Betting Order 1976 which has the support of his ministerial colleagues in Northern Ireland?

Mr. Wakeham: I knew that important fact and as the hon. Gentleman has raised it in the House, many more people will be made aware of it. What is more important, the people who are responsible for these matters will also take it on board and give it proper consideration.

Mr. Peter Thurnham (Bolton, North-East): Can my right hon. Friend find time for a debate on the laws of blasphemy? My hon. Friend the Member for Hyndburn (Mr. Hargreaves) has tabled an early-day motion referring to the book "Satanic Verses" by Mr. Salman Rushdie.

[That this House regrets the distress caused to Muslims in the United Kingdom by the publication of Satanic Verses by Salman Rushdie; notes that the book has been banned in India and Pakistan and the Islamic nations; and reminds authors that freedom of speech goes hand in hand with responsibility to ensure the accuracy of what is written.]

The Muslim community in Bolton is petitioning for a ban on the book. I understand that some members of the Church of England want the laws on blasphemy extended to include other religions, and, on the other hand, that the Law Reform Committee wants to scrap the laws on blasphemy. The right hon. Member for Blaenau Gwent (Mr. Foot) has recommended this book for a prize, but I understand that the Library feels that it is not worth stocking.

Mr. Wakeham: My hon. Friend raises a number of interesting questions. I cannot find time for a debate in the immediate future. There are occasions when my hon. Friend could raise these matters if he feels that they are sufficiently important.

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett (Denton and Reddish): Will the Leader of the House reconsider the business for Monday night? Does he realise that there is always considerable pressure from Back Benchers to have an opportunity to debate particular topics? He repeatedly claims from the Dispatch Box that there are opportunities, particularly as we approach a recess. Does he realise that, by tabling private Members' business followed by the Adjournment motion and Consolidated Fund Bill debates, he is substantially reducing those opportunities?

Does the right hon. Gentleman recall that, when the House agreed to change the Standing Orders so that the Consolidated Fund Bill debate finished at 9 am instead of continuing for a period to be determined by the Whips and others, an undertaking was given that we would have a whole day for it? That undertaking is being eroded in two ways on Monday, which is grossly unfair. Will he reinforce the undertaking and make it clear that in future a Consolidated Fund Bill debate will run for a full day so that Members may have a full opportunity to use it to raise the many issues which they press on the right hon. Gentleman at business questions?

Mr. Wakeham: I have some sympathy with the hon. Gentleman. It is by no means unprecedented for the Consolidated Fund Bill debate to start at the time appointed on Monday, but I shall seek to ensure that we start earlier on future occasions.

Mr. Bill Walker (Tayside, North): Has my right hon. Friend had an opportunity to consider how the Standing Committee on the Transport (Scotland) Bill is to be manned? Will he bear in mind the fact that last Session we

[Mr. Bill Walker]

had to reduce the size of the Committee on the Schools Boards (Scotland) Bill? If he has given that consideration, will he tell us what is happening?

Mr. Wakeham: Following discussions through the usual channels, it would be for the general convenience of the House if we did not try to reduce the number of hon. Members from Scottish constituencies required by Standing Orders to serve on the Committee dealing with the Transport (Scotland) Bill. Instead, we shall be proposing that a Scottish Standing Committee larger than those nominated in the last Session should be appointed to consider the Bill.

Mrs. Margaret Ewing (Moray): To return to the question of the Select Committee on Scottish Affairs, I assure the Leader of the House that Tuesday evening's debate will not be over quickly, given that he and his colleagues have 18 months of neglect to explain. When does he anticipate tabling the motion to enable hon. Members to put down appropriate amendments? Will the motion take account of Standing Order No. 130, which instructs the House to establish such a Select Committee?

Mr. Wakeham: It is better to travel hopefully than necessarily to arrive. I recognise that strong views will be expressed in next Tuesday's debate. I will table the motion later today, which I hope will be satisfactory.

Mr. Teddy Taylor (Southend, East): Press reports on Tuesday drew attention to the publication of the Court of Auditors' report, which for the fourth year running has apparently revealed widespread fraud, some corruption and illegal devices in the spending of the EEC. Will my right hon. Friend say when we will be likely to discuss this document? Given that the British taxpayer and others are paying for this excessive expenditure, will he explain why this document is available to the press but not to the House of Commons?

Mr. Wakeham: I cannot answer my hon. Friend's last question, but I shall look into it and give him a satisfactory answer. I have not read the document, but press reports certainly reveal some disturbing aspects. It is better that the Government and others consider the report before deciding how best to proceed.

Mr. Nigel Spearing (Newham, South): May I express the appreciation of the Select Committee on European Legislation to the Leader of the House for acceding to a special request for a debate on structural funds, which was originally requested in November? Is the right hon. Gentleman aware that the document sets new criteria for the social fund, the regional fund and the agricultural guidance fund of the EEC, which could affect the constituencies of all hon. Members? It will be decided by the Council of Ministers shortly after Christmas. Given the importance of the matter, is a debate lasting an hour and a half sufficient, or will the right hon. Gentleman consider suspending the rule to enable us to have a three-hour debate?

Mr. Wakeham: I am grateful for the hon. Gentleman's remarks about arranging the debate, and I reciprocate by saying that I am grateful to him for drawing it to my attention. Having received his letter, I decided that action was required, which I took. A decision on whether the debate should be extended from the normal hour and a half is best made through the usual channels.

Mr. Ian Gow (Eastbourne): Does my right hon. Friend recall that the purpose of the Anglo-Irish Agreement was to bring to the Province peace, stability and reconciliation? As more than three years have elapsed since the agreement was signed, does my right hon. Friend think that it would be timely to have a debate on the Anglo-Irish Agreement?

Mr. Wakeham: I agree that this is an important matter that should be discussed in the House. The review that is taking place will take several months, and it is a matter of judgment when the best time for debate will be. I recognise that some will want it earlier than others, but we will consider all requests.

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): One of the jobs of the Leader of the House is to oversee the facilities and amenities of this place. Is he aware that when I came here earlier, six large hampers—probably from Fortnum and Mason—had come directly from the Bank of Credit and Commerce for certain Tory Members of Parliament, including one ex-Tory Member of Parliament, Freddie Bennett? One could have got a body in the hampers, which it took two men to lift. They were full of food and booze and should be included in the Register of Members' Interests. The men who were unloading them said to me, "Can we get a trolley?" I said, "I will ask the Leader of the House"——

Mr. Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman must ask a question; and will he make it a business question please?

Mr. Skinner: When we debate the Register of Members' Interests, should we insist that Tory Members list on the register the Christmas hampers that they get from the Bank of Credit and Commerce, which has been described in some circles as a corrupt bank? Why is it that——

Mr. Speaker: Order. Like me, the hon. Gentleman is a chairman. He would not allow his members to digress.

Mr. Skinner: If the Leader of the House provides the staff and the trolley to move the big hampers upstairs into the House of Commons, will he allow the contents of the one that is addressed to Sir Frederic Bennett, who is no longer a Member of Parliament, to be distributed to those who try to exist on Charing Cross embankment, or will they go to the double agent who sits on the Government Back Benches?

Mr. Wakeham: Sometimes the hon. Gentleman pushes his bile and points a bit too far. He appears not to have his name on any of the packages. No doubt he is a bit jealous about that. I do not believe that there is any need to debate the matter. Matters to do with Members' interests are dealt with in a proper and regulated fashion in the House, and they are not helped by the hon. Gentleman's wild accusations.

Mr. Richard Holt (Langbaurgh): As Dr. Marietta Higgs has gone to court to protect herself from discipline by the Northern regional health authority, does my right hon. Friend think that it is time that we debated consultants' contracts under the NHS? They have not been altered since they were introduced, and time has marched on.

Mr. Wakeham: I am sure that my hon. Friend would not expect me to comment on the case that he has mentioned. Consultants' contracts are a perfectly legitimate matter for debate. They could be referred to at times other than Government time. I shall certainly bear in mind my hon. Friend's suggestion.

Mr. Roy Beggs (Antrim, East): Will the Leader of the House make time available at the earliest opportunity for us fully to discuss the extent of the enormous damage that has been done to egg producers, the need for compensation, and the inadequacy of the Government's attempts to correct a great wrong that was done by a junior Minister who should be sacked forthwith?

Mr. Wakeham: The Government are well aware of the deep problems facing the egg industry. That is why today they issued a press advertisement that was designed to advise and reassure the public about eggs. We are also considering further action in addition to measures that we have already taken to tackle the new strain of salmonella. We are urgently considering the representations that have been made to us. In the debate on Monday night, there will be an opportunity for those hon. Members who catch Mr. Speaker's eye to make contributions.

Mr. Rupert Allason (Torbay): Will the Leader of the House be kind enough to make sure that anything for my predecessor, Sir Frederic Bennett, if it is addressed to the hon. Member for Torbay, comes to me, whether or not it comes from Fortnum and Mason?

Mr. Wakeham: The remarks of the hon. Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner) were addressed to me, or, more correctly, to Mr. Speaker, but I have no knowledge about Christmas presents.

Mr. Ernie Ross (Dundee, West): On the question about the Government's failure to find enough Opposition Members to form the Select Committee on Scottish Affairs, if it is the right hon. Gentleman's intention to table a motion that suggests that the work that would normally be carried out by the Select Committee on Scottish Affairs could or should be carried out by any other Select Committee, there is no way that any Opposition Member who is a member of any other Select Committee will participate or assist.

As my hon. Friend the Member for Holborn and St. Pancras (Mr. Dobson) said, Members take great interest in Scottish business. Rather than the Leader of the House trying to offload his responsibility and that of the Chairman of the Committee of Selection, we expect him to form a Select Committee on Scotland. It is not acceptable for him to try to offload that work on to other Select Committees. The right hon. Gentleman and the Chairman should ask those hon. Members who are concerned about Scotland to join the Select Committee and get it up and running.

Mr. Wakeham: As on most occasions when the hon. Gentleman asks such questions, he has it wrong, and has not followed this process—it has been going on for a long time—with perhaps the care that he should have done. However, that does not greatly encourage me to take his advice about the form of the Government's motion for the debate. I shall table the motion later today and, whether the hon. Gentleman likes it or not, that will be the basis for the debate. Obviously, he will be entitled to table an amendment if he does not feel that the motion reflects the view on which he would like the House to come to a decision.

Mr. Julian Amery (Brighton, Pavilion): In reply to my hon. Friend the Member for Eastbourne (Mr. Gow), my right hon. Friend suggested that the review of the Hillsborough agreement might go on for some months. Of course we accept the monopoly of wisdom of the Government and their omniscience in all these matters, but I hope that my right hon. Friend is not suggesting that we should wait until that review is concluded. We believe that it may be a help to Ministers to have some idea what the House thinks about these matters before decisions are taken.

Mr. Wakeham: I fully agree with that. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State is also anxious to hear any views that right hon. and hon. Members and others may wish to express. We accept that the House should have an opportunity to express its views. All I said to my hon. Friend the Member for Eastbourne (Mr. Gow) was that it is a matter of judgment as to when will be the most helpful time for the debate.

Mr. Harry Ewing (Falkirk, East): Am I correct in understanding that the Ministerial and Other Salaries Order does not include the proposal of the Top Salaries Review Body that Ministers who are sacked or resign should continue to receive their ministerial salary for three months to allow them to adjust to the much lower income of a Back Bencher? If that is not in the order, has the Leader of the House abandoned all thought of bringing that proposal before the House?

Mr. Wakeham: The order that I lay will be in accordance with the answers that I gave to Parliament, which briefly contained the terms on which the order will be based. The order will be laid in good time for the debate.

Mr. Roger Knapman (Stroud): Will my right hon. Friend find time for an early debate on the National Health Service, bearing in mind that the Gloucester health authority appears to wish to close the Berkeley and Tetbury community hospitals in my constituency? Such a debate would give me the opportunity to observe that it is the Gloucester health authority that is in need of deep-cut surgery and not community hospitals in my constituency.

Mr. Wakeham: I do not know whether my hon. Friend has tried his luck with an Adjournment debate, but that would appear to be a suitable opportunity to voice his concern.

Mr. Greville Janner (Leicester, West): Will the Leader of the House ask the Home Secretary to make a statement concerning the recent decision of the Association of Chief Police Officers that there should be a national register of missing persons? Is he aware that the present system is completely unsatisfactory, that the computer at Scotland Yard is a disaster and that the Salvation Army is doing a wonderful job—and will do so over Christmas—in trying to reunite families? However, thousands of families will spend a thoroughly miserable Christmas because they cannot find missing relatives.

Mr. Wakeham: My right hon. Friend the Home Secretary has heard what the hon. and learned Gentleman

[Mr. Wakeham]

has said, but I suspect that he does not accept everything that he said. However, it is an important issue, and my right hon. Friend will consider how best to communicate with the hon. and learned Gentleman.

Mr. Tim Devlin (Stockton, South): Before the Bill on identity cards in football grounds is introduced, may we have an early debate on a national scheme of voluntary identity cards so that football clubs, pubs and other places of entertainment can control their entry requirements?

Mr. Wakeham: I cannot promise my hon. Friend an early debate, but, reading the press this morning, I felt that the subject of identity cards may be before the House in one form or another in the not too distant future.

Mr. David Alton (Liverpool, Mossley Hill): Has the Leader of the House had the opportunity to consider early-day motion 176, which has been signed by hon. Members on both sides of the House?

[That this House condemns the decision of the South African courts to jail for six years, 18 year old Charles Bester following his conscienscious objection to serving in the South African armed forces; notes his statement in court after hearing his sentence, 'you shall know that truth and the truth shall set you free'; and calls upon the South African government to immediately release Mr. Bester.]

It concerns the case of Charles Bester, an 18-year-old African who last week was sentenced to six years' imprisonment by the South African courts, because of his refusal to be conscripted into the South African armed forces. Does he not believe that it would be appropriate for the Government to make representations to the South African Government to seek clemency?

Mr. Wakeham: No, we reject the motion. Such decisions are for the individuals concerned. However, we understand why some young South Africans refuse to do military service, and we respect the sincerity of their views.

Mr. Tony Banks (Newham, North-West): May I wish the Leader of the House a happy Christmas? I shall be more than ready to help him out with any sticky comestibles that he may have in his hamper.

Will the Leader of the House give time for an early debate on endangered species? I was not referring to the right hon. Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup (Mr. Heath); I was referring to, for example, black rhinos, gorillas and elephants. The right hon. Gentleman must have read recent newspaper stories and will know that there is great concern for such animals. It would be much appreciated if we could have an early debate on endangered species.

Mr. Wakeham: When the hon. Gentleman was talking about endangered species, I thought that he was talking about himself. I see that today he is in his winter plumage, and I look forward to seeing him in brighter attire when the spring comes. He has raised a serious matter in which he takes a serious interest and for which the House respects him. I cannot promise him an early debate, but it is certainly a matter that I shall bear in mind.

Mr. Max Madden (Bradford, West): Will the Leader of the House arrange for the Foreign Secretary next week to make a statement to the House about the policy for issuing visas to those who wish to visit the United Kingdom? Is he aware that, on 5 December, Mr. Narinder Singh applied to a British post in India for a visit visa to visit his brother-in-law who was seriously ill in a Leeds hospital? Mr. Singh was asked to produce a doctor's letter confirming that his brother-in-law was in hospital, which he did last Monday. Unfortunately, his brother-in-law died on Saturday.

On Monday, he asked for a visa to attend the funeral and to help his sister and her young family to settle his brother-in-law's affairs. He has still not been granted a visa, despite several hours of discussion and telexes this week between London and India. It appears that this decision, and many others like it, are in direct contradiction of assurances given by Home Office and Foreign Office Ministers that visas would be quickly granted in urgent medical cases.

Mr. Wakeham: Obviously I cannot comment on the case that the hon. Gentleman has raised, but I shall make inquiries when I leave the Chamber and I shall contact him.

Mr. Harry Barnes (Derbyshire, North-East): Before the publication of the football Bill, will the Leader of the House talk to the Department of the Environment to ensure that I receive an answer to a question that I put down on the Order Paper a fortnight ago suggesting that the league table should be studied in terms of football violence? The table may show that, when considered against the numbers attending football matches, the number of incidents of violence may be insignificant. Or is he worried that Luton Town may finish at the top?

Mr. Wakeham: I am not worried in the least about such matters, but I shall speak to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment to ensure that the hon. Gentleman receives an answer to his question.

Mr. Alan Meale (Mansfield): Will the Leader of the House inform the House why he has decided to delay debate on cold weather payments until mid-January? Will he review that decision, because many tens of thousands of pensioners are facing illness and death this winter? Can we not for once tackle the matter before the winter is halfway through and there are catastrophic effects for pensioners?

Mr. Wakeham: We had discussions about changing the time of the debate, and the Government felt that it would be more convenient to have the debate on the date that I have recently announced.

Mr. Thomas Graham (Renfrew, West and Inverclyde): Will the Leader of the House confirm or deny that it is not his intention to set up a Select Committee on Scottish affairs? What is so complex about doing so? The Opposition will gladly man a Select Committee on Scottish affairs. We desperately need it.

Mr. Wakeham: As the hon. Gentleman will know, the tradition of the House is that Select Committees are set up by agreement with Members in all parts of the House. I have tried for a long time to obtain agreement. Unfortunately, the proposals that I presented to the Opposition were not acceptable, and I make no complaint about that. That will be the subject of the debate, and no doubt we can discuss it next week.

Adjournment Motion

Mr. Speaker: I remind hon. Members that on the motion for the Adjournment of the House on Thursday 22 December, up to nine hon. Members may raise with Ministers subjects of their own choice. Applications should reach my office by 10 pm on Monday next. A ballot will be held on Tuesday morning and the result made known as soon as possible thereafter.

Points of Order

4.9 pm

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. You will recall that during Question Time the Home Secretary reached question No. 7, in the name of my hon. Friend the Member for Edinburgh, Central (Mr. Darling), regarding a national identity scheme after 1992. The question was quite specific. It was in no way allied to the scheme for football that is proposed by the Minister with responsibility for sport. Question No. 73 on the Order Paper relates specifically to the football identity card scheme.

It is a well-known practice—indeed, a rule—in the House that when a Minister is answering questions, so as not to cause embarrassment to anyone or to cause difficulties to the House, he shall not answer questions further down the Order Paper. On question No. 7, at the end of his last answer to the supplementary questions that had been asked, the Home Secretary referred to the football membership scheme. I drew that to your attention immediately, Mr. Speaker, for the very good reason that that practice must be stopped. It should not be allowed because it would provide much more room for manoeuvre for any Government, irrespective of colour.

It is important to raise the matter now as a point of order as it should be drawn to the attention of the Home Secretary, who may not have been aware of the mistake that he was committing. When such occasions arise, there is a perfectly reasonable and proper practice for doing what the Home Secretary might have wished to do, and that is to approach Mr. Speaker earlier in the day saying, "I wish to answer question No. 73 about a matter which I regard as important." The Home Secretary did not use that procedure. He thought that he could get away with it without anyone noticing, but we have caught him out.

The Secretary of State for the Home Department (Mr. Douglas Hurd) *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I think that I can deal with the matter, although of course I shall call the Home Secretary if he so wishes. If that did occur—I shall look carefully at *Hansard*—perhaps I should have drawn the attention of the House to it. But I must say that it had escaped me. As the hon. Gentleman knows, I go through the Order Paper carefully and try to ensure that those with questions lower down the Order Paper have an opportunity to be called. I had not linked that question on the Order Paper. I had linked question No. 37 with question No. 7. The hon. Gentleman is quite right. Perhaps I should in future be stricter in listening to supplementary questions. The hon. Gentleman is frequently very close to the mark.

Mr. Hurd: Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. I entirely accept the principle to which the hon. Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner) has drawn attention. I understand its importance, and I would not have tried anything out either on him or on you, Mr. Speaker, but I say emphatically that I was not trying to answer question No. 73. I am ashamed to say that my reading of the Order Paper had not got that far. Now that I have studied question No. 73, I see that it is about legal disqualification under the football membership scheme. It does not

[Mr. Hurd].

mention identity cards. The answers that I was giving to a series of supplementary questions were all about identity cards, and I believe that tomorrow *Hansard* will show that there is only a glancing relationship between the answers that I gave and the answer that I would have given to question No. 73 had it been reached.

Mr. Brian Wilson (Cunninghame, North): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. Will you give me guidance on how we can, within the rules of order, raise the matter of the hon. Member for Erewash (Mr. Rost) who, according to a report today, works for a company appropriately known as Grafton Interaction and has offered his services for the sum of £2,900 a month to a Danish company.

"in the run-up to privatisation of electricity"?

It is reported that the hon. Gentleman used his position as a member of the Select Committee on Energy to offer his services to the Danish Board of District Heating, an organisation representing about 30 communal central heating firms. The letter from Grafton stated:

"We can supply confidential reports of political activities, discussions with UK Government Ministers and the thinking of the specialist groups in Parliament."

Is it in order for a Member of the House to prostitute himself and to try to sell, for personal gain, specialist knowledge obtained through his membership of the House and through dealings with Ministers?

Mr. Speaker: I understand that the position described by the hon. Gentleman remains hypothetical at present. Should the hon. Member for Erewash (Mr. Rost) acquire a declarable interest, I am sure that he will declare it. Wider matters to do with the registering and declaring of interests are within the terms of reference of the Select Committee on Members' Interests. I cannot rule on an individual case in response to a point of order.

Mr. David Ashby (Leicestershire, North-East): Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. Normally we inform hon. Members if points of order relating to them are to be raised in the House. Did the hon. Member for Cunninghame, North (Mr. Wilson) inform my hon. Friend the Member for Erewash (Mr. Rost) that he intended to raise this point of order? If not——

Mr. Speaker: Order. As the House knows, the Chair can impose the rules—there are not very many of them—but convention is a matter of honour between Members on both sides of the House. It is certainly a convention that we do that.

Mr. Eric S. Heffer (Liverpool, Walton): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. For some time now there has been a change in the way in which points of order are raised. There was a time when a point of order could be raised immediately on an issue that might have been of great interest to the House and it would be taken at that time. Now we are always told that points of order must be taken after questions or statements, when the impact of the issue has usually gone. It may serve to calm the atmosphere, but that is not the point. I ask you, Mr. Speaker, to reconsider the convention that has grown up. Perhaps it is an old-fashioned view, but I believe that when someone wishes to make a point of order, it should be taken there and then. May we return to the former practice?

Mr. Speaker: I do not need to reconsider the matter because I agree with what the hon. Gentleman has said. If a matter of order arises at any time, it should be raised immediately with the Chair. If the hon. Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner) had raised that matter immediately, I would have dealt with it at the time. That would have been the correct way of dealing with it. He sought to raise it at the end of Question Time as arising out of questions. That is a practice upon which I ruled on 12 February 1987. Matters that need immediate attention from the Chair may be raised at once.

Mr. Richard Holt (Langbaurgh): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. My point of order is much more domestic and in search of guidance. Hon. Members on both sides of the House are becoming increasingly worried about the lack of taxis coming into the House during the day and especially at night. Will you use any influence that you have to ensure either a greater supply of taxis or that alternative arrangements are made? On some nights, hon. Members may stand for 50 minutes waiting to go home.

Mr. Speaker: I have no authority for dealing with taxis. That matter should be raised with the Services Committee.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Of course I shall hear points of order now, but there is a long list of speakers for the subsequent debate. I fear I shall have to place a limit on speeches between 7 o'clock and 9 o'clock. I do not like doing that, but in the circumstances I shall have to do it.

Mr. Max Madden (Bradford, West): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. I wonder whether I could have your advice. Some time ago, as you will recollect, you said that a debate about the sale of old people's homes in Bradford was sub judice as a result of a High Court case. Strangely, that did not stop Bradford council deciding, on Tuesday, to hire private management consultants to negotiate the sale of those homes on the basis of the life expectancy of old people living in them. I attended the High Court case in London this morning and the High Court has reserved judgment. It is not known when the judgment will be made.

Mr. Speaker: In that case, perhaps the hon. Gentleman should not pursue his point of order. As the matter is sub judice, I cannot deal with it.

Mr. Madden: That is precisely the point, Mr. Speaker. In view of the present situation, will it be permissible for myself and other hon. Members who are anxious about it to raise the matter? It has been debated extensively in our own council chamber whereas we are denied the opportunity to debate it in Parliament. Would we be in order next week to raise this matter, which is important to our constituents, in view of the fact that the High Court has reserved judgment and it may be weeks before its judgment is delivered?

Mr. Speaker: In view of what the hon. Gentleman has said, I shall look into the matter and communicate with him. I repeat that we have a heavy day ahead of us.

Mr. D. N. Campbell-Savours (Workington): Further to an earlier point of order, Mr. Speaker. May I revert to the point of order that was raised by my hon. Friend the Member for Cunninghame, North (Mr. Wilson)? Will you confirm that, if the allegations about the hon. Member for

Erewash (Mr. Rost) are true, he has complied with the rules of the House? He is entitled to act in that way under our rules because they do not preclude people from doing so, if they register. They can then do what they want.

Mr. Speaker: That is not a matter for me. I am not prepared to rule on a hypothetical matter.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: The key issue is the position of the Chairman of the Committee of Selection. A general principle is involved here. When the interests of a Member change after that Member has been appointed to a Select Committee of the House, the responsibility is placed on the Chairman of the Committee of Selection to reconsider that selection. If the hon. Member for Erewash, or any hon. Member had declared an interest prior to his selection, he might not have been selected.

Mr. Speaker: I have already said to the hon. Gentleman that issue is hypothetical. He has abused the time of the House. The matter should be drawn to the attention of the Chairman of the Committee of Selection, if the hon. Gentleman feels strongly about it. I have aleady made that point.

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett (Denton and Reddish): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. You will have heard earlier in exchanges with the Leader of the House of his regret that he has removed three hours of opportunity for hon. Members to debate matters on the Consolidated Fund Bill on Monday. Will you confirm that the Standing Orders of the House require the Consolidated Fund Bill debate to be completed at 9 am, on Tuesday, but that there is nothing to stop the Government tabling a motion to extend the debate by three hours, thereby restoring to Back Benchers the opportunity of further debate? Perhaps. as guardian of Back Benchers' rights, you would at least consider using your influence to press the Government to consider that.

Mr. Speaker: That is a matter for the Leader of the House. However, I do not disagree with what the hon. Gentleman has said.

Mr. Martin M. Brandon-Bravo (Nottingham, South): Further to the point of order, Mr. Speaker. The honour of one of our colleagues has been most disgracefully impugned this afternoon and he is not present to defend himself. I merely seek guidance about whether we can seek information about whether our colleague was informed, in accordance with the conventions of the House, before the statement was made.

Mr. Speaker: The matter has been raised previously. I imagine that the hon. Gentleman was not so informed, or he would probably have been here. I believe the hon. Member for Cunninghame, North (Mr. Wilson) quoted from a report in a newspaper. But I hope that all of us will always stick to the conventions of the House, which have served us well over the decades.

Mr. Chris Mullin (Sunderland, South): Further to the point of order raised by my hon. Friend the Member for Cunninghame, North (Mr. Wilson). May I put it to you, Mr. Speaker, with respect, that the matter is not hypothetical. I agree that whether money has changed hands is hypothetical—clearly it has not in this case. What is not hypothetical is that a letter has been written. In view of that, may I put it to you that the hon. Member for Erewash (Mr. Rost) should be asked to explain himself to the House. Such activity brings the House into disrepute?

Mr. Speaker: If the hon. Gentleman is alleging a contempt of the House, he must draw my attention to it by letter, in the proper way.

Mr. Hugh Dykes (Harrow, East): I am sorry to press the point, but in view of the, I imagine, legitimate points of order made by other hon. Members, would it not be incumbent on the hon. Member for Cunninghame, North (Mr. Wilson)—who is unfortunately leaving the Chamber at this moment—to say whether he notified my hon. Friend the Member for Erewash (Mr. Rost) of what he intended to say? Does that not raise serious issues about the tradition of notifying an hon. Member that he will be referred to in an attack of that kind?

Mr. Speaker: That is correct, but, as I have already said, it is not within the power of the Chair to compel hon. Members to adhere to the conventions of the House, although it is a great pity if they are not adhered to.

Mr. Ashby: Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. You have, of course, a duty to protect hon. Members. Is it right that Opposition Members should be able to make slanderous statements against other hon. Members, under the guise of a point of order, and then walk out before they can explain themselves? Are not hon. Members entitled to the protection of the Chair?

Mr. Speaker: The hon. Gentleman is right to say that we have conventions in the House. I have already said that I think that it is a great pity, and lowers the reputation of the House, if we do not stick to the conventions, which have served us well over the years, indeed over the centuries.

BILLS PRESENTED

Fair Employment (Northern Ireland)

Mr. Secretary King, supported by the Prime Minister, Mr. Secretary Hurd, Mr. Secretary Ridley, Mr. Ian Stewart and Mr. Peter Viggers, presented a Bill to establish a Fair Employment Tribunal for Northern Ireland and an office of President of the Industrial Tribunals and the Fair Employment Tribunal; to amend the Fair Employment (Northern Ireland) Act 1976; to make further provision with respect to the promoton of equality of opportunity in employments and occupations in Northern Ireland between persons of different religious beliefs; and for connected purposes: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time tomorrow and to be printed. [Bill 13.]

Social Security

Mr. Secretary Moore, supported by Mr. Secretary Fowler, Mr. Secretary Walker, Mr. Secretary Rifkind, Mr. Secretary King, Mr. Norman Lamont, Mr. Nicholas Scott and Mr. Peter Lloyd, presented a Bill to amend the law relating to social security and occupational and personal pension schemes; to make provision with respect to certain employment-related benefit schemes; to provide for the recovery, out of certain compensation payments, of amounts determined by reference to payments of benefit; to make fresh provision with respect to the constitution and functions of war pensions committees; and for

connected purposes: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time tomorrow and to be printed. [Bill 3.]

Orders of the day

Security Service Bill

Order for Second Reading read.

Mr. Speaker: Before I call upon the Home Secretary, I must repeat to the House that, very sadly, we have a late start today, and many right hon. and hon. Members wish to participate. I regret that not all of them will be called. I shall impose a limit of 10 minutes on speeches between 7 pm and 9 pm, but I ask right hon. and hon. Members who are called before that time to bear in mind that limit in consideration of the late start that we have had today.

4.27 pm

The Secretary of State for the Home Department (Mr. Douglas Hurd): I beg to move, That the Bill be now read a Second time.

The Bill gives Parliament, for the first time this century, the opportunity to establish a framework for the Security Service and to weld it into legislation. A month ago no one suspected that we are about to launch a substantial reform of this kind. Now, so fast does the political kaleidoscope shift, those who in their hearts were amazed at the boldness of what we proposed take it for granted and press for more. Labour Members, who in their time did nothing, are particularly urgent that we should do more than we propose—and much more, of course, than they ever dreamed possible.

Before I come to the Bill, I must say a word about the Security Service. I am well aware that it is hampered by the fiction which envelops it. I have nothing against the thriller as an art form, but those who unwittingly get their ideas of the Security Service from Sapper, Le Carré or Deighton will not bring much understanding to the Bill. The Security Service is not full of latter-day Bulldog Drummonds, nor is it locked in a time warp of the 1950s, for ever fighting shadows that have long since disappeared. Still less equipped for the debate are those who feed on works of fiction paraded as if they were statements of fact.

The precursor of today's Security Service was created in the War Office just under 80 years ago to deal with German army espionage. The unit was called MO5, and later became MI5. In 1935, MI5 was amalgamated with the section of the Metropolitan police working to counter subversion and it was in that year—although one would not always think so—that it changed its name to the Security Service. In both world wars, the Security Service was highly successful in counter-espionage and in the last war, the efforts of all the German agents sent here were frustrated.

Let me deal with the constitutional aspects of the service. At the end of the war, the work of the service was reviewed. In his report in 1963, Lord Denning quoted from a report by Sir Findlater Stewart in 1945, which crisply described the purpose of the Security Service as

"Defence of the Realm and nothing else".

That phrase was repeated and developed in 1952 in the Home Secretary's directive to the Director-General of the Security Service—the Maxwell Fyfe directive. That directive, published in Lord Denning's report, continues to apply to the service today.

We now propose that the language of that injunction should be turned into the requirement of a statute. I share

the sorrow of the right hon. Member for Plymouth, Devonport (Dr. Owen) that the rolling phrases of the 1940s and 1950s are being replaced, but I think that the term "national security" is now well recognised and understood in statute, and it appears in many Bills passed by the Labour party when in government. By its very nature, the phrase refers—and can only refer—to matters relating to the survival or well-being of the nation as a whole, and not to party-political, sectional or lesser interests.

The main responsibilities of the service for the protection of national security are clearly set out in the Bill. In addition, the Security Service must be able to act if necessary against any substantial threat to the nation as a whole. It is not primarily concerned with matters relating to defence and foreign policy but, as its history shows, it could not, and would not, stand inert in the face of threats to the nation's defence or the hostile actions of a foreign Government. It cannot act in any of those areas, however, unless the security of the nation as a whole is in question. That is what national security means.

Mr. David Winnick (Walsall, North): No one in the House, and very few people outside, would for one moment dispute the need for some kind of security service to protect national security, but how can it be argued that it was in the interests of national security for MI5 to target my hon. Friend the Member for Peckham (Ms. Harman) and Patricia Hewitt, who are bringing a case against the Government at the European Court of Human Rights? How can my hon. Friend the Member for Peckham, as legal officer of the National Council for Civil Liberties, and Patricia Hewitt, as its general secretary, possibly have undermined national security or the democratic structure of our state?

Mr. Hurd: I shall not deal with the past operations of the service or with cases that are now before the European Court. I am merely explaining what is in the Bill, and I shall be coming to the hon. Gentleman's point later.

Clauses 1 and 2 would not permit the Security Service to act against any person or organisation just because he or it has campaigned against the policies of the Government of the day. The Bill makes the political neutrality of the Security Service a statutory requirement for the first time ever. Clause 1 accurately describes the functions of the service as the protection of national security and the safeguarding of our economic well-being from outside threats.

The House knows that, in recent years, the Security Service has been at the forefront of the fight against terrorism, and the shift in the emphasis of its work towards counter-terrorism has been marked and successful. In responding to the threat from Irish terrorism, the Security Service has gained much information that has been used directly and immediately in preventing attacks and thus saving lives. I am thinking in particular of the timely news of arms shipments that have been intercepted before they could reach the island of Ireland and wreak the havoc for which they were intended.

Mr. Eric S. Heffer (Liverpool, Walton): In the book "One Girl's War", the lady concerned says that she and other officers broke into the home of R. Palme Dutt because they understood that the main secrets of the Communist party were kept under his bed. When they examined the box under his bed, they found that it contained his marriage lines. That was the great secret that he kept. The point is that they broke into his home, just as they have broken into and bugged the homes of many other politicians and political people. The Home Secretary says that the service will be politically neutral from now on. Can he assure us that, from now on, people who express political opposition will never be subjected to that sort of thing again?

Mr. Hurd: The hon. Gentleman is being offered not an assurance from me but a Bill. We are putting these matters on the statute book for the first time. I do not intend to enter into details of what has happened in the past, and I hope that the hon. Gentleman will read the passages in the Bill that are relevant to his point.

Mr. Roy Hattersley (Birmingham, Sparkbrook): The Home Secretary said that clause 1 explicitly excluded any political bias in the service. Will he read us the words that provide that?

Mr. Hurd: I referred to clauses 1 and 2. clause 2(2)(b) says that it shall be the duty of the director-general to ensure

"that the Service does not take any action to further the interests of any political party."

That is a precise and accurate answer to the right hon. Gentleman's question.

I was dealing with the first and, at the moment, dominant role of the Security Service. I shall deal with subversion in a moment, because I know that that is the aspect that most perturbs Opposition Members.

As regards espionage, there is not much doubt about the principle involved. During the years since the war, the Security Service has provided information that has led to the possibility of successful and decisive action against hostile intelligence agents in this country. We continue to face other threats from outside the country, which relate to those who would weaken our defences, threaten our economy and suborn those whom we trust with our secrets. Here again, the service exists to protect us.

I know that one aspect that worries one of my predecessors, the right hon. Member for Morley and Leeds, South (Mr. Rees) is counter-subversion. I do not doubt that the Security Service must be able, within the limits set out in the Bill, to undertake that task. I have no doubt—we have considered the matter many times—that the definition of subversion given by Lord Harris of Greenwich in 1975 and endorsed by the right hon. Member for Morley and Leeds, South as Home Secretary was the right one.

I am not alone in reaching that conclusion. The matter was considered by the Select Committee on Home Affairs in the 1984-85 Session. The Committee was considering police special branches and it accepted that the Harris definition was broadly correct.

Mr. Winnick: There was a minority report.

Mr. Hurd: The hon. Member would not deny that that was the conclusion of the Committee.

It is not sensible to define subversion only in terms of those who breach the criminal law. We must be able to know the plans and intentions of those who abuse the freedom that we provide under the law to infiltrate our institutions and structures. Under the definition, however, the Security Service can take an interest only in people who

[Mr. Hurd]

have a deliberate purpose and intent to undermine parliamentary democracy and who also represent a real threat to the security of the nation.

The definition is not as wide as some imagine. It is not enough that someone's actions may have the unintended effect of weakening parliamentary democracy. There must be a deliberate intention. It is not enough to have that intention if it presents no current substantial threat. Such people must represent a real threat to the security of the nation, and must intend to do so. That is a fairly narrow and precise definition.

The Security Service is not interested in the normal and proper conduct of the trade unions of this country; it is not interested in thwarting those who seek to persuade others that Government policies—including this Government's policies—are wrong or that their priorities are wrong. It is not interested in those who join together to make their views heard on, for example, the environment or on our defence policies. It is interested in any who might collectively or individually, overtly or clandestinely, be planning the deliberate overthrow of our parliamentary democracy and in doing so present a real threat to our security and safety. Those who think that such people could not exist are ill-informed. Those who think that the Security Service imagines that such people are everywhere are plain wrong.

I ask the House to recognise that clauses 1 and 2 have been carefully drafted to ensure that the Security Service is able to continue to protect the nation as a whole, and to give Parliament a clear indication of its principal concerns. The Security Service cannot get involved in lesser objectives, nor can it obtain or disclose information for lesser objectives. Nor, under clause 2(2) from which I have already quoted, can it take action intended to further the interests of any political party, including the party of the Government of the day. Those are all strong safeguards, proposed for the first time in statute, against the Security Service seeking to act outside its functions or against any Government seeking to put improper pressure on the director-general to do so.

Mr. Norman Buchan (Paisley, South): Many of us are worried about the meaning of the words

"undermine parliamentary democracy by political, industrial . . . means",

since the final arbiter will be the Secretary of State reporting to the Prime Minister, not to any Committee of the House. We would do well to keep in mind when we use the words "political" or "industrial" the fact that the Prime Minister described the miners as enemies of the state. Given that kind of definition, what trust can we have in those words?

Mr. Hurd: The change that I am coming to is fundamental, and addresses the hon. Gentleman's point. The issue of warrants for entering property to obtain information, as with the issue of warrants for interception, will be under the scrutiny of a judge. That is a substantial change, which completely alters the basis on which the hon. Gentleman made his criticism.

I ask the House not to underestimate the effect of that. We already have experience of that in the arrangements that Parliament approved in the Interception of Communications Act 1985. Our experience of that shows the real impact that the Bill will have on the Security Service and on the work of the Home Secretary.

Mr. Richard Shepherd (Aldridge-Brownhills): Does the definition of national security continue to be that given in the White Paper on the interception of communications, which I think covered the Government's foreign and defence policies?

Mr. Hurd: Yes. If my hon. Friend reads what I said about the definition of national security earlier, he will see that I defined it rather carefully and at rather greater length than previously. He may wish to return to the point later, but I hope that he will study the words that I used at the beginning.

Mr. Dave Nellist (Coventry, South-East) *rose*——

Mr. Hurd: No, I shall not give way. I must get on.

Mr. Nellist: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Without in any way wishing to repeat matters dealt with in April, is not one of the purposes of a debate such as this, particularly during the opening speech of a leading Minister, to give hon. Members the opportunity to ask factual questions? Is not the Home Secretary being selective in whom he is prepared to give way to?

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Harold Walker): If the hon. Gentleman catches my eye later, he will be able to make his point then.

Mr. Hurd: I sometimes think that I give way too much. I want to pursue this argument. Many other hon. Members wish to speak and I want to make some progress since I have already given way generously.

I was explaining the impact of the arrangements under the Interception of Communications Act 1985, which we propose to extend under the Security Service Bill to the work of the Security Service and to my own work.

The arrangements for authorising interception warrants under the 1985 Act ensure that the Home Secretary sees the way in which the concerns and priorities work out in practice. My predecessor will know, because it is a worry that he has expressed, that that was not so in his time. I have either to agree or disagree with them. If an application for a warrant in that area is submitted to me and I am not satisfied that it is necessary for the protection of national security, I shall not issue it.

In making my decision, I know that the interception commissioner is looking over my shoulder. He has access to all the warrants and has the right to call for any document or file relating to those warrants.

In his report for 1987, the interception commissioner, the right hon. Lord Justice Lloyd, said:

"I have examined all the new warrants issued on the ground of major subversive activity, and I have selected other warrants for examination at random. I am satisfied that I have been given a complete list of all new warrants when making my random selection. As last year, I have not come across a single case where the Secretary of State has not been justified in regarding the issue of the warrant as being necessary in the interests of national security, or for the other purposes mentioned in Section 2(2) of the Act".

That is the commissioner, an independent judge, doing his job and reporting not in a secret document but in the 1987 report which was published in March this year, was laid before Parliament, and is in the Library.

Mr. Harry Cohen (Leyton): Will the right hon. Gentleman give way on that point?

Mr. Hurd: No, I want to get on.

If the House approves the Bill, it will have the assurance that similar rigorous procedures will also operate for the property warrant. The Security Service, the Secretary of State and Parliament will know that each and every warrant will be open to the commissioner's impartial and independent scrutiny. The hon. Member for Paisley, South (Mr. Buchan) will have to take it from me that it is a formidable feeling to know, as I have known since 1986, that such an oversight exists under the Interception of Communications Act.

There are two major changes. First, for the first time, the decisions come from the Secretary of State, as they did not when the right hon. Member for Birmingham, Sparkbrook (Mr. Hattersley) held office. Secondly, when dealing with them under the law, I know that I have the judge looking over my shoulder. Anyone who supposes that that is a comfortable, easy or platitudinous position is wrong.

The commissioner's report will cover not only warrant matters but any other matters arising out of the work of the commissioner or the tribunal as a result of their investigating any complaint. There will be in place—I hope that the House will give full weight to this—a commissioner and a tribunal able to follow up the real practical concerns of people—organisations as well as individuals—who feel in some way aggrieved as a result of what they believe the Security Service has done against them. They do not need to provide any evidence for their views or give any basis for their belief.

Mr. Robert Maclennan (Caithness and Sutherland): The Home Secretary seems to be couching his description of the commissioner's powers much more widely than the Bill. Clause 4(3) confines them to warrants—not, as he has suggested, to the whole range of security matters. That is a serious objection to the Bill.

Mr. Hurd: The hon. Gentleman may not have read far enough. He is right that the commissioner has the job of investigating the way in which the Home Secretary exercises his warrant powers. However, the tribunal may also, as I think that he will find in schedule 1, refer to the commissioner a wider range of matters if it is felt that there are grounds for doing so. The crucial point is that his report to Parliament can cover the whole range of his activities as authorised by the Bill.

Since November 1987, we have had an independent staff counsellor to consider anxieties from within the Security Service. Now, if Parliament agrees, once the tribunal and commissioner are in place to investigate the truth of concerns felt outside the service, the case for publishing rumour and allegations is undermined. We catered for the aggrieved insider when the staff counsellor was put in position a year ago. We cater for the aggrieved outsider, the citizen who feels that the Security Service has done something against him in the Bill, with its provisions for the tribunal and the commissioner.

Of course, this is not the only possible model. Others have argued for a system of oversight and review. Some think that oversight should be by a Committee of Privy Councillors and others look for a body which draws more widely on Members of the House. Some appear to believe that all matters relating to national security, except perhaps a current operation, should be made publicly available across the Floor. Others look to the Security Commission and suggest its vote should be expanded. Those are serious proposals that deserve to be examined, but, having examined them, we do not favour them.

Secrecy is at the heart of security. It is not the result —as one might read in fiction—of some paranoia by the Security Service or by Ministers. It is fundamental to the success of the protection of the public by the service. Most people accept the case for some secrecy and they accept that any oversight body would have to respect that. During the debate on the Loyal Address, the right hon. Member for Chesterfield (Mr. Benn) accepted that Ministers should not be obliged to tell the House, for example, that they believed an alleged bomber was staying in a particular hotel. I think everyone would accept that. The difference, therefore, is not over the need for secrecy, but whether it is possible to draw an effective line between what can be kept secret and what can run free.

I hope that the House understands that we ask the Security Service to work against people and organisations who are not amateur tip and runners, or anarchists with a rush of blood to the head. We ask them, particularly in counter-terrorism, to work against people and organisations who have become highly sophisticated in their methods. Those people work hard at identifying whether they have been spotted and are skilful in taking action to evade detection once they are alerted. One does not have to announce that one knows who they are, or what outrage they are planning, to put them on their guard. They are expert at piecing together and using strands of information and evidence much more cleverly than that.

In those circumstances, which are borne in upon us day by day, it is not possible to distinguish, as some have genuinely sought to do, between policy and operations, overall resources and how they are spent, or theory and practice. Those distinctions can be made on paper and can be beguiling, but they do not work in practice. An oversight body could not steer clear of secrets by confining itself to the generalities. A body which had no access to secrets would have access to very little of interest or importance to the work of the Security Service. A body that worked and reported in ignorance would not be of much appeal to the House.

If the body was inside the necessary ring of secrecy, it would have to report in monosyllables to those outside. People could not be expected to be content with that, whether they were members of the body or those who listened to the reports.

Mr. D. N. Campbell-Savours (Workington): Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Hurd: I shall give way when I have finished the argument.

I am grateful to the House, the Select Committee and the conventions of the House for helping to ensure that I, like my predecessors, am not placed in an intolerable position. Those conventions would not hold up against the pressures that would weigh on an oversight body that had to report to Parliament and the public on how it fulfilled its remit.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: In Congress and the Senate, the security services select committee examines the budget, oversees the service and has other responsibilities. If it works in America—I was told by the principal adviser to

[Mr. Campbell-Savours]

that committee in Washington that it has never leaked and that Congress and Senate were happy with its operations —why could it not work here?

Mr. Hurd: I shall deal with comparisons between the United States and the Commonwealth shortly, because I understand that they form part of the argument.

Mr. Ray Whitney (Wycombe): Is my right hon. Friend aware that his point about the difficulty involved in taking a Select Committee inside the barrier was well illustrated by the hon. Member for Workington (Mr. Campbell-Savours) in the Zircon affair? The right hon. Member for Ashton-under-Lyne (Mr. Sheldon), the Chairman of the Public Accounts Committee, was taken inside the barrier and told about expenditure. That decision was questioned and seriously challenged by Opposition Members, including the hon. Member for Workington.

Mr. Hurd: My hon. Friend's point is relevant in general, but not directly to the Security Service. The illustration he has given of the difficulty in which respected Members of Parliament can find themselves is valid, even when applied to the Security Service.

Mr. Nellist: Will the right hon. Gentleman give way to me now?

Mr. Hurd: If I give way to the hon. Gentleman, will be be happy for the rest of the day?

Mr. Nellist: That is highly unlikely, but I accept the comment with the graciousness with which it was made. Will the Home Secretary answer the question I wished to ask a few minutes ago about the basic and fundamental nature of the Security Service—its subjectivity? In his opening remarks, the Secretary of State mentioned overthrowing or weakening parliamentary democracy. If I and my hon. Friends, together with members of the Labour movement outside this place, were to campaign for something that we think would strengthen parliamentary democracy but which I suspect all Conservative Members would think would weaken it—the abolition of the House of Lords—is that something for which we could be investigated under the terms of the Bill?

Mr. Hurd: No. That would not be the case under the existing system and, under the safeguards we are proposing in the Bill, which hon. Gentlemen should welcome, that would not be so because the safeguards will state that in black and white.

We are not saying that no one can step inside the barrier of secrecy. I have mentioned the interception commissioner, who is a judge, and the staff counsellor, who is not a member of the Security Service, and they are both inside. I have also mentioned the Security Commission, which is chaired by a judge, and that has been inside on specific occasions. All those people have a clear and specific job with clear terms of reference and clear lines of reporting. I do not believe that one can read across from that responsibility to a general parliamentary oversight body. Review and oversight are incompatible with the specific or narrow terms of reference held by the people I have mentioned. Review and oversight could not be confined without creating a contradiction at the heart of our security, which we should all want to avoid.

As the hon. Member for Workington said, and as my hon. Friend the Member for Aldridge-Brownhills (Mr. Shepherd) is repeatedly saying, in other countries there are arrangements for oversight. In some cases it is carried out by Privy Councillors, committees of Congress or their equivalent. We should take account of that, but we should not feel that we need to follow automatically what has been proposed or put in place in other countries.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: Not even if it works?

Mr. Hurd: I am coming to that. There should be no willy-nilly or automatic assumption of that sort.

The hon. Member for Workington referred to the model in the United States. The FBI is the parallel organisation to our Security Service, but it represents an entirely different response, to a different constitutional framework. However effective the arrangements may be in America, they could not be directly implemented here. The crucial point is that the United States has no equivalent to the Prime Minister or Home Secretary. There is no person present in and responsible to the House who has to propose and defend legislation in the way that I am doing.

My hon. Friend the Member for Aldridge-Brownhills then says, "What about Australia or Canada, where there are parliamentary systems which are more comparable to ours?" We need to examine that carefully. The provisions in Australia are recent, and the relevant parliamentary committee has not yet met formally. Australians would agree that it is too soon to be clear about how it will work out, but it is worth noting that, among other restrictions, the committee's terms of reference prevent it from reviewing anything said to be operationally sensitive. That may suit Australia well but, in our terms, it would beg many of the questions at issue in this discussion.

Similarly, the experience in Canada is recent—no more than four years old. It provides for two separate oversight bodies, an inspector-general and his staff and a review committee, and there is discussion in Canada about whether that leads to overlapping and difficult responsibilities. The system, which is very new, is to be reviewed next year.

Of course, this was a subject of debate in 1986, and we have thought long and hard about oversight and discussed it with others. I had a conversation recently with a Minister in another country who had experience of parliamentary oversight and who said that there was an inevitable tendency—without imputing blame to anyone in particular—to draw party political advantage from the knowledge that the overseers obtained in confidence.

There is another danger that I must mention to the hon. Member for Workington: the creation of unofficial and subterranean channels of secrecy outside the framework of oversight. We are right to put aside this set of ideas and to concentrate instead on a clear statement of function, organisation and responsibility through Ministers to Parliament, and on a clear remedy for grievance——

Mr. Nellist *rose*——

Mr. Hurd: The hon. Gentleman promised to be happy, but here he is again; but I am coming to the close of my remarks. Perhaps he will succeed in catching your eye, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

I was very surprised to read in the newspapers that the Opposition had decided to oppose the Second Reading of this Bill. I clearly remember how the right hon. Member

for Birmingham, Sparkbrook (Mr. Hattersley) and I went off contentedly to the "Newsnight" programme on the day the Bill was published. I remember him saying then that the Labour party would not oppose the Bill on Second Reading. It is sad to see what has happened since then, but it is not a mystery.

Last week, the right hon. Gentleman made a little foray in the direction of common sense over the handling of the Prevention of Terrorism Bill. It was not exactly a memorable foray: he was persuading his colleagues to vote for a destructive reasoned amendment and to vote against Third Reading, but in the middle he urged them to stage an heroic abstention on Second Reading. Even that distinctly mouselike movement was too much for the Labour party. There was tumult; the hon. Member for Birmingham, Ladywood (Ms. Short), who is not in her place, wrote a rude letter to her leader. The party was again in disarray and the trumpet for retreat was sounded. So, on this Bill, the right hon. Gentleman, despite his clear statement on television and his personal acknowledgment in the House that it was a step forward, has now to slink back to the world of unreality over which he presides as deputy leader.

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett (Denton and Reddish): Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Hurd: I shall not: I am coming to the end.

We have worked hard and soberly on the Bill for many months. We were not forced into it. We have fully taken into account the views and experiences of the Security Service. We have tried to analyse the present correctly and to look at the kinds of tasks which, as far as one can tell, the Security Service is likely to have to undertake in the years ahead.

After these months of cool consideration, we decided that the time had come to make the reform and take the step forward contained in the Bill. I hope that, whatever their criticisms, Opposition Members will acknowledge that it is a big step forward for the service, for Government and for Parliament. I hope the House will judge that this is a step which is well weighed, and I urge it to give the Bill a Second Reading.

5.5 pm

Mr. Roy Hattersley (Birmingham, Sparkbrook): The Home Secretary was right to say that on the first day of this Parliament, when the House was told of the Government's intention to introduce a Security Service Bill, I said that I hoped that the Opposition would be able to give it at least qualified support. Not only did I say that on television when I had the pleasure of appearing with the Home Secretary, but I said it in the House. I said that we hoped to support it—

"subject to examination of the Bill".—[*Official Report*, 23 November 1988; Vol. 142, c. 137.]

We examined the Bill, we asked questions and I propose to tell the Home Secretary how inadequate were the answers that we received, and why, having examined the Bill as I said we would, our conclusion is, and must be in a free society, that the Opposition should vote against it.

Having said that, I wish to tell the right hon. Gentleman why I hoped we could vote for the Bill and why I still wish that that were possible. In our view, the work of the Security Service is best conducted free from political controversy. That is at least part of the reason why the Labour party proposed, and continues to propose, plans which I shall explain in a minute for the supervision of the Security Service by an all-party Committee of the House. But the Home Secretary must understand that to obtain all-party agreement, even on matters for which that is highly desirable, requires something more than the Government making unilateral announcements in the expectation that the Opposition parties will lamely and meekly accept whatever they recommend.

If, as they claim, the Government really want all-party agreement on security matters, they must make real attempts to accommodate some of the strongly held views of the Opposition parties. This Bill does not even recognise the problems that the Opposition have identified—problems concerning the accountability of the security services, and problems that affect the civil liberties of the nation and the efficiency of the Service. So much was shown again this afternoon by the Home Secretary's reply to my question. He said that the Bill specifically prohibited the service from operating with political bias. When I asked him to justify that from the Bill, he read from a clause that specifically prohibited the service from acting in the interests of a political party. If the Home Secretary cannot distinguish between those two things, he is not fit to be Home Secretary.

I have never suggested that the Security Service has burnt ballot boxes, forged ballot papers or acted on behalf of Conservative candidates to obtain their success. What I have suggested, and what we all know, is that the Security Service throughout the years has operated in a way that clearly shows a political bias of a much more general but equally damaging sort. We know, for instance, that in the 1970s two great patriots, Lord Scanlon and Mr. Jack Jones, were continually under the surveillance of the security services. I do not believe that even the Security Service of that period could have been so bone-headed as to tap their telephones if it had not been operating under the political bias that assumes that trade union leaders are likely to be subversive.

That is what we are discussing, not the interests of a political party. That the Home Secretary, with his abilities, should give such an inadequate answer to the question that I raised shows how flimsy is the ground on which he stands——

Mr. Rupert Allason (Torbay): Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Whitney: Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Hattersley: I shall give way to the hon. Member for Wycombe (Mr. Whitney), whose experience in these matters I respect.

Mr. Whitney: Is the right hon. Gentleman alleging that the Security Service tapped Mr. Jack Jones' telephone against the orders of the Home Secretary of the day, or deliberately obscured the knowledge of the Home Secretary of the day, who was a Labour Home Secretary?

Mr. Hattersley: I am making the allegation that Mr. Jack Jones' telephone was tapped, a matter of general knowledge and comment. I am making the assertion that it should not have been tapped, and that no one would have tapped it who was not so befuddled by political bias that he did not understand the real threat to the country and where the real duties of the Security Service lay.

Mr. Allason *rose*——

Mr. Hattersley: I shall take a few interventions at the beginning, but then follow the Home Secretary's practice and try to get on.

Mr. Allason: Without wanting to go specifically into the cases of Jack Jones and Hugh Scanlon, may I ask the right hon. Gentleman whether he is aware that leaders of the trade union movement have often been approached by hostile intelligence services and have reported these approaches to the Security Service, which has conducted operations with their consent?

Mr. Hattersley: I have no objection to that. What surprises me is that the hon. Gentleman might think that it was in any way relevant to the complaint that I was making about phones being tapped without the permission of the people who owned them.

I want to emphasise that the Government do not even get close to proposing a scheme of genuine accountability. The Home Secretary made that clear from the start. He said that he was not prepared to countenance the sort of accountability that the Opposition want. But the Bill does not even take a small step in that direction. Certainly, MI5 is to be given a statutory existence, which is progress of a sort. There were times when the Government of the day did not even acknowledge MI5's existence, let alone put it on a statutory basis. The Bill allows Parliament and the public to know no more about the security services than we know today.

The Bill's provisions will allow Parliament and the public to know nothing more about the Security Service, and it provides no more reassurance about the service's behaviour than we now possess. It is possible to argue, as I shall in a moment, that the Bill's provisions increase the Security Service's power to carry out operations that, in a free society, should be prohibited. The Bill could be used to legalise that which is presently illegal and to legitimise operations that are now wholly illegitimate and should be suppressed.

Today, MI5 exists in a form that is most clearly set out in Lord Denning's report on the Profumo affair 25 years ago. Lord Denning wrote:

> "The members of the services are, in the eye of the law, ordinary citizens with no powers greater than anyone else. They have no special powers of arrest such as the police have. No special powers of search are given to them. They cannot enter premises without the consent of the householder even though they may suspect a spy is there."

Despite that view being generally accepted by Governments and by the courts, we know from memoirs, prohibited and allowed, and from studies of the services both independent and Government-inspired, that for years MI5, in the immortal words of Peter Wright,

> "bugged and burgled its way all over London."

MI5 did so illegally, but in the knowledge that some Governments and some Home Secretaries preferred it to behave like a private army rather than cause the embarrassment that would result from the need for MI5 to obtain explicit ministerial permission to tap a trade union leader's home or to enter the premises of a private citizen, believing him to be assisting the Soviet Union. When the Home Secretary was courteous enough to discuss those matters with me, he agreed that one of the arguments had always been that it is best to keep the service outside the law, because that way, a Minister's hands are kept clean.

Under clause 1, it will be illegal for the service to take any of the actions that I have mentioned without obtaining the Home Secretary's explicit permission. That could have been a substantial step forward but for the inhibition that, for the Home Secretary's permission to have any force, three requirements must be met. First, the criteria against which the Home Secretary should measure warrant applications should be public, precise and limited. Secondly, Parliament should be empowered to impose a measure of control over the way in which the Home Secretary exercises his powers. Thirdly, a mechanism should be created to ensure that the Security Service does not continue with its old habits and defy the new law by acting without the Home Secretary's warrant.

Later, I shall examine each of those criteria but before I do so, I make it plain—if the Home Secretary needs that to be done, because he heard the murmurs of agreement from my right hon. and hon. Friends when he mentioned this point—that we accept without qualification that much of the Security Service's work must be kept secret from all except that small group of men and women who, in that famous phrase, need to know how the service conducts itself. What divides the parties is their interpretation of the concept of the need to know.

We believe that there is a need for a small group of men and women of undoubted probity within Parliament at least to exercise a degree of general supervision of the service. We believe that that is necessary for the service's efficiency, as well as to ensure that it respects the obligations of a free society. Without that scrutiny, the secret service will be able still to act as a private army—the Prime Minister's private army, but a private army nevertheless. Without such scrutiny, the service will still be able to act improperly, without those who are aggrieved receiving proper recompense. Certainly the tribunal provisions in clause 5 will not provide anything like adequate redress.

In the past, the Government have inevitably chosen, as they have today, to conduct this debate as if MI5 was the best counter-espionage organisation in the free world and that we would be rash to make any radical changes that might in any way tarnish its record of unparalleled efficiency. The implication is that any radical change in the governance of MI5 might put at risk its present levels of performance. In truth, since the the war MI5 has been one of the worst and most ridiculed security services in the western Alliance. It has a long history of recruiting and promoting Soviet agents, and of wasting its own time and public money pursuing individuals who, by any rational analysis, constituted no threat whatsoever to national security.

MI5's errors are the errors of inbreeding. Its mistakes are the mistakes of a closed society that does not have to account for the legality or efficiency of its operations. It has often made itself ridiculous, believing that it was above scrutiny. The story of MI5 does not justify acceptance of the suggestion that it will be dangerous to tamper with its record of unequivocal success.

When the Minister replies, perhaps he will respond to just one example that I can give. It is not from the work of the bitter and discredited Peter Wright, for whom none of us has very much time, but from a monograph produced one year ago by Mr. Anthony Cavendish—a man neither embittered not vindictive, neither impoverished nor prejudiced. It is a monograph written not about the 1950s, which the Home Secretary said were days behind us, but about the 1970s. In that monograph, which was suppressed by the Government, Anthony Cavendish wrote

that the Security Service was engaged in plots to destabilise the Government of the right hon. Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup (Mr. Heath).

One can look at Mr. Cavendish's story in two ways. If it is true, then MI5 was engaged in treason. If it is not true, then in Mr. Cavendish, it employed and promoted a man who, by making that allegation, demonstrates himself to be at best a liar, and at worst a lunatic. I am inclined to accept the first explanation—that what he wrote was true. Whichever alternative we choose, it does not redound to the credit of MI5's employment and promotion policies.

Mr. Allason: Is the right hon. Gentleman aware that Mr. Anthony Cavendish has never been employed by the Security Service, and that any comments made by him must be purely speculative?

Mr. Hattersley: If the Government will allow publication of Mr. Cavendish's little book, we shall be a position to contest Mr. Cavendish's judgment on his employment with the judgments of others. Unfortunately, that book is suppressed. Since that was done without Mr. Cavendish ever being a member of the Security Service, it raises considerable questions about the justification for suppressing it in the first place.

I emphasise that making the Security Service more accountable would improve its efficiency, as well as ensuring that it plays a role consistent with existing democracy. From time to time, we are told that parliamentary control of the kind that we seek will undermine—

Mr. Heffer; How does the hon. Member for Torbay (Mr. Allason) know who is employed by the Security Service? Is he a member of the Security Service? Does he have more information than any other right hon. or hon. Member? We are entitled to know from where his information comes.

Mr. Allason: If the right hon. Gentleman will allow me to intervene again, I can give his hon. Friend the Member for Liverpool, Walton (Mr. Heffer) the answer to his question.

Mr. Hattersley: No, because I want to deal with the real world, and not with the world that is inhabited by the hon. Member for Torbay (Mr. Allason) in one guise or another, or under one name or another.

I wish to explain why we insist on arguing for parliamentary control. I shall deal with the argument, which is inevitably and invariably made, that to allow a measure of parliamentary control will undermine the confidence of our partners and allies in the operation of the service. I know the Government's preoccupation with that subject. I vividly recall telling the Foreign Secretary that I would be very surprised if the Soviet Union did not know at least as much about the Zircon satellite as was to be published in the *New Statesman* the following day. The Foreign Secretary's reply was that that was all very well, but that the Americans were disturbed by the incidence of such leaks.

Of course, the Americans have a security system controlled by a Senate committee which publishes its budget. It has an operational head whose name appears in the papers and whose address appears in the telephone directory. I do not suggest for a moment, no matter what the Home Secretary may pretend, that we can take the American system and spatchcock it on ours. Experience in Washington suggests, however, that the sort of control that we propose is not invariably less efficient than a system that provides no parliamentary accountability. All the problems described by the Home Secretary—whether the few people allowed inside the net of secrecy would tell too much or tell too little; whether it would produce less satisfaction; whether it would produce intolerable pressure on the head of the service—all those problems are overcome in Washington, and I believe that with good will they could be overcome here.

From time to time the Prime Minister and the Home Secretary insist that as they are, between them and in a not very clearly defined fashion, Ministers responsible for the Civil Service, parliamentary accountability exists. It is there, manifested by them. It is provided through the answers that they give the House on the subject. It was, indeed, an answer by the Prime Minister that, as much as anything else, convinced me that we would not support the Bill. She told the House that there would still be accountability, because she would be accountable. When my right hon. Friend the Member for Morley and Leeds, South (Mr. Rees) asked in what form that accountability would be exercised, she replied:

"In precisely the same way as the Home Secretary and myself have always been accountable to the House".—[*Official Report*, 22 November 1988; Vol. 141, c. 26.]

We know what that usual way is. All of us who have been Ministers dealing with such matters have given exactly the same answers to questions about security as the Prime Minister gave every time that she was asked. Her answer is that she does not answer. The Prime Minister is accountable in the sense that she is the Minister responsible for refusing to answer the questions. I think that even the Home Secretary will concede that that is a very limited definition of parliamentary accountability. The Bill should have provided something new and something better.

Mr. John Greenway (Ryedale): What?

Mr. Hattersley: I have been saying what for the last 10 minutes, but I will gladly repeat it. The Bill should provide for a Committee of the House with a general supervisory power.

Mr. Hurd *rose*——

Mr. Hattersley: I will give way to the Home Secretary after I have said this to the hon. Member for Ryedale (Mr. Greenway): for him to hear a case based on that requirement for 20 minutes and then, when the subject is raised, to shout, "What?" says something about either his attention or his intelligence. But we shall see whether the Home Secretary can do better.

Mr. Hurd: I am glad that the right hon. Gentleman has sketched his proposal for the benefit of the House, because it illustrates perfectly the contradiction hidden within it. On the one hand, he admits the need for secrecy over actual operations and says that what is required is some general oversight. On the other hand, he claims that that general oversight will prevent abuse in a particular operation. Both cannot be correct.

Mr. Hattersley: I shall do my best to demonstrate why the Home Secretary is wrong. Let me take an example —the creation of police authorities. We have never believed that a police authority is supposed to be involved in the day-to-day operation and decisions of inspectors,

[Mr. Hattersley]

chief constables and superintendents, but we believe that the existence of that authority is in itself a countervailing power against unreasonable operations. This is exactly the same principle. If the Home Secretary will bear with me for a moment, I shall try to give an example of what I mean.

We believe that real accountability can come about only if and when the three criteria that I have set out are properly observed. Those three criteria are a concise and acceptable definition of when action by the Security Service can be authorised, a real check on how the Home Secretary exercises his right to issue warrants and a mechanism that ensures that the Security Service does not act outside its lawful powers.

The Minister of State, Home Office (Mr. John Patten): It is all in the Bill.

Mr. Hattersley: We are going to examine the criteria in a minute, if the Minister of State will contain himself.

The criteria against which the Home Secretary's action must be judged are set out, as the Minister of State so perceptively said, in clause 3 of the Bill. They are set out in a form that is vague to the point of vacuity. That which may be authorised is

"entry on or interference with property".

"Interference" can mean virtually anything. I confess that I spent a happy hour yesterday evening looking through my Shakespeare concordance at all the alternative meanings that one English poet has given the word. I shall not give them all, but "interference" can mean whatever anyone wants it to mean. Obviously it means breaking and entering; presumably it also means the expropriation of property and the planting of monitoring devices. Unfortunately it could mean a good deal more. There is clearly no legal limit to what could be justified by the word "interference".

The rest of the clause is drawn just as widely. First, action is justified when the Home Secretary "thinks it necessary". There is no need for him to justify that view; he need only hold it. The information that the interference with property is intended to obtain must be

"of substantial value in assisting the Service to discharge any of its functions".

The breadth of that definition—"any of its functions"—is clear only when we examine the functions of the service as set out in clause 1.

Clause 1 defines the function of the service as

"the protection of national security and, in particular, its protection against threats from espionage, terrorism and sabotage, from the activities of . . . foreign powers and from actions intended to overthrow or undermine parliamentary democracy by political [or] industrial . . . means."

Some newspapers have placed much emphasis on the word "particular", but I believe that with or without that word the clause gives the security services the right to do whatever they choose. I cannot imagine any circumstance that is not covered by that subsection. It is made up of word after word that has only subjective meaning. How is a threat defined? Who decides that the intention was to overthrow or undermine? The answer to all those questions is the Security Service itself, or perhaps the Home Secretary.

Mr. William Powell (Corby): Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Hattersley: I will not give way any more.

Neither the Home Secretary nor the Security Service is a suitable arbiter in this instance. If clause 1(2) is dangerous, clause 1(3) is simultaneously dangerous and absurd. MI5 is enjoined to

"safeguard the economic well-being of the United Kingdom against threats posed by the actions or intentions of persons outside the British Islands."

How are we to define economic threats posed by persons outside the United Kingdom? At present a great controversy surrounds the Sultan of Brunei and the pressures which, it is alleged, were exerted on him, together with inducements, to keep his sterling balances in London. In those circumstances, would MI5 have been justified in tapping the Sultan's telephone to find out whether it was his intention to move his sterling balances?

I hope that at least we can be assured that when the Chancellor of the Exchequer goes abroad and agrees—at the New York Plaza, let us say—to damage the British economy with policies of high interest rates, MI5 will not be entitled to "interfere with his property". But in the strict context of the Bill, applying the words in a literal sense, there is no reason why it should not do so.

No doubt the Home Secretary will argue that despite such vacuous definitions we can rely on the whole business being kept in check by his exercise of moderate and reasonable authority. He will insist that he will do only what is right, and that may well be the case.

Mr. Kenneth Hind (Lancashire, West): Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Hattersley: No.

It is certainly not my intention to impugn the Home Secretary's integrity, but the power provided for him in the Bill is unchecked and should not be given to any Minister. The Home Secretary has not been appointed in perpetuity. The power to authorise action at once so important to the national interest and so offensive to civil liberties ought to be exercised only by a Minister who is himself subject to supervision. The Bill does not provide adequate supervision through the tribunal, and therefore fails the second of my criteria.

In any event, it is very difficult for the Secretary of State alone to exercise effective control over the security services. His role will become the same sort of legal fiction as his theoretical position as the police authority for London, which amounts to little more than requiring him to endorse decisions taken by others.

Let the House imagine that at 9.45 am today the Home Secretary was about to leave for the Cabinet meeting, carrying with him the draft of the speech that he intended to make this afternoon, that he was suddenly presented with an application for a warrant and that he was told that the security services needed to "interfere" with somebody's property before noon. I believe that in those circumstances the Home Secretary needs some countervailing force to exert alternative pressure from that which would certainly be exerted by the security services in favour of immediate and unthinking action. The commission, operating behind a wall of secrecy in every sense of that word, cannot exert anything like effective pressure.

Several Hon. Members: Absolute rubbish.

Mr. Hind: Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Hattersley: No.

The only effective countervailing force is a Committee of this House.

Mr. Hurd *rose*——

Mr. Hattersley: I think that the Home Secretary wants to speak. I shall give way to him.

Mr. Hurd: Would a Committee of this House have examined that application between 9.45 and 10 am today?

Mr. Hattersley: I think that a Committee might consider the application if the aggrieved person wished to do so. I do not suggest for a moment that a Committee of this House should examine every action of the security services. I said so a few moments ago when I drew a parallel between the Committee that should control the behaviour of the police. It is crucial that a Committee of this House is able to deal with the complaints of an individual who says that he has been aggrieved. That is the purpose of the tribunal. It is that purpose which we believe the tribunal cannot properly fulfil.

The third criterion concerns the necessity to ensure that the security services, with their deplorable record in this particular, do not continue, despite the new legal framework, to act unlawfully. That assurance can be provided only by an official secrets Act that does not allow their covert activities permanently to be protected, whether they are lawful or unlawful. Yet we know, from the new Official Secrets Bill, that we are to debate next week, that everything that the security services do must remain an official secret. To reveal it in any circumstances will be an offence. If MI5 bugs and burgles without warrant, anybody who reveals that he has broken the law is himself or herself breaking the law. The aura of secrecy with which the Bill that is to be debated next week surrounds the security services disqualifies the Bill from our support.

It also reduces—this is the point that I was struggling to make to the Home Secretary—the tribunal's effectiveness when investigating complaints. I refer to the tribunal that is to be established under clause 5. During the debate on the Loyal Address I asked two specific questions about the tribunal: first, whether there was any appeal against its decisions and, secondly, whether its decisions could be questioned in court. The Minister of State replied to neither of those questions. I assumed that that was because he did not know the answers. I realise now that it was because he knew the answers. The tribunal's judgment cannot be questioned in court. There is no appeal against the tribunal's decision. It is farcical to suggest that, for an aggrieved party, that can be considered to be a safeguard that is comparable to supervision by a Committee of this House.

Those parts of the Bill that deal with the powers and duties of the commission and tribunal, both clauses and schedules, show how little restraint and protection those two institutions will provide. The obvious example is paragraph 3 of schedule 1. If a man or woman complains that the security services have given information to a prospective employer, the tribunal may examine whether the information is accurate. However, the real cause of complaint is not the accuracy of the information but the propriety of information about a free individual being passed from hand to hand. To examine that great abuse —the principle of improper vetting—is not within the tribunal's capabilities.

The idea that such a scheme should provide adequate recompense for offending citizens or adequate protection against wrongdoing is absurd. Against the background of a system that is cloaked in complete secrecy and of a definition of powers that gives absolute discretion to the Home Secretary, the tribunal becomes no more than window dressing.

In some ways, the Bill is window dressing from start to finish. We know—the Home Secretary confirmed it to me —that the security services wanted the Bill. I have no doubt that at last they have become conscious of the enormous and unjustified criticisms that have been recently directed towards them and that they decided that a minimum legal framework, which allowed them to operate much as they had done before, was the best way to avoid a continual campaign for greater efficiency and genuine accountability.

I want to assure the Home Secretary that a campaign to improve the performance and to increase the accountability of the security services will not go away. We shall continue to argue for a system of parliamentary scrutiny. Until we achieve it, we shall continue to press the Home Secretary properly to discharge the duties which——

Mr. William Powell: Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Hattersley: No.

We shall continue to press him properly to discharge the duties that, because of this Bill, he has been able to pretend he has acquired. We shall try to question him, but he will no doubt refuse to answer—as is the practice and convention. When next there is a security scandal we shall attempt to hold him responsible, but he will no doubt say that that is not a proper subject for debate in this House. He will simply refer to the clauses that demonstrate that anything he has approved is lawful. That response will only hasten the day when we have a proper Security Service that is under proper control and proper supervision.

5.36 pm

Mr. Robert Boscawen (Somerton and Frome): I listened with interest to the speech of the right hon. Member for Birmingham, Sparkbrook (Mr. Hattersley). I was quite convinced, at the end of it, of two things: either that he knows very little about the subject or that he does not want a Security Service in this country. He sought in every way to undermine what the Security Service is bound to do.

I have a few points to make about the Bill, which I believe is extremely important for the safety of every individual in this country. The Bill is timely. There are details that need to be looked at, but it gets the answers about right.

What stands out is the relevance, the succinctness and the clarity of the original Maxwell Fyfe directive that was drawn up by a former Labour Government. It is still relevant today, 36 years later, except in one respect; that it is not a statutory provision. That is what the Bill intends to put right.

It is interesting to dwell for a moment on why it has taken so long since the second world war for the Security Service to be placed on a statutory basis, in place of the directive to the Director-General of the Security Service on his appointment by the Home Secretary. This country believes, more than any other country, in a free society. It

[Mr. Robert Boscawen]

has shed as much blood as any other country to destroy the worst police states in our history. Incidentally, this country has had Labour Governments for almost 19 of the 36 years since the Maxwell Fyfe directive. For nearly 23 years since the second world war, there have been Tory Governments.

Why has it taken so long to place the Security Service on a statutory basis? The answer must be significant. The reason is the long-standing belief of no fewer than nine Prime Ministers—three of whom were Labour and six Tory—their senior permanent secretaries and a number of senior distinguished judges that Britain's Security Service, however imperfect, was best safeguarded by the Maxwell Fyfe directive. It was not until the treacheries of Blunt and others were revealed, and certain dubious revelations of illegality by worthless creatures such as Wright, and the genuine telephone tapping incident, that the requirement of a statutory basis appeared on the menu. In my view, not least of the reasons was the need for the improvement of morale and well-being among those who staffed the service and had done so for a long time.

I entirely disagree with the right hon. Member for Sparkbrook, as I consider that the legality issue is faced squarely and set down in clause 3. It is nothing new. Many of us in younger days had to be trained in security matters for previous emergencies. I can certainly vouch for the emphasis placed on the individual's responsibility for acting lawfully at all times, if necessary through the authority of the warrant system. Hence a close relationship has always been maintained with the police authorities. If all those lurid stories that sell so well on the bookstalls are true, the individuals have not been acting lawfully. If they have not been acting lawfully, they are on their own, as any individual in Britain who does not act lawfully is on his own.

If nothing else, what is spelt out in clause 3 must be a confidence-building exercise, in that the Security Service must act lawfully at all times, throughout the warrant system which is also scrutinised by the Commissioner for the Security Service as is laid down in the Bill. That is what we have to aim for.

As for the contentious matter of parliamentary oversight, I believe that it would be totally wrong and would be harmful to the security of British people and must be rejected. A year or two ago, my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary used the very good description, "those inside and those outside the barriers of secrecy". He was then quoted by the right hon. Member for Sparkbrook. In cases of security, those inside the barriers of secrecy must be limited to the fewest possible people. The idea of matters of secrecy being open to the members of a Select Committee, however eminent and responsible they are, increases enormously the risk of secrecy being blown. That is why those who remain inside the barriers of secrecy must be as few as possible.

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Boscawen: No. I shall speak for a short time, as I know that other hon. Members wish to speak, and I must get on.

More than anyone else, those with the continuous burden of the highest responsibility of office must be inside the barrier of secrecy. They would be the Prime Minister and I understand, for administrative reasons, the Home Secretary. For reasons which we have heard, the Home Secretary is the Minister responsible for issuing the warrants and is answerable for that. I do not believe that it is sensible or wise to spread information and secrecy on what the Security Service is doing, particularly in its operational duties, beyond those two Ministers.

Ex-Home Secretaries, ex-Law Officers and ex-senior Cabinet Ministers, however eminent in office, are different animals without their official pressures. They are under different pressures, often of a highly competitive nature, inside the House. Many of them are working to regain office. That is their duty. Many of them are working hard outside the House on other personal matters. I do not believe that they are the right animals to hold the tremendously responsible position inside the House of scrutinising and overseeing the Security Service.

In my humble position as an ex-Whip—after 10 years in the Whips Office, where one has the opportunity to observe human nature in the House—I certainly do not have the confidence that the right hon. Member for Sparkbrook and some other Opposition Members have in their colleagues to maintain the enormous responsibility of secrecy that would be required of them if they were to be in charge of overseeing the Security Service.

Finally, if a Select Committee was in the know, as my right hon. Friend pointed out many times, what could its members reveal to their colleagues if they had misgivings about what was going on? They could go only to the Prime Minister or the Home Secretary of the day and tell them about their misgivings. They could go to no one else, so what advantage would there be to the House and to Back Bench Members on both sides? It is a foolish proposal. It is significant that, in all its years in government, the Labour party never sought parliamentary control of the Security Service when faced with the realities of office.

The Security Service depends on the morale of those who give long years of toil within the barriers of secrecy. On it depends the better defence of freedom from the violence for political ends in Britain that is so close to us today. It is vital that nothing in the Bill undermines the value of the Security Service to the safety of our country.

5.48 pm

Mr. Michael Foot (Blaenau Gwent): The hon. Member for Somerton and Frome (Mr. Boscawen) and other Conservative Members have suggested that what we are proposing, or the outcome of our proposals, would be unfair to the Security Service or to people working within it. However, there have been gross injustices to people in the service in the past, in particular because of the way in which some accusations have been made in recent years.

There could not be any more serious charges against a man of distinction who served the Security Service than the charges that were made against Roger Hollis. Those charges were investigated a number of times. I remember the Prime Minister at the Dispatch Box announcing to the House that all the investigations had shown that the charges were quite false and quite misleading. None the less, charges against Roger Hollis continue. They have been taken up by Peter Wright—although some of us do not pay much attention to him—and Chapman Pincher,

who is occasionally given special favours by various Governments for his work. It is grossly unfair that the charges against Roger Hollis continue.

Anthony Cavendish who I believe was employed by the Security Service, tried to come to the aid of Roger Hollis to defend his good name, but his information was suppressed. It is unwise and improper, and it does not serve the House of Commons and the nation, if that happens. The present system can be grossly unfair to former servants of the Crown. People such as Roger Hollis can be maligned in a scandalous way without any successful repudiation of the charges. I am not complaining about the Prime Minister's actions—she tried to come to the defence of Roger Hollis at one stage—but members of the Hollis family have a right to feel outraged by what was said about him and about the fact that there was insufficient right to reply.

The Home Secretary said that he would not enter into details about the past. I can well understand that, but obviously the Bill has been introduced because of some of the events of the past. If the Government were as content as the hon. Member for Somerton and Frome with what happened in the past, there would not have been any purpose in their coming forward with the Bill. They have been in a dilemma about whether to present the Bill as a great reform or as a measure that will not make much difference. The Home Secretary has done his best to make the Bill more than it is. He has tried to present this fig leaf of a Bill as though it were a virility symbol of Freudian proportions. However, the Bill has very little in it and will not make much difference to the way that the security services operate. That is one of our complaints.

We have serious complaints about what has been revealed in the recent past. There has been nothing like sufficient investigation or explanation, especially about Peter Wright's revelations and many others. It is all very well the Government saying that they will not go into past matters, that it is a matter of history and has nothing to do with the present, but those past matters are the background to the Bill. If it had not been for all the past events, the Government would not have proceeded with the legislation. In saying that he will not go into past events, the Home Secretary is saying that he will not be going into the reasons for the Bill. There is grave suspicion about the Government's actions because they have steadfastly refused to inquire into the revelations.

Mr. Chris Mullin (Sunderland, South): Does my right hon. Friend recall that, as late as 14 February this year, the *Sunday Express* devoted most of its front page to a photograph which had been released to it by the security services, smearing a former Labour Minister, Lord Diamond? Does my right hon. Friend agree that it would be a test of the new spirit of frankness which is alleged to be abroad if, in summing up, the Minister were to tell us who leaked that photograph and why?

Mr. Foot: My hon. Friend raises an important matter. I should be happy to hear a reply by the Government, although I doubt whether they will attempt to do anything of that kind. If the Government will not give us any information about some of the matters which have been discussed throughout the country over the past year and a half, I doubt whether they will come forward with any information to answer my hon. Friend's questions.

A Government who have done what this Government have done over the past year and a half cannot wash their hands of the matter. We might have looked on the Bill with more favour if the Government had had a splendid record of defending civil liberties at every turn, of showing great sensitivity to threats to bring injunctions against newspapers and of introducing novelty in the scale of security operations. We have not had such a Government. The Government have engaged in peppering and pestering the newspapers with injunctions on a scale never seen before. The Home Secretary laughed about that, and perhaps some newspapers deserve to have their stories stopped, but I doubt whether that is a proper way for a free country and Government to operate.

The Government have refused to allow any investigation into Peter Wright's revelations and the associated revelations. The Prime Minister may say that she is weary of these issues. I have had long correspondence with her over the past year or so. When revelations were made in the Wright book about the attempted action against the Labour Government—the primary matter in the book—and other matters, I believed that it was of paramount importance that inquiries should have been made. The revelation about the Suez plan prepared by the Secret Service for the assassination of President Nasser was important, if it were true. Even if it were not, it was still important. We did not have a proper inquiry into that matter.

Only recently, judges have pronounced on the way in which the Government behaved. I am glad that some emphasised how seriously they regarded such allegations and said why it was necessary, to have some means to investigate these matters properly. Up until the present, the Government have refused to have any investigation into those charges. Now the Home Secretary tells us that he is going ahead with this legislation, and the other legislation which will be introduced next week, without giving an answer to the House of Commons about any of the revelations.

Mr. Allason: I know that the right hon. Gentleman likes to keep up to date in these matters. Is he aware that Peter Wright has admitted on television that his tale of a conspiracy against the Labour Government was sheer fiction?

Mr. Foot: If the hon. Gentleman is so inaccurate in his reporting of facts in his books as he is in the House of Commons, we shall have to watch carefully what he writes. He has misreported even Mr. Peter Wright. I fully understand that there are often good reasons for not treating Mr. Peter Wright with great respect.

The Government have been engaged in great efforts across the world, at great cost to the reputation of senior civil servants and of the law. The Wright case eventually was tried in this country. The judges' verdicts are a judgment of the way in which the Government behaved throughout the proceedings and a judgment of the case that they were asked to try. These matters cannot be brushed away as easily as the hon. Member for Torbay (Mr. Allason) or anyone else has suggested. It is a great mistake that the Government have never held inquiries. So long as they refuse to do so, the matters will continue rumbling.

The Government's excuse over many months when the case was before the courts was that they could not act

[Mr. Foot]

because it was sub judice. Again, the Prime Minister was possibly saying that we cannot have an inquiry because it may injure the operation of the secret services. Today, the House is asked to proceed to decide on what we shall do in future without any of the information or proper investigation that we would normally have for any other section of the nation's affairs.

The Home Secretary sought to reply to my right hon. Friend's proposals for proper parliamentary scrutiny, and that will become the overwhelming question for discussion. The House of Commons is a much more powerful and versatile place than the Government give it credit for. We hear Conservative Members, including Front Bench Members, especially the Prime Minister, talking as if the House is not fit to do these jobs and cannot adapt itself to carry out the proper work of surveillance over a security system. I am not saying that we should have exactly the same system as the Americans, but if they had had the same system as we have, absolute secrecy, all the revelations about their arms dealings with Iran would never have been revealed.

It would have greatly injured the relationships of the Western world if the Americans had been allowed to sell arms to terrorists without anybody knowing that they were doing so and if there had been no investigation. It would have greatly weakened the whole democratic world if the United States had not had the investigative methods that operated there, whether or not they were initiated partly by the newspapers and were operated through a Congress which had some sort of machinery. I am not saying that we should have exactly that machinery—naturally, we must adapt it for ourselves—but it is nonsense to say that the House of Commons cannot devise methods for dealing with these matters.

Mr. Ray Whitney (Wycombe): Would the right hon. Gentleman be prepared to tell the House if, when he was a member of Labour Cabinets, he urged on his fellow Cabinet members the parliamentary mechanism for oversight which he is now recommending, or is that a secret within the Labour party?

Mr. Foot: That is not a secret. The proposal for a parliamentary surveillance of these matters was not one that I raised in Cabinet, but there is strong case for it. All the evidence and outpourings of the activities about the security services in recent years confirm the good case that my right hon. Friend has made.

Yesterday there was some talk about insults to the country. It is an insult to the House of Commons to say that we cannot devise a proper method for dealing with the Security Service and making it properly answerable. If anybody says that cannot be done, my advice is to look back at the ways in which the House of Commons in times of extreme danger has decided that it can waive rules or devise machinery to investigate dangerous affairs of this kind. That should have been done when the Peter Wright revelations were coming out.

During the first world war, a Select Committee was set up to inquire into why there had been such a catastrophe at Gallipoli and to take evidence from many different quarters about the reasons for it. The strength of the House during that war was partly because it devised a means by which it could discuss even such secret matters as the operations that led to the Gallipoli disaster and partly because it learned lessons from that. Some people at the time said, "You cannot allow a Committee of the House to inquire into these matters; they are much too secret in wartime," but fortunately for the nation, an inquiry was carried out. It was one of the most important inquiries in the war in changing the way that people looked at the conduct of the war.

During the second world war—I watched from the Gallery—the House of Commons inquired into many matters. It even had secret sittings. Some Members did not like that. It is incredible to think of a secret sitting with almost every Member present. It discussed matters of the utmost importance. Some thought that if different views were taken, it could give some advantage to the enemy. But others thought that it was much more important that the Government should establish their good faith before other hon. Members and that that risk should be taken. They thought that it was much more important that Ministers should be called to account and should give answers.

Churchill, who knew something about these matters, was prepared to act in that way. He had secret committees on many matters, inquiring into questions infinitely more sensitive than many of those covered by the Security Services. If both this Bill and next week's Bill are carried, no future Churchills will write their memoirs. If ever the historical writings of any great figure in this House were stuffed with official secrets—I bet that not every one was vetted and passed—they were Churchill's. He thought that he had a better idea of what was an official secret than any officious security officer who might tell him otherwise, and that is often the case. Above all, Churchill was answerable to this House, and he trusted it.

Even in the much lesser event of the Falklands war, it was necessary that there should be a proper inquiry into how the country got into the war. The Prime Minister was not eager that it should be the size that it was. She thought that we must have a smaller inquiry because it would be a bit dangerous to have as many as six or seven Members of Parliament investigating. Some of us persuaded her—she is not always easy to persuade—that she must have a committee that could both inquire and command the confidence of the House. If it was to have the confidence of the House, it could not consist of one or two hon. Members; it had to be a bit larger. Some of us thought that it might have been a bit larger still.

A great deal of secret information and information about security, and many official secrets went before that committee. My right hon. Friend the Member for Morley and Leeds, South (Mr. Rees) was on that committee and will vouch for what I am saying. If that evidence had not been available, the report would have been worthless. It is not the case that this House cannot devise means of dealing with these questions.

During recent weeks and months, the Government have taken measures on a series of events to restrict the freedoms that we have previously accepted as natural, which we have taken for granted. I shall not go through the whole long list, but they include the proposed interference with the right to silence, interference with the rights of people to report terrorism in Northern Ireland, and the introduction of an identity card system. There is a list of different measures which infringe some of our elementary rights.

Nobody believes that those matters, including some of the provisions in the two Bills on this subject, are the outcome of the cool analysis or—what was the phrase of the Home Secretary?—the "cool consideration" of the Home Office and the Government. They are not. They are the result of the paranoid spasms of the Prime Minister. She comes along and says, "We must settle these questions in a particular way overnight, whatever the objections, criticisms and obstacles." The Home Secretary's way of dealing with these questions over the years has been governed much more by that factor than by any so-called cool consideration of all the factors involved. I hope that that pressure will be sustained.

I have not the slightest doubt that eventually the House will have enough dignity and determination to establish over the security services the right that we have over every other activity in this country—the right of surveillance. It can be done without injuring the nation's security or the way in which it conducts its affairs. All that is needed is for hon. Members to have a little confidence in this institution, which still has the power and capacity to adapt itself to any such needs.

6.10 pm

Mr. Jonathan Aitken (Thanet, South): The right hon. Member for Blaenau Gwent (Mr. Foot) put his finger on a curious paradox that is one of the central weaknesses of the Bill. He said that the Bill has come into existence only because of past events. Looking forward to the future—remembering, to use the right hon. Gentleman's words, what a "small fig leaf" the Bill is—there is little hope that future events will be handled differently. It is to that central weakness that I shall devote most of my attention.

I should like to give the Bill a qualified welcome. It is a sensible initiative to place the Security Service on a statutory basis for the first time in its 80-year history. When such a first attempt to legislate is made, it is perfectly natural that there should be some unease and debate about whether the activities of the Security Service, as defined in the Bill, infringe civil liberties. That unease, which has come mainly from the Opposition, would largely have been alleviated if the Bill had been drafted better. Sometimes parliamentarians criticise the Foreign Office for making a mess of legislation because it has so little experience of bringing Bills before the House. Poor old MI5 has had no experience of bringing legislation before the House, so perhaps it is not surprising that, by professional standards, the Bill has been poorly drafted and has many grave flaws.

If one wanted to choose a fundamental flaw in the drafting regarding the lack of political interference by the Security Service, one could do no better than make a comparison with the rather splendid words of the Maxwell Fyfe directive of 1952. Paragraph 4, which deals with political interference, says:

> "It is essential that the Security Service should be kept absolutely free from any political bias or influence, and nothing should be done that might lend colour to any suggestion that it is concerned with the interests of any particular section of the community or with any matter other than the Defence of the Realm as a whole."

Those words have a splendid ring to them and compare favourably with the extremely modest sentence in clause 2(2)(b), which asks the director-geneal to ensure

> "that the Service does not take any action to further the interests of any political party."

A quite different dimension of restraint of the Security Service is contained in the Bill than that contained in the famous Maxwell Fyfe directive. I dare say that we shall tidy up much of the drafting in Committee.

The big issue in the Bill, which is the first in the history of the Security Service, is probably not civil liberties but the confidence, effectiveness, efficiency and judgment of the Security Service. The Bill should be judged by what it does to improve, enhance and strengthen the Security Service, which is certainly needed in today's world. Judged by that test, the Bill is extremely disappointing.

There are many omissions in the Bill and many opportunities have been lost. The most recent controversy was the Wright brouhaha. Most observers agree that it probably would not have happened if only MI5 had had a decent and fair system of pensions. If Mr. Wright had had a pension, none of this Niagara falls of information would have fallen into the public domain. It is unlikely that many revelations from former employees of the service would have reached the ears of journalists and authors if there had been a clear contractual responsibility by which pensions could be lost following breaches of trust or disclosure of information. The Bill completely misses the opportunity to deal with possible restrictions, definitions or fairer treatment of pensions.

The Home Secretary tackled the subject of oversight very feebly indeed. When he came to this part of his speech, he tried to dismiss the Canadian experience as only four years old, the Australian experience as too new and the American experience as of no relevance. He continuously dodged the fact that we are the only democracy in the English-speaking world that has no system not merely of parliamentary oversight—it is perfectly true that there can be more than one view of this—but any system of independent oversight whatsoever. He did not admit—why should he reveal a state secret, but I will do so—that three successive directors-general of the Security Service have supported independent oversight of some type for the Security Service.

Mr. William Powell: Is my hon. Friend saying that a judge is not independent oversight? Surely a judge is.

Mr. Aitken: I do not think that my hon. Friend quite understands what is meant by "oversight". Oversight, in the sense that it is used by security services in other parts of the world, is some form of continuous monitoring body. It monitors not whether the right warrant was issued for the right telephone tap but whether the structure and operations of the service are being correctly, efficiently and most effectively carried out. At present, that function is exercised by Ministers, which is what they mean when they talk about oversight.

To some extent, I embarrassed the Government the other day, when the Home Secretary was at his peak of reminding us how wonderfully effective oversight by the Prime Minister and himself would be in the future. I quoted from the last ministerial statement made on oversight seven years ago by the then Home Office Minister, Dr. Shirley Summerskill. I will not bore the House by repeating it, but the gist of it was, "We have a completely new oversight mechanism, which has been strengthened and is working perfectly; Ministers are doing a wonderful job, and although there have been faults in the past, you can trust us and we will do oversight splendidly."

[Mr. Aitken]

That is the same old gramophone record that the Home Secretary played today and during the debate on the Gracious Speech.

However, the extraordinary catalogue of blunders, mismanagement and outbreaks of chaos which followed that statement shows that ministerial oversight failed, for the simple reason that Ministers were too preoccupied and too busy to give the continuous attention that is needed. The fight for oversight of the Security Service will not end with this Bill; it will be a continuous process, whether it be parliamentary oversight or independent oversight by a body such as the Falklands committee. That committee kept its secrets very well, and the right hon. Member for Blaenau Gwent reminded us that the House can perfectly well keep secrets at times of great national importance or on issues of substance.

Nothing in the Bill will improve the management, efficiency and effectiveness of the Security Service or ensure that it devotes its efforts to the right targets by the right methods. It is no secret that the Security Service has not been well managed in recent years. There are times whey it has been spectacularly badly managed. There have been five directors-general within a decade, which is an astonishing turnover in the world of counter-intelligence, where a long perspective is often needed.

Some of the Security Service's recruitment methods are out of the *Boy's Own Paper* days. No commercial organisation could have recruited, promoted and failed to detect an erratic, alcoholic and social misfit like Michael Bettaney. Even the expurgated version of the security commissioner's report on Michael Bettaney, published in 1985, was one of the most scathing indictments of the quality of management of any Government organisation this century.

We are told that, since Bettaney, everything has been improved. That is true to some extent. Sir Antony Duff, an outsider from the Security Service, made certain significant changes. As a result of his influence, all MI5 employees were given a 10 per cent. pay increase over and above the normal Civil Service increments, to pay them for their enhanced responsibilities—a new reward structure, which, incidentally, Ministers have never disclosed to Parliament. Sir Antony Duff then insisted that there should be a major shift of resources from counter-intelligence and subversion towards fighting terrorism. That was a wise move.

Here again—this is why Parliament should debate such issues—a caveat should be entered since Sir Antony Duff's retirement. We all agree that fighting terrorism is extremely important, but some experienced international observers fear that, with their understandably deep concern for terrorism, the present Government may not have got the balance quite right in the allocation of resources. There is a somewhat simplistic view in the Security Service today that, in this age of glasnost and perestroika, it is safe to lower our guard against Soviet penetration and subversion so that we may raise our guard against Irish terrorism. That view is not shared by intelligence experts on the other side of the Atlantic, who, incidentally, are refreshing easy to consult, in comparison with how difficult or impossible it is to get near their British equivalents.

I draw the attention of the House to a speech by Mr. Robert M. Gates, the deputy director of the Central Intelligence Agency, to the Association of Former Intelligence Officers on 15 October. He said:

"Since Gorbachev's accession to power, the hostile intelligence threat against the US has grown. Over the past three years we have discovered more penetrations of US defence and intelligence activities than at any time in our history . . . Despite improved US-Soviet relations there has been an increase this year in Soviet attempts to recruit US sources. I believe the recent choice of Vladimir Kryuchov to be chairman of the KGB will mean an intensification of Soviet intelligence efforts of the US and its allies."

If Deputy Director Gates of the CIA is right about the increased intensification of KGB activities and the increased spending on the KGB by the Soviet Government, it suggests that our Security Service may be getting its priorities wrong.

Mr. Whitney: Does my hon. Friend agree that the evidence by our hon. Friend the Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office to the Select Committee made precisely the same point as Mr. Gates? Therefore, we must assume—neither my hon. Friend nor I know—that that information, which apparently is in the possession of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, is also in the possession of other security agencies, and that they are taking appropriate action to deal with it. Why does my hon. Friend impute such ignorance or lack of wisdom to our colleagues on the Government Front Bench?

Mr. Aitken: My hon. Friend knows much more about this subject than I do. The judgment of priorities and the assessment of threats and macro-political judgments of the kind that we are talking about, is certainly not something that MI5 has done particularly well in the past. My view of MI5 is that, on the whole, it has done its best to do a decent, honest, patriotic, plodding job. The tone of MI5 is the tone of sound mediocrity, often touched with an inferiority complex about its cousins at MI6.

The retired military and police personnel who are so present in MI5 ranks are not the stuff of which deep thinkers are made, yet deep thinking is required on certain aspects of the Bill. The Bill appears to enlarge the role of MI5 and let its officers into new areas in which the qualities of intellect, expertise and specialist knowledge will be required on a scale not hitherto observed at the Curzon street headquarters.

I draw the attention of the House, as did the right hon. Member for Birmingham, Sparkbrook (Mr. Hattersley) to the dramatic expansion of MI5's activities as defined in clause 1(3):

"It shall also be the function of the Service to safeguard the economic well-being of the United Kingdom against threats posed by the actions or intentions of persons outside the British Islands."

Unless that is a quite spectacular piece of bad drafting, it means something very different from what MI5 has done in the past. What does it mean? The mind boggles. It has gone way beyond the Maxwell Fyfe directive. Is MI5 to monitor speculators against sterling? Is it to place the gnomes of Zurich under surveillance? Will Smiley be sent off to the souks of Cairo to make sure that another "Hero from Zero" does not grab hold of Harrods? Is Bulldog Drummond to be sent to the Mexican fastness of Sir James Goldsmith to make sure he is not cornering the market on salmonella-free eggs? What does it mean?

It certainly means that a new type of employee is to be required for MI5 to monitor overseas people who are

posing threats to the economic well-being of this country —LSE professors—*[Interruption.]*—yuppies, as my hon. Friend says, and certainly fiscal wizards.

When I made a few discreet inquiries about what the clause could mean, I was given the impression that I had got it wrong and that it was to do with offshore oil rigs which needed protection, and about the Channel tunnel. That would be confirmed by the rather curious reference to the "British Islands". If that is the case, it is an appalling piece of parliamentary draftsmanship to have a clause which is meant to refer to offshore installations such as oil rigs and the Channel tunnel all mixed up in economic well-being overseas.

It is not a well drafted Bill. Large parts of it are about cosmetics. Clauses 4 and 5 are a couple of sledgehammers to crack nuts. They envisage the appointment of a high judicial officer as a commissioner, three or four lawyers as a complaints tribunal, and a tribunal staff of 12 officers, at a cost of £360,000 a year.

What will they all do? After all, in the 80 years since the Security Service was founded, few real complaints about extra-judicial activities have surfaced, except in the suspect works of Peter Wright. The few genuine ones such as Cathy Massiter's complaint may not be directed at MI5 at all. It is common knowledge that MI5 had great internal doubts and debates about monitoring the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament, but instructions from higher up made it do it. There is no way that the tribunal will criticise MI5 for carrying out what it was properly asked to do.

Be that as it may, I doubt whether this expensive apparatus will find more than one genuine complaint that it can uphold in the course of a year. Of course it will have complaints from plenty of nutters, paranoiacs and anti-MI5 obsessives, but it will get rid of them pretty quickly, and then it will have no real job. The tribunal will be a sort of Don Quixote tilting at windmills.

That brings me to my real grumble about the Bill and the Official Secrets Bill which my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary is to launch next week. There are scores of missed opportunities—certainly in this Bill. There is no oversight, no real reform of the Security Service, no management improvements, and no real expansion of citizens' rights. There is a hollow cosmetic touch to the Bill, once one has welcomed the basic, genuine legal change. It reminded me of the great speech of Lord Randolph Churchill about Mr. Gladstone whom he criticised in 1884 for chopping down trees as his recreation, particularly the famous passage which begins with the words

"The forest laments in order that Mr. Gladstone may perspire."

Having perspired, Mr. Gladstone handed out chips as symbols of what he was doing in his wood cutting.

The Home Secretary's policies are similar. The commissioner is a chip for the civil liberties lobby. The tribunal is a chip for lawyers. Sir Philip Woodfield, the staff counsellor, is a chip to the young Turks inside the service who did not like the idea of not being able to report Mr. Bettaney, even when he was drunk and on fire, as unworthy. The legal status is a chip to appease the European Court of Human Rights. It is chips, chips, chips. The Home Secretary is good at those chips and cosmetics, but this is not a lasting reform of substance. Parliament will not be gainsaid indefinitely and fobbed off permanently with no oversight. I believe that the European Court of Human Rights will be back on some of the civil liberty issues.

As a first step, the Bill is not entirely useless, and for that reason I shall vote for it. However, although it is some progress, it is a story of missed opportunities, and I have grave reservations about it.

6.30 pm

Mr. Robert Maclennan (Caithness and Sutherland): It is a great pleasure to follow the hon. Member for Thanet, South (Mr. Aitken) and to agree with almost every word that he has said. He was right to focus on the inadequacy of the Bill in strengthening the effectiveness of the Security Service, as well to allude to the infringements of civil rights which, undoubtedly, the Bill will do little to remove and, indeed, may make it more difficult to identify.

I and my right hon. and hon. Friends will be voting against the Bill, however, because it has failed on three counts. First, it does not properly define the role of the Security Service. If one had any doubt about that before the Home Secretary spoke, that doubt would have been strengthened by his attempt to expound the provisions of clauses 1 and 2, which, far from indicating that the Bill was squarely based on the Maxwell Fyfe principles, or the definitions of national security as set out in 1975 by Lord Harris of Greenwich, showed that the Bill goes a great deal further than that. It also has some catch-all provisions, which will enable those in the Security Service—almost unchecked—to carry out investigations on or interferences, as they are called, with individuals and their property, which almost certainly would have fallen foul of the law in the past.

Secondly, we shall vote against the Bill because, although it purports to provide a remedy for aggrieved members of the public, it is difficult to see how that remedy will be effective. It in fact removes the redress that the individual citizen has at present, by providing a system which excludes the purview of the courts.

Thirdly, we shall vote against this measure because the Bill entirely fails to provide for effective scrutiny and parliamentary accountability, which I believe is increasingly recognised, not only in this country but in other parliamentary democracies, as appropriate for the Security Service as it is for other Government services.

Mr. Hind *rose*——

Mr. Maclennan: Because of your appeal, Mr. Speaker, for short speeches and the 10-minute rule which is about to——

Hon. Members: It is on.

Mr. Speaker: Order. It is not effective until 7 o'clock.

Mr. Maclennan: I am grateful. I would prefer not to give way, although I regret the brevity of the debate.

The Bill is a response to an historical situation of considerable gravity, which has been underlined not just by the revelations of the rogue Peter Wright, but by the more serious revelations of Cathy Massiter, Anthony Cavendish and many other instances of incompetence which have come to light since the end of the last world war. Of course it is correct to move towards putting the Security Service on a statutory footing, provided that the statute deals with the problems which have been highlighted, but plainly it does not.

[Mr. Maclennan]

The continuing practice of the Security Service over the years to scrutinise the wrong people because they belong to a class of individuals who are suspect in certain Right-wing circles and to promote from within its ranks or into its ranks highly unsuitable people—in many cases the agents of foreign powers—suggests that something radical is needed to ensure that this self-perpetuating oligarchy, only sporadically the subject of effective scrutiny, is ended.

The role of the Security Service under the Maxwell Fyfe rubric was fairly clearly set out, and departures from the role were clearly matters that required to be remedied. However, under clause 1, there must be considerable anxiety about the extent of the powers and functions of the proposed statutory service. The use in clause 1(2) of the definition of the protection of national security, and the continuation later in that clause of the description of particular threats, appear to allow the Security Service to decide that many matters not particularised also raise issues of national security; that I am anxious about. It is an open door to pursue hares which are inappropriate.

It is disturbing, too, that the wording of the Harris of Greenwich rubric is not in fact precisely reflected in clause 1. Those provisions of the Bill provide for protection against threats from espionage, terrorism and sabotage, from the activities of agents and foreign powers and from actions intended to overthrow or undermine parliamentary democracy by political, industrial or violent means. Those are three separate categories.

The Select Committee on Home Affairs was only satisfied by the Harris of Greenwich definition of regional security because those two latter categories were linked together. The Select Committee—which the Home Secretary wrongly invoked in support of the Bill—did not consider that it was satisfactory to have these as separate categories. That last category has given rise to criticisms in the past that the Security Service has too readily focused upon political, not security, issues. That the Cathy Massiter type of revelations will continue unchecked is something that must worry us.

The concept of subversion, which clause 1 appears designed to define, has been found unhelpful in other security services. It is noticeable that, in the past year, the Canadians have specifically excluded subversion from the purview of their security service. I believe that we should have taken the opportunity to do likewise in this Bill.

I found compelling the remarks of Lord Jenkins of Hillhead in an earlier debate on the matter. Speaking as a former Home Secretary, he described the inappropriateness of those who are living and moving in the fevered world of espionage, applying their minds to whether certain behaviour was subversive or simply legitimate dissent.

I doubt whether the proposals for remedying grievances are much of an improvement on the provisions of common law. They provide limited rights but are not subject to appeal to the courts. They do not seem to provide for circumstances that have been complained of: that smear campaigns have been conducted for political purposes, or that a former Prime Minister believed that MI5 had tried to undermine his Government. Such complaints will not be examined by the tribunal that will be set up and will certainly not be examined by the commissioner. Nor will complainants be given reasons for the decisions of the tribunal.

No adequate remedy is provided, and in any event it is highly unlikely that evidence will be available on which complainants could mount a case to the tribunal—certainly in the light of the linked provisions in the Official Secrets Bill, which will come before the House next week, which make it an offence for a member of the Security Service to reveal any misdeeds in the service.

The third and most important defect of the Bill is the lack of accountability. The Home Secretary's view, which he repeated today, is that to give some accountability to any body other than himself is to breach the necessary secrecy. He has spoken repeatedly of the barrier of secrecy. Those who are within that barrier include himself, the Prime Minister and a few others for specific purposes.

I take no great comfort from the proposed appointment of the commissioner. His role is much more limited than that described by the Home Secretary. It is confined to the propriety of the handling of warrants and he is not allowed to examine policy, efficiency, value for money or any of the matters that Parliament is entitled to consider.

On value for money, it is extraordinary that a service that costs the country more than £100 million per annum is accountable to the National Audit Office only through the certificate of a Minister that the money has been spent. That will not suffice. Even the financial responsibility for the service is inadequately provided for.

The gossamer-thin arguments that the Home Secretary used to disregard the evidence of what is happening in other countries show the frailty of the Government's case in general. It is possible for individuals to be chosen by the House who are responsible and perfectly capable of straddling, or going within, the barrier of secrecy. He has preferred instead to bring within the barrier of secrecy as the commissioner someone of high judicial office.

In the debate on the Queen's Speech, the Home Secretary said, in relation to a body that may be set up to scrutinise the workings of the Security Service:

> "If the body knew all, it would know that it could say little to the rest of Parliament without damaging results. If it knew little, it could say nothing with any conviction".—[*Official Report*, 23 November 1988; Vol. 142, c. 123.]

Parliament would prefer to play some part in the choice of those who are appointed to scrutinise, or to stand at the Secretary of State's shoulder, as he put it. If those great powers—they are necessary powers—are to be applied without infringing fundamental human rights and freedoms, Parliament must discharge its role more precisely by appointing a body that is accountable directly to it. We cannot simply rely upon the assertions of the Ministers that all is well.

The acceptance of that principle of Executive convenience is an abandonment of our democratic responsibilities, and that is why we shall vote against the Bill.

6.45 pm

Mr. John Wheeler (Westminster, North): I shall resist the temptation to go down the byways of the past to review the history of the service and some recent events that may apply to it. I shall concentrate on what the House must consider.

For the first time, the Security Service will be placed on a statutory basis and Parliament is invited in clause 1,

which has been carefully drafted, to define the function of the service. Clause 2 defines the role of the director-general and the line of accountablility from the person in day-to-day management of the service to the Home Secretary. That is reaffirmed as the proper form of control, and I support it. The Home Secretary and the Prime Minister are accountable to the House. They are both elected Members of Parliament, who assume that accountability by virtue of their appointment to ministerial office.

For the first time, there will be a statutory remedy for members of the public who have complaints about the service's activities against them. I welcome the Bill because it answers the anxiety that has grown in recent years about the alleged illegal activities of the service and its supposed lack of accountablility. Those allegations have followed well-publicised disclosures by former officers of the service.

There is no doubt that, in a parliamentary democracy, the House should have the opportunity to define the function of the service and to set up, as is proposed in the Bill, a procedure for investigating and remedying complaints from the public arising from its actions. Those who work for the service should clearly understand the legal basis for their activities. There should be explicit ground rules and improved procedures for accountability.

The Bill will define MI5's functions as the protection of national security, especially against the threat of espionage, terrorism and sabotage. The director-general is charged with ensuring that the service remains politically neutral.

Under the proposals, the Home Secretary will be given power to issue warrants before members of the service can enter property—something which they do not at present require. I qualify that by saying that the entry of a person on to another person's property is subject to civil law as well as, in many instances, criminal law, and both are complicated matters. An independent commissioner who is a former or serving senior judge and thus independent of the Executive—that point is important—will continually review the warrant system and report annually to the Prime Minister. His reports will be published, subject to vetting on security grounds, and the House will have the opportunity to consider those reports.

The new guidelines will follow the lines of the Interception of Communications Act 1985, which brought telephone tapping and the interception of mail by the Security Service under the law. A tribunal of up to five independent lawyers will also be appointed to consider any complaints against the service by members of the public. It will have the power to call on MI5 for relevant documentation and information. If a complaint is upheld, the tribunal can order an end to an investigation and the destruction of relevant records. Those are powerful and significant requirements.

Furthermore, compensation payments can also be granted by the tribunal, which is independent, and officers engaged in entering property without warrant authorisation may face criminal proceedings. There have been, and will continue to be, calls for a wider parliamentary role in the accountability of the service, as we have heard in the debate this afternoon. I recall that, when the Select Committee on Home Affairs carried out an inquiry into the work of special branch—which is, perhaps, the public face of the security services in some of its activities—we had great difficulty in mounting that inquiry.

One question begets another and the problem is that, before one knows where one is, one wishes to intrude into operational areas; that may put in jeopardy the interests of the nation and the very function of the service whose existence Parliament is being invited to authorise in the Bill. I do not, therefore, subscribe to the view that a special Committee of the House should be appointed or that a Select Committee—the Select Committee on Home Affairs comes to mind—should be otherwise involved in the scrutiny of the service's work.

The right hon. Member for Birmingham, Sparkbrook (Mr. Hattersley) used the example of my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary being accosted in the street and asked for a warrant at 9.45 am. The Select Committee would be in an even less favourable position if it were to be approached to authorise the grant of warrants or, worse still, to be asked to say whether the issue of that warrant should continue. The neat arrangement for the tribunal meets the legitimate concerns of members of all parties for an acceptable form of accountability.

The Select Committee on Home Affairs could look at the Estimates for the financial provision for the service, as could the Select Committee on Public Accounts, because they are a matter of public availability. The Select Committee could examine the report about the work of the tribunal and its findings, but I do not believe that it is either practical or desirable for Parliament to go beyond that.

We have heard this afternoon about the work of other democratic Parliaments and the attempts that they may have made to exercise some scrutiny over the work of their own security services. I know nothing about the details of those operations, but in the fulness of time, I may have the opportunity to examine them. However, I doubt that they could go much further than the Bill's provisions on the work of the commissioner and the tribunal. I very much doubt whether a service that is charged with the utmost secrecy to perform its functions can be made accountable operationally to a Select Committee or a committee of politicians who have other interests and other concerns as the basis of their appointment.

If the service is to remain effective and to serve the best interests of the British people, operational accountability must, strictly, arise from the director-general to the Home Secretary and, ultimately, the Prime Minister. The holders of those offices must remain accountable for their discharge on the Floor of the House of Commons. I see no way at all of avoiding those responsibilities.

6.55 pm

Mr. David Winnick (Walsall, North): There is no dispute among the Opposition about whether there should be a Security Service. It goes without saying that even if the country was not involved in combating terrorism and drugs, the necessity for such a service would remain. The dispute is whether that service should be accountable to Parliament.

When the Select Committee on Home Affairs—of which the hon. Member for Westminster, North (Mr. Wheeler) was a member—decided in 1984 to make the first ever parliamentary inquiry into the special branch of the police, the hon. Member for Bury St. Edmunds (Sir E. Griffiths), who was not a member of the Committee, said that the Committee's decision could endanger the security of this country. As I have remarked previously, we carried

[Mr. David Winnick]

out the inquiry, with some controversy, and produced a majority report and a minority report. Lo and behold, not a soul, including the hon. Member for Bury St. Edmunds, has argued that any damage was done to the national interest, although the Home Secretary at the time, the right hon. and learned Member for Richmond, Yorks (Mr. Brittan), was hardly enthusiastic that the Select Committee should look into the special branch.

During the course of proceedings, the Home Secretary made public the Home Office guidelines on special branch. That was the first time that the guidelines had been published and the Home Secretary did not deny that the Committee's decision to look into special branch was connected with the decision to go ahead in bringing that document into the public domain. The hon. Member for Westminster, North is nodding his head in agreement.

I have some knowledge of the minority report because I wrote it. Paragraph 34 of the minority report says:

"The security services were outside the terms of reference for this inquiry, but the House may well wish to consider whether the present total lack of Parliamentary scrutiny over these government agencies is really desirable and if it would not be preferable for there to be some degree of accountability to Parliament which would not endanger the safety of the realm."

I doubt whether the Government would have produced the Bill if the Security Service had not been the subject of such continued controversy and scandal, particularly in view of Wright's serious allegations that he and other officers in MI5 were involved in subversive activity against the Labour Government in the 1970s.

Of course, as I have said before, Wright may have been lying, and the only reason that he published such allegations may have been that he wanted his book to sell. The Government have certainly helped him to become a millionaire. However, if there is any truth in his allegations, the questions must arise about how someone like Wright was ever recruited into MI5. Can any Conservative Member say that Wright was wholly committed to parliamentary democracy? Because he did not like the Government of the day and considered it too Left-wing, he decided to commit treachery. What sort of person was he? Are there others like him in MI5? There is a good possibility that he is telling the truth and that others were involved and still remain in the Security Service.

There have also been disclosures from Cathy Massiter. I do not put these two people together. Wright is an out-and-out scoundrel, and, whether he is telling the truth or not, his basic loyalty to this country and to the democratic process must remain in considerable doubt, to say the least. Ms. Massiter,who was employed by MI5, clearly had the most serious reservations about what she was being asked to do. No one has claimed that she made any money out of her disclosures. I believe that she acted in an honourable manner and I am pleased that there are people whose conscience leads them to say that their work is wrong and that they should make that known. I have the highest respect for Ms. Massiter. However, under the Government's proposal, which will be debated next week, for the change of the Official Secrets Act, she would have had no legal defence that she had acted in the public interest. That must cause us much concern, and the Opposition will express that concern when the Bill is debated next week.

Clause 5 of the Bill establishes a tribunal to consider complaints against the Security Service. As the Home Secretary pointed out, that is very much along the lines of what was agreed in the Interception of Communications Act 1985 which also raised considerable doubts among Opposition Members both in Committee and on the Floor of the House. I do not believe that the provision in the Bill is an improvement upon the complaints procedure in that Act.

We can be assured that many complainants who apply to the Security Service tribunal will not be in a position to argue their case. Most people will not even know whether they are the subject of investigation by MI5, but even those who believe that they have a case and take it to the tribunal are most unlikely to be allowed to appear in person or —more important—to be legally represented. It will not be too difficult for the Security Service to make out a case that the national interest required such and such a person to be targeted. The tribunal will then conclude that in all the circumstances the Security Service acted in the proper way.

Our crucial concern is not of course, that the Security Service pursues spies or people who genuinely endanger the security of the country. It is right and proper that it should do that. That is what our Security Service should be all about. What worries us is that people engaged in perfectly legitimate political activities are targeted by the Security Service. That is why Cathy Massiter's disclosures are so worrying. She told us that the leaders of the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament were spied upon and that, when the editor of CND's journal resigned over an internal difficulty of the kind that all organisations have, he was approached by members of the security services or special branch who were interested in all kinds of tittle-tattle; they wanted to know who had slept with whom and all about people's private lives. What has that to do with the security of the country?

Ministers have told us repeatedly that it is perfectly legitimate to campaign for nuclear disarmament. It does not matter how strongly the Government oppose nuclear disarmament; those involved in the campaign should not be spied upon or have their private lives pried into by people paid by the taxpayer who are supposed to be defending the interests of the state. Opposition Members suspect that CND was targeted because the then Secretary of State for Defence gave direct orders to MI5 to target it.

Mr. Foot: Disgraceful.

Mr. Winnick: As my right hon. Friend says, it was disgraceful.

Take the National Council for Civil Liberties. Cathy Massiter told us that anyone who was on the national executive of that organisation or who was an active member at branch level was placed on permanent record and that routine inquiries were established to identify such people, with police co-operation being sought. Just imagine that.

Why was it decided to target my hon. Friend the Member for Peckham (Ms. Harman), who was then the legal officer of the National Council for Civil Liberties, and Patricia Hewitt, who was its general secretary and who now works in the office of my right hon. Friend the Leader of the Opposition?

Mr. Allason: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Winnick: I am afraid that I cannot, because of the time limit.

Mr. Allason *rose*——

Ms. Diane Abbott (Hackney, North and Stoke Newington): He knows the answer.

Mr. Winnick: If he knows the answer, he can tell us in his own time. No doubt the House will be interested to hear his explanation.

I am pleased that my hon. Friend the Member for Peckham and Patricia Hewitt are bringing their case before the European Court of Human Rights and that it has been decided that there is a case for the British Government to answer. If those two were targeted, the question inevitably arises how many other people, perhaps less prominent, wer the subject of MI5 investigations or of special branch but did not find out.

Mr. Allason: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Winnick: Perhaps you, Madam Deputy Speaker, will tell me how much time I have left.

Madam Deputy Speaker (Miss Betty Boothroyd): The hon. Gentleman has six minutes.

Mr. Winnick: Then I give way to the hon. Member for Torbay (Mr. Allason).

Mr. Allason: The hon. Gentleman asked why members of the National Council for Civil Liberties should historically be targeted by the security services. The answer is quite simple. Many years ago, the NCCL was defined as a proscribed organisation by the Labour party because it was considered to be a Communist front, and the Communist party of Great Britain has always been the subject of surveillance by the Security Service.

Mr. Winnick: I am grateful for that explanation. I have never had an explanation from the Government. I wonder whether the explanation that the hon. Gentleman gave will be the one given by the Government at the European Court of Human Rights.

Mr. Allason: The NCCL was proscribed by the Labour party.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: We shall research it and find out.

Mr. Winnick: We have no need to research it; I know the answer. It is perfectly true that, rightly or wrongly, the NCCL was proscribed by the Labour party—at a time when, in all honesty, the Communist party had too much influence in the organisation. I concede that. But those events took place about 25 or 30 years ago. Can MI5 really say that matters have not changed and that my hon. Friend the Member for Peckham and Patricia Hewitt, who are as committed to parliamentary democracy and its defence as any hon. Member, should be targeted because there was too much Communist influence on the organisation 25 or 30 years ago? No one—not even the Government—could claim that the NCCL is a Communist front organisation now or has been for 20 years. The Communist party probably has no more than 4,000 or 5,000 members now, so it is hardly in a position to have front organisations. That is more a matter for the Conservative party.

No doubt if the Security Service was made accountable to Parliament, the Select Committee—presumably the Select Committee on Home Affairs—would ask the director-general the questions that I have asked. It would not be appropriate to ask about operational matters that would genuinely endanger the security of the country, and we did not ask any such questions when we carried out an inquiry into special branch.

But the broader questions are also very important, and in that respect I come to the point made by the hon. Member for Thanet, South (Mr. Aitken). Other Western countries, no less democratic than ours—the United States, Canada and Australia—have concluded that their security services must be made accountable to Parliament. Why should we be different? Perhaps there would be a case if it could be argued that our Security Service had never been the subject of scandal and if we had never had any Wrights; but even leaving aside the Soviet spies and all the rest of it, our Security Service has been particularly scandal prone. Canada, Australia and the United States have decided to make their security services accountable to Parliament, and we have even more reason to do that.

The present definition of subversion is far too wide. I prefer the definition agreed to before the one decided upon by Lord Harris. Lord Denning's definition of subversive seems perfectly all right to me:

"one who would overthrow or contemplate the overthrow of government by unlawful means."

That definition would give the security services a far more narrow remit and less scope to dabble in matters that do not concern them.

Britain's security services will remain the subject of controversy as long as parliamentary accountability is lacking. The Bill will not change the position. When the Bill becomes an Act, as it obviously will, Opposition Members will still have Adjournment debates, ten-minute Bills, and all that we are entitled to do. We shall continue to do all that, because we believe that, as in other western democracies, it is essential for those who carry out the sort of work that I have been describing—the broad range of which I do not question—to be subject to parliamentary accountability. We shall continue to press that point at every opportunity.

7.10 pm

Mr. Richard Shepherd (Aldridge-Brownhills): The Government are right to want to legislate, or rather, to put the security services on a statutory basis. Whether they are going about it in the right way I shall come to, but we recognise the pressures that are upon them to do just that.

When Sir John Donaldson, then a High Court judge, now Lord Donaldson, said that we would be naive to suppose that burglary and bugging do not take place, a man sworn to uphold the rule of law has denied it in the courts of Britain. That is remarkable.

But the Government are confronted with something more pressing than that. As has been pointed out a couple of times today, we had two cases before the European Court of Human Rights in which it was argued that it is admissible to take a complaint to that court on the basis that we no longer have the judicial remedies to protect the freedoms and liberties of our own citizens.

It is shocking that the United Kingdom, an early signatory to basic rights and freedoms and recognitions of

[Mr. Richard Shepherd]

who we are as a people, is now almost arraigned in front of the European Court defending our processes and practices.

The Bill is a minimalist attempt to meet the contentions before that court. We have seen it happen before, in what *The Times* called an insult, in the Interception of Communications Act. That too was minimalist, and one day that too will come before the European Court and we shall be found wanting.

My fear is that the Government, by not taking a direct and central grasp of the real issues that affect the relationship of the security services to a democracy, will also, in time, find that they are again in front of the European Court.

I was interested to hear that my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary had had his official servants canvass the world to see what other procedures exist. I noticed how, within a couple of minutes, he was able to dispense with those, roll his hands and say, "Well done, we're pretty well done here."

I shall not follow the line of the American experience, but let us take the Canadian one. One difficulty that has always confronted Parliament is that we are unique in having a parliamentary democracy with ministerial responsibility. Therefore, let us take a country which has just such a system, Canada.

Canada had isolated incidents that sadly turned out to be not so isolated when a Royal Canadian mounted policeman, then responsible for his country's security services, unfortunately bombed someone's house. The Government said that those were isolated incidents, but they turned out not to be and the McDonald Commission was set up. Its report was telling. It was called "Freedom and Security under the Law". The concepts are there.

Did we hear my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary of the United Kingdom say today that freedom as a concept must be weighed with security? No, we did not. That is what has been worrying me about my right hon. Friend's proposal. He is not weighing the central contentions for the House and for our society. After all, what is the Security Service for? It is to defend our liberal democracy. What is our liberal democracy? It is freedom of speech. It is also freedom to dissent. Let us never forget that. It is an important right that we try to exercise when we are assembled in the House. That is the function of the security services.

When we weigh up the right organisation and the right arrangements to embrace a necessary protector, that is subordinate to the needs of us, as citizens, and to the House of Commons as an expression of what the citizens wish. That is one thing that the Bill does not do.

Let me look at one definition. The hon. Member for Caithness and Sutherland (Mr. Maclennan) rightly drew our attention to clause 1(2). There is an elision here from what the previous Home Secretary said to the Select Committee on Home Affairs. Two branches, or limbs—as I think he called them—are not there in that definition. I do not propose to go over it other than to take from the Canadian Security and Intelligence Service Bill, with which the Home Secretary will be familiar, the definition of

"threats to the security of Canada."

For that let us read

"threats to the security of the United Kingdom."

That means our freedom. That is what we are defending.

The Bill deals with the understandable threats of espionage and treachery. Then it comes to the difficult area of what constitutes subversion. Sub-paragraph *(d)* defines it thus:

"activities directed toward undermining by covert unlawful acts"—

note the insertion of "unlawful acts"—

"or directly toward or intended ultimately to lead to the destruction or overthrow by violence of, the constitutionally established system of government in Canada".

There is a final important caveat. The passage goes on:

"but does not include lawful advocacy, protest or dissent, unless carried on in conjunction with any of the activities referred to in paragraphs *(a)* to *(d)*"—

(d) being the one that I have just quoted. That is a proper definition of the purpose of the Security Service.

When my right hon. Friend and the Government come to weigh those matters in Committee I ask them to look in a more friendly manner on the necessary balances. Having listened to my hon. Friend the Member for Somerton and Frome (Mr. Boscawen), previously a distinguished Whip, I cannot imagine that the House of Commons to which I am a party, can be so subservient as to say that there are things that we must not know or should not look at. The McDonald Commission, in 1,000 pages, asserted vigorously the right to know—the right even of the Opposition to know—what the security services are getting up to, because they touch on our freedoms in the most intimate way. They touch on our privacies and our rights.

How can we be self-respecting if we say, "I must shield myself on the basis of a concept that there are only two people in Britain who must know"? The truth of the matter is that we know that they do not know. The experience of the noble Baron Armstrong in Australia was riveting because we knew what he did not know. So much did he not know that he had to have an instruction from the previous Attorney-General, the subsequent Lord Chancellor, to retract his evidence.

The Bill confirms arrangements that a deferential House has accepted in the past. I notice that the focus for the Bill is the responsibility of the Home Secretary again. Canada and Australia used the Solicitor-General. I just add, in the spirit of Christmas goodwill, that perhaps that responsibility should fall to the Solicitor-General, who can give the time, interest and direction to those matters.

At the end of the day the balance has to be right and that requires—I argue the Canadian course—an independent review committee and an inspector-general with warrants judicially issued and reviewed throughout, and a report to Parliament. That independent review committee of Privy Councillors is presently outside Parliament. That comes up for review next year, five years after it was introduced. I have heard commissioners say, first, that the system works and, secondly, that they see no reason why those nominated Privy Councillors should not be found from within the body of the House of Commons in Canada. We should respect the experience of our cousins, who come from our own institutions and who have pioneered a way better than we have today.

7.18 pm

Ms. Diane Abbott (Hackney, North and Stoke Newington): The Secretary of State described the Bill as a big step forward for the Security Service. Having read the

Bill and listened carefully to his remarks, I would argue that rather than a big step forward it is something of a sideways shuffle.

I have read the Bill carefully. Since it comes from a Government who pride themselves on cutting legislation to a minimum, the question that comes to someone such as me, unversed in security matters, is, what is it for? The Bill provides for no improvements in the effectiveness, efficiency or management of the service. Above all, it says nothing about parliamentary oversight. Who, among Conservative Members, can seriously say that there is no need for improvement in the management and efficiency of the security services? To show the need for improvement, I have only to reel off the names of past scandals such as those involving Maclean, Burgess, Philby and Blunt. I remind Conservative Members, that the case of Blunt was kept secret from the Government and the House for 15 years.

The recurrent history of appalling scandals of KGB infiltration of the service ought to make responsible Members consider the need for improvements in management and efficiency. In addition, one senses from reading a number of different accounts that at any given time there will be elements in the service who do not consider themselves accountable to the Government. One does not have to believe a fraction of what Wright had to say, either to Chapman Pincher or in the book, against which an unsuccessful prosecution was brought in Australia, to know that there were elements, even if only half a dozen people, who did not consider themselves accountable to Wilson's Government. How could a Security Service that was serious about being accountable to the Government of the day keep the details of the Hollis investigation from the Prime Minister for as long as it did?

There have been recurrent scandals, and a lack of a sense throughout the service of being accountable to the Government rather than a notional accountability to the Crown. There is an anti-Labour theme running through the activities of some of the members of the security services. When Sir John Hunt, the Cabinet Secretary, was asked to examine the Security Service's activities, one of his suggestions was that the recruitment system needed to be reformed to prevent anti-Labour factions from forming. Do we know what reforms were carried out or how effective they were? Leonard McCoy, an ex-deputy head of the CIA, when interviewed, said that, when briefed by James Angleton, head of CIA, he was told that Harold Wilson was a Soviet Agent. I am not a 100 per cent. unreconstructed admirer of Harold Wilson, but it is an extraordinary way to describe a sturdy west Yorkshire patriot.

How can one take the activities and the loyalty of the security services seriously when remarks such as that come from foreign security agents that work hand in glove with them?

I shall touch lightly on the question of madness in the security services. Sir Martin Furnival, an ex-head of MI5, said, and he should know, that possibly four or five years in counter-espionage is too long because it causes insanity. I shall not pursue the matter further.

The hon. Member for Thanet, South (Mr. Aitken) talked about the bad drafting of the Bill. That is cruel to the civil servants in the Box. I am obliged, as an ex-Home Office administration trainee, to stand up for my one-time colleagues and remind hon. Members that drafting can only be as clear and elegant as the political intentions behind the legislation. The Opposition believe that the political intentions behind the legislation are neither clear, elegant nor coherent. It will not do for hon. Members to criticise hard-working, underpaid members of the Home Office by talking about poor drafting.

The drafting, including that of clause 1(2), is quite extraordinary. It says:

"The function of the Service shall be . . .protection against threats from espionage, terrorism and sabotage from the activities of agents of foreign powers".

That is fine. However, it goes on to refer subjectively to undermining parliamentary democracy

"by political, industrial or violent means."

Some Opposition Members might say that by abolishing tiers of local government the Government are seriously undermining our system of democracy.

The clause continues by saying that the function of the service is

"to safeguard the economic well-being of the United Kingdom against threats posed by the actions or intentions of persons outside the British Islands."

What does that mean? Is the Security Service licensed to bug and burgle innocent New York stockbrokers who may be engaged in speculation against our short-term economic interest? The drafting is extraordinary, but I blame the politicians.

Schedule 1, which deal with the working of the tribunal, is equally strange. Paragraph 2(4) contains a circular argument. The service can investigate someone because he or she is part

"of a category of persons regarded by the Service as requiring investigation".

Under paragraph 2(4) that is acceptable to the tribunal. There is no provision for an appeal to find out what categories of person the service deems to be worthy of investigation. It is as if the service is judge and jury. For example, if the service found a category such as ex-general secretaries of the National Council for Civil Liberties worthy of investigation, that would be acceptable under the terms of the schedule. Therefore, as I have said, the drafting is extraordinary, but I blame the politicians.

There has been much talk by Conservative Members about what Labour Governments did or did not do when they had the chance. As somebody who was not born when some of those Labour Governments were in power, I cannot take seriously Conservative Members' claim that what Labour Governments did not do is an infallible guide to what the Government should do.

The Bill and speeches made by Conservative Members refer to fears about the undermining of parliamentary democracy. I am sure that I speak for all my right hon. and hon. Friends when I say that we all take that seriously. What more serious threat is there to the respect and esteem in which parliamentary democracy is held than for the Government to say that Members of Parliament cannot be trusted with scrutiny or oversight of the Security Service? That has been requested by three ex-directors of the Security Service and is found in every English-speaking democracy. The Secretary of State has undermined parliamentary democracy by saying that elected Members of Parliament, the heart of our parliamentary system, cannot be trusted with what every other English-speaking democracy has. That is an unfounded smear. The Bill represents no great leap forward but a crab-like shuffle sideways. I hope that, even at this late stage, the Government will reconsider.

7.28 pm

Mr. Ivan Lawrence (Burton): I am pleased that the hon. Member for Hackney, North and Stoke Newington (Ms. Abbott) said that what Labour Governments have not done should not be a guide to what this Government should do. One thing is clear—the previous Labour Government did nothing about secrecy or the Security Service.

We enjoy with great amusement and pleasure the books and films about spies. Some of them are real and some are fictional. This has been a light-hearted debate. I remember Art Buchwald saying that the best thing that we could do would be to give the Russians our secrets because that would put them three years behind.

But the security of the state and the lives of the people who protect us in the Security Service are precious and important for the existence of the nation. And so we must pay proper regard to the seriousness of the matter that we are discussing.

I believe that most people, including even, the hon. Member for Walsall, North (Mr. Winnick), accept that there must be secrets and that they should remain secret. Most people accept that those who work in the Secret Service should be trusted to keep these secrets, although I do not think that the hon. Member for Walsall, North necessarily agrees with that. However, people are concerned that only things that should necessarily be secret should remain so. Many people believe that criminal sanctions should apply only in cases for which they are absolutely necessary.

Many believe that if the Security Service does wrong there should be redress and that that redress will come only if there are visible signs of accountability. There have not been such signs, and it was to remedy that that the Government brought forward this Bill which, in principle, we should all support.

There is argument about how this acceptability should be achieved. We can all agree that putting the Secret Service on a statutory basis for the first time is thoroughly good. We can all agree that its functions should be set out to protect national security, not political parties. They should be so set out to protect us against espionage, terrorism, and sabotage, and against the undermining of parliamentary democracy. Some of us also think that the state should be protected against economic subversion, although as has been pointed out, the wording in clause 1(2) is somewhat mysterious.

Most of us can agree that there should be a director-general, as there now is, with statutory requirements that he must follow, that information will be available only for certain limited purposes, and that once they have been fulfilled, that information should be destroyed. So there is a great deal of the Bill about which we must all agree—but there is disagreement about the instruments for achieving accountability.

Most Conservative Members do not believe that a parliamentary Select Committee is the best way of achieving accountability, mainly because we are all intensely party-political and adversarial. That is the strength of this place, but we all know that the best of us are liable, in moments of over-enthusiasm and of political bias, to make misjudgments which can be serious if peoples' lives are at stake. I do not want to embarrass any hon. Member, but we all know of many occasions in the past few months alone—let alone in the rather longer time that some of us have been here—when some hon. Members have made asses of themselves although, in the normal way, they are the most upright, sensible and balanced colleagues. This happens because we sometimes become detached by our political and adversarial status——

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett: Does the hon. and learned Gentleman accept that Ministers are Members of Parliament? Surely, if they can be trusted with secrets, when they are out of office they can also be trusted with them.

Mr. Lawrence: Yes, the hon. Gentleman is quite right. He will notice that in the Bill which will be published next week the Government propose to take away ministerial certificates which allowed Ministers to say that they were the best judges of what constituted a secret. The Government propose to give that decision to juries. So now, the fact that people—genuinely or otherwise—might sometimes think that a Minister was biased in his assessment of what a secret was, has been recognised and the decision on that will be left to an unpolitical, independent, objective and unbiased body of people—the jury.

Mr. Patrick Thompson (Norwich, North): Does my hon. and learned Friend agree that Ministers have Departments with large numbers of civil servans who can advise them in a considered way, whereas Members of Parliament, who are busy and rushed, have little support?

Mr. Lawrence: I accept that excellent point in support of my argument.

The Government propose an independent and objective structure for accountability. It is evident from the Bill that there are a number of ways in which people will be protected—ordinary people and people in the Security Service. The operation is under the control of a director-general, who is appointed by the Secretary of State who, usually, if not always, and whichever party is in power, has a general sense of balance and reliability when he appoints important people to important positions. The Secretary of State will have the power to authorise warrants for obtaining information from private property.

A commissioner will review the Secretary of State's use of his warrant power—that is new. The commissioner is a senior judge, past or present. He has a duty to be supplied with all documents and information that he thinks necessary. He is required to make an annual report to the Prime Minister which will be laid before Parliament. So the public and Security Service personnel will be protected at a series of stages.

Next, there is a tribunal to consider complaints about activities of the Security Service. If, in the past, CND or the NCCL or anyone else have been unfairly supervised and have had reason for complaint, there is now a structure to deal with that—a tribunal composed of the most wonderful people in our society: four or five lawyers, utterly independent, not politically biased, not people who CND might say had opposite political persuasions. They will decide whether the complaint is valid, they will make the necessary inquiry and they will cause the records to be destroyed and award compensation if necessary.

So, for the first time, we have a whole ramp of protections—from the director-general and the Secretary of State to the staff counsellor, who has existed for some

time and to whom the discontented service man, or woman, can go. There are also the commissioner and the tribunal, and if all that protection and accountability are insufficient, there is always the Member of Parliament. In all this discussion, people have lost sight of the fact that we in this House have direct access to Cabinet Ministers and, in important cases, to the Prime Minister. If secret agents had legitimate complaints to make——

Mr. Campbell-Savours: They cannot come to us.

Mr. Lawrence: They could, and they could be authorised to release their information to a Cabinet Minister, to the Prime Minister or even to us. They could not be stopped from doing that.

Some of this ramp of protections never existed before; most have now been put into place in this Bill; and they are all there for the purpose that concerns us all—accountability.

There may be problems in the legislation—of definition and of scope. They can be sorted out as the Bill goes through Parliament, as most of these problems usually are. There is also the practical problem of unbalanced people. I represent a constituency with a lower proportion of unbalanced people than any other in the country—if that were not so, I would not have been voted into this place as its Member of Parliament. But there are still some people who believe that the Security Service spies on them through their television sets and who think that the noises they hear at night are specially directed at them by the Service. Sometimes they think that the electric currents are directed against them. This is a psychiatric illness, for which the only remedy is to suggest to such people that they wear wellington boots around the house so that the currents will not be conducted through them and cause them any disturbance. All those nuts will have access to the tribunal. The American figures show, I believe, that 30 per cent. of complaints fall into that category.

It is beyond denial that the Bill will provide better protection for state servants who feel that wrong is being done, and for people who are wronged by the secret service. It is not perfect—no legislation ever is, but it will——

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. I am sure that the hon. and learned Gentleman is reaching the end of his remarks.

Mr. Lawrence: I am, Madam Deputy Speaker. I am reaching my last two or three sentences, though I did have to give way to one or two interventions.

The Bill will help to strengthen public confidence in a way that a political all-party committee of the House would not. It is because public confidence is so important to us all that I support the Bill.

7.40 pm

Mr. D. N. Campbell-Savours (Workington): I cannot join the hon. and learned Member for Burton (Mr. Lawrence) who, in not expressing a vote of confidence in other right hon. and hon. Members, felt that they are incapable of maintaining the integrity of information divulged in the secret proceedings of a committee. However, I join the hon. Member for Aldridge-Brownhills (Mr. Shepherd) in supporting in principle a Bill that places the security service on a statutory footing.

I confess that when the Bill was published, I thought it likely that I would support it in the Division Lobbies, and I stated as much on a television programme. However, the more I read of the Bill's detail, the more I realised that the absence of parliamentary accountability is a fatal flaw. I drew that conclusion after my visit to Washington during the summer, when I was able to discuss the matter with Mr. Thomas Latimer, staff director of the congressional select committee on intelligence, and to discuss that committee's operations with certain Members of Congress who had business with the committee—if I may put it that way.

The general view expressed to me was that the system worked. One of the reasons why it does not leak is that its members are required to sign a complex document that is exactly the same as that which members of the American security services sign. Committee Members feel bound by that document, and they are people whom Congress feels it can trust.

My own proposals for parliamentary scrutiny can be found in appendix 6 of the first report from the Select Committee of Privileges 1986-87, when it carried out its inquiry into the Zircon affair. During the course of its proceedings, members of the Select Committee were asked to make their own submissions. I made one based on establishing a scrutiny committee that, in its early days or years, would have special responsibility for three areas of activity. They are, first, matters such as the Zircon project, which are reported to the Chairman of the Public Accounts Committee in confidence but are not referred to the PAC's general membership. In making such a reference to the Chairman only, parliamentary accountability is currently provided for—but I believe that that duty should be removed from the PAC Chairman and transferred to the committee that I thought should be established.

The second area is the sums of money shown under defence Votes as applying to areas of expenditure to which they are not in fact allocated; that is to say, laundered money within the defence budget that does not show up precisely under the specified project definition. That area of expenditure was drawn to my attention by the minutes of two previous PAC hearings in, I believe, 1947 and 1963. Clearly, there are laundered areas of expenditure—to which I do not object, if that is the way it must be done to hide expenditure that otherwise would fall under the secret Vote.

The third area of expenditure that could be subject to the proposed committee's scrutiny is the secret Vote itself, which I understand now totals about £100 million annually. So there are three areas that, in the proposed committee's early years, could be under scrutiny without risking too much and, if I am honest about it, without unsettling people in the Security Service and perhaps even in the Government.

Those three areas could have come under scrutiny in order to build within the Security Service and the Department, and among Ministers, confidence in the fact that parliamentary accountability can work. However, there has been no response by the Government to that proposal. I have asked Ministers whether they are prepared to take on board the principle behind my proposals, but to date there has been no positive response. Financial accountability is the way in to scrutiny of the security services. That scrutiny can be undertaken only once that first hurdle has been cleared.

I refer next to subversion, and draw attention to conflicting statements that right hon. and hon. Members may wish to consider. The first concerns the interpretation

[Mr. D. N. Campbell-Savours]

of subversion by the Prime Minister when she announced new vetting procedures in 1985. Referring to her own belief of what constitutes subversion, she spoke of an individual who

"is or has been a Member of the Communist Party or a fascist organisation or of a subversive group, or is or has recently been sympathetic to or associated with members or sympathisers of such organisations or groups in such a way as to raise reasonable doubt about his or her reliability, or people who are susceptible to pressure from such organisations or groups."

I believe that that is the secret interpretation of what constitutes subversion.

That belief is reinforced by a letter that was sent to my hon. Friend the Member for Kingston upon Hull, East (Mr. Prescott), and quoted in the latest book by Richard Norton-Taylor, who researched this subject area in depth. The then Home Secretary, the right hon. and learned Member for Richmond, Yorks (Mr. Brittan), wrote to him that special branches are not interested in trade unionists "as such", but

"only in such activities of individuals within trade unions (as within any other group or section in society) as are relevant to the tasks laid upon them by the guidelines."

The right hon. and learned Gentleman acknowledged:

"The definition"

of subversion

"is not limited to possible acts of a criminal nature. In an open society such as ours it is all too easy to use tactics which are not themselves unlawful for subversive ends . . . Those who are entrusted with safeguarding our democratic institutions from subversive attack must not be prevented from looking into the activities of those whose real aim it to harm our democracy but who, for tactical or other reasons, choose to keep (either in the long or the short term) within the letter of the law in what they do."

Also, in a letter to my hon. Friend the Member for Livingston (Mr. Cook), the right hon. and learned Gentleman's predecessor as Home Secretary, now Viscount Whitelaw, wrote:

"The preservation of public order may require information to be kept on individuals who are active in a political movement, not because of the views they hold, but because the activities of the group could be such as to encourage public disorder."

Those are two different interpretations of subversion.

If one adds to them the interpretation given by the present Home Secretary when addressing the House this afternoon, there are three. I submit that the interpretation that will be applied is that of the Prime Minister. That will sow confusion in the minds of the public. In my view, that is the intention, because through confusion the Government will secure what they want—and that is, no change.

7.49 pm

Mr. Rupert Allason (Torbay): Although by the Home Secretary's admission, the Bill is some 79 years late, I welcome it enormously. I should like, however, to know the Government's motiviation. Is it the impending judgment in the European Court? Alternatively, is it the controversy earlier this year relating to the royal prerogative? Since its inception in 1909, members of the Security Service have been told that their work is covered not by statute but by the royal prerogative, but earlier this year that plank was well and truly demolished legally. One of the Bill's advantages is that it will give a boost to morale in the Security Service, which for years has in effect been working without strict legal backing.

Although a good deal of both optimism and pessimism has been expressed here today, we have not heard much realism. I want to examine a little of the background to the secrecy of the Security Service. The service has not always been cloaked in secrecy. Before the war Colonel Edward Hinchley-Cooke was a regular figure in the media as the representative of the service, and after the war Jim Skardon would give evidence on its behalf without having to be described as witness A, B, or C. Similarly, in the early 1950s the director-general of the Security Service, Sir Percy Sillitoe, was given official permission to write his memoirs.

I do not want to get involved in the business of accountability; I have never believed that the Security Service has been truly accountable to the House. I would, however, like to congratulate the Home Secretary on constructing a bridge over the barrier of secrecy. Last year he told me that it was impossible to bridge. I gave him various ideas then about the introduction of two people whom I described as "non-executive directors" who could be involved in the work of the Security Service, on its directorate, and at the same time could write a report each year that could be supplied to the Home Secretary and the Prime Minister. I very much regret that instead of two non-executive directors we appear to be getting just one commissioner, but I hope that that omission will be rectified in Committee.

From whom, though, is any oversight committee to hear evidence? If the suggestions that have been made today are followed, evidence will be heard from the director-general, but I feel that that suggestion is fatally flawed, because experience tells us that the word of individual directors-general simply cannot be relied on. Let me cite two examples.

In 1949 Klaus Fuchs was arrested in an espionage case. At the time the director-general of the Security Service was prevailed upon by senior officers to lie to the Prime Minister, because it was believed that if it was revealed that there had been a major blunder and that Fuchs could have been arrested in 1944 or 1945, the morale of the service would be undermined. That is a clear example of the Prime Minister being misled. I might add that the director-general at that time had severe reservations about what happened.

Another much later case is on the public record. It is one of the most disgraceful documents to be publicly available, and was written by the Security Service. I refer to the White Paper on Burgess and Maclean. I urge hon. Members to read it if they believe that advice from the Security Service can always be relied on. It details no fewer than 17 major instances of deception.

Let me explain why I feel that two commissioners are needed. I have described how reports from the director-general cannot always be relied upon, and I do not believe that we can necessarily rely on reports from a single commissioner working alone. Lord Denning, for instance, was taken for a ride by the Security Service. That was the view of many senior officers at the time. A little pantomime was prepared—a completely bogus operation—for him to witness, which he describes in the report in glowing detail. That is another example of a single person being duped by the Security Service.

What about the judicial qualification suggested in clause 4(1)? While I believe that it is a good old-fashioned

British tradition to rely on a judge in such matters, I am not as sanguine as that, or as confident in judges. I would much rather have two commissioners, and I would not restrict their qualification to the law—with the greatest respect to hon. and learned Members on both sides of the House.

I should like the role of commissioner to be greatly widened. It seems to me from reading the Bill that that role will be limited to dealing with the supervision of warrants and with complaints brought by the tribunal. I should like to return to the idea of two non-executive directors who would be involved not in operational matters but certainly in matters of policy judgment, and I hope that that suggestion will be considered in Committee.

The Bill says nothing about what could go into the annual report of the commissioner or commissioners. We know from our experience of the Interception of Communications Act 1985 that the reports by the commissioner under the Act supply less information than we had before. I should like certain detailed questions to be answered on an annual basis in the report. Again, that could be considered in Committee.

There is, for example, the marvellous euphemism "interference with property". I think that it should be a statutory responsibility of the commissioner to mention in his report every year exactly how many warrants have been issued. I do not think that the disclosure of that detail would necessarily undermine operational prowess. It would, however, be of great reassurance to the public to know that there will be rather more in the report than the view across Gower street and the Euston road.

Let me now deal with the Security Service itself. Many reforms have been introduced by Sir Antony Duff in the wake of the Bettaney affair. I remind hon Members who are not aware of quite how appalling that case was that this was a senior Security Service officer operating in the most senior branch of the service, who was promoted although he had two criminal convictions for deception —having also been convicted of drunkenness—and who consumed a bottle of whisky a day. I urge hon. Members to read the Security Commission report on that, because it is utterly damning.

The Security Commission has often been mentioned as having some kind of oversight role, yet within the Security Service it has been suggested that the commission is nothing more than a stable-locking operation. I suggest that anyone who does not agree with that reads the Security Commission report on Michael Bettaney, which illustrates one of the dilemmas placed before the commission. The report contains the statement that Bettaney's erratic behaviour drew attention to him and he was therefore denounced by colleagues, and that that was how the investigation was pursued. What seems odd about that is that we now know in the light of subsequent events that it was Oleg Gordievsky in the Soviet embassy, the KGB resident in London, who tipped off the security authorities to the existence of a traitor in their midst.

That prompts the following question: did the Security Commission lie when it stated that Bettaney's investigation had been initiated as a consequence of the diligence and vigilance of his colleagues? Alternatively, were they lied to, with the best of motives, because the Security Service wished to protect a source? That is a very difficult operational dilemma, but again it calls into question the system of reporting and the difficulties of oversight.

The United States has recently been subjected to the Iran-Contra scandal. What is so odd about that incident is that, although the law, as supplied by the Senate, was broken, there were no penalties for Oliver North or for John Poindexter. I hope that in Committee penalties will be incorporated in the Bill.

I warmly welcome the Bill. At long last it provides the Security Service with a legal status. It provides for the appointment of a commissioner, which I welcome, although I hope that in Committee we can add a second commissioner. The Bill provides for the creation of a tribunal, which is also warmly to be welcomed. Therefore, I urge the House to give the Bill a Second Reading.

8 pm

Mr. Tony Worthington (Clydebank and Milngavie): I cannot, as did the hon. Member for Torbay (Mr. Allason), claim to have immersed myself in this subject for many years. I have to consider it in a very simple way. According to the Bill, the purpose of the Security Service is to protect parliamentary democracy. However, the Security Service has a unique power with which to undermine parliamentary democracy. We have to ask ourselves whether the Bill—which hon. Members have welcomed in principle, if not for its content—furthers parliamentary democracy. The answer to that question must be that it does not do so.

Because of its limited powers, the Bill asks us to trust the Government. That request ought not to be made. We should not be asked to trust any Government at any time in any parliamentary democracy, nor should we be obliged to trust any Government. We should be able to ask the Government to tell us what they are doing and to spell out their policies, and then we should be able to subject their policies to scrutiny. The Bill makes no provision for such scrutiny.

In recent years a litany of names, associated with the Security Service, have passed on confidential information. Bettaney has just been mentioned. Ponting, Tisdall, Stalker, Massiter, Wright and Campbell also revealed confidential information. The Government behaved badly in public in those cases, yet they ask us to trust them in private. That is extremely difficult to do.

A Select Committee of senior parliamentarians should be set up to scrutinise the work of Government. To put it in psychological terms, there is a grave risk that both politics and the Security Service attract people with authoritarian personalities—those who say, "I know best," and who also say, "National security equals party interest equals my interest." For that reason an outside influence needs to be brought to bear upon such personalities, whether they are in the Security Service or at the top of the parliamentary world. There needs to be a countervailing force—a fresh wind or a fresh breeze—not to authorise the signing of warrants at 9.45 am but to examine budgets and the range of activities that are being pursued by the Security Service.

Conservative Members will have gathered that the clause in the Bill that provides that no action shall be taken to further party political interests is greeted with hollow laughter on these Benches. In recent years, organisations on the Left—trade unions, CND and other organisations that have sought to scrutinise Government policy—have been subjected, on flimsy grounds, to far too many

[Mr. Tony Worthington]

inquiries by the Security Service. The Opposition could point to many issues where capitalist activities have undermined parliamentary democracy.

The Bill provides that a person can complain to the commissioner about the fact that he is under investigation. The commissioner can then investigate whether there are reasonable grounds for suspecting that that person belongs to a particular organisation. However, the commissioner cannot investigate whether there are reasonable grounds for suspecting that organisation.

We have to return to what was said by Harold Acton: that absolute power corrupts. That is the safest axiom to adopt. Any inwardly turned organisation becomes sloppy, corrupt and maligned unless questions are asked about it by independent observers. Any inwardly turned organisation—whether it be the Security Service, a professional organisation or a commercial firm—eventually becomes sloppy, corrupt and maligned. As great power is vested in the Security Service, it is particularly important that there should be independent scrutiny.

I am reminded not just of what Harold Acton said but of what Robert Michels said about the iron law of oligarchy—that, even in an organisation with democratic goals, power is concentrated at the top. People do not go to work each day saying to themselves, "I am pursuing the goal of national security. I am a missionary for national security." They construct ideas about national security and interpret it. That can lead to an inwardly turned, hierarchical organisation. Such people easily get out of control.

That seems to have occurred most recently over phone tapping. There have been well-documented reports about it. There were reports in *The Observer* earlier this year about the tapping of the phones of 30,000 individuals and organisations. The number of British Telecom engineers was reported to have more than doubled. Lord Justice Lloyd may have investigated authorised warrants, but there has been no investigation of unauthorised warrants.

The Bill contains a strange expression. It provides that investigation will not be unlawful if the Home Secretary has signed a warrant. It does not refer to an investigation being lawful if he has not signed a warrant. The result will be that certain people will believe that they are beyond scrutiny. Reference has been made to other democratic nations—Canada, Australia and the United States—which have realised that scrutiny of their secret services is inadequate. We should see this Bill for what it would be if it were introduced by any other nation. We should say that the Bill is inadequate. Even if it were to be introduced by South Africa, the Soviet Union or any other European country, we should say that it would not be able adequately to scrutinise the Security Service. For those reasons, there is growing unease on these Benches.

8.9 pm

Mr. Kenneth Hind (Lancashire, West): I have no doubt that the decision of the European Court has caused the Government to think seriously about the Bill.

I welcome the measure and I am sure that many of my hon. Friends feel as I do. As my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary said, 79 years too late we have put our secret service on a statutory basis. We should not underestimate the Bill, as it is a major step forward. For the first time, after years of secrecy, the secret service is defined by statute. For the first time the powers of the secret service and the roles of the Home Secretary and the Prime Minister in relation to it are absolutely clear. The Home Secretary's powers are clearly defined by the fact that every interference in the rights of individuals in Britain must be certified by warrant and that warrant can be questioned by the commissioner, a High Court judge. Members of the public can step in and say that they have been investigated wrongly, and there is a tribunal to investigate the incorrect use of power.

Some of my hon. Friends may have reservations about the Bill, but we must take one step at a time, and the Bill should be welcomed. In the short time I am allowed, I shall address some of the criticisms of the Bill which I do not consider valid.

It has been said that we do not have a proper level of scrutiny. What level of scrutiny does Parliament wish to take to itself and how effective is that scrutiny? Probably, those who do the scrutinising will not be able to say very much about it. They will examine the work of the secret service but they will not be able to report it or tell anyone about it. As they will be inside the ring fence of secrecy protecting the activities of the secret service and protecting national secrets, clearly they cannot report it. That means that there will be no large debates about it in the House. There will not be a stop on the questions or on Adjournment debates on the activities of the secret service.

Alternatively, the scrutiny could be outside the ring of secrecy. In those circumstances, hon. Members scrutinising the secret service would be supervising only budgets and making general reports and not having a great deal of say one way or the other in the activities of the secret service. That would not be any form of scrutiny.

We have to decide. It seems to me that the first method of scrutiny could be carried out only by a very few select people and they would be tempted to question individual operations and look into day-to-day matters in the secret service. The public and the House would be totally wrong if they thought for one moment that the responsibility for any such scrutiny would rest with the whole House. We have to face the fact that it would then be outside the ring fence of secrecy.

We have a system of accountability which is not enjoyed in the United States. The hon. Member for Workington (Mr. Campbell-Savours) spoke about what happened in the United States and we have heard from the Opposition Front Bench spokesman, the right hon. Member for Birmingham, Sparkbrook (Mr. Hattersley) about what happens overseas. In the United States, members of the committee sign the same declaration that is signed by every security operative in the CIA and the FBI. They cannot tell anyone either. Unlike the United States, we have senior Ministers, members of the legislature, who are answerable to the House. We have that safeguard. They have to answer for the secret service at the Dispatch Box. We have to realise that the fewer of us who know the details of what happens in the secret service, the better it will be for the activities of the secret service. The more people who know, the less likely the secret will remain secret. We have that safeguard and we should stick by it.

The same arguments apply to accountability. If something goes wrong, Ministers have to answer to the House from the Dispatch Box. They have the support of the tribunal and the supervision of the commissioner.

Quite a lot of accountability and scrutiny is provided for in the Bill. The Bill represents a major step forward. We should recognise that the House has far more control over the secret service than ever before.

I emphasise that the Bill cannot be seen in isolation from the Official Secrets Bill. A whole range of items that were excluded from section 2 of the 1911 act have been built into that measure. The test of harm will be introduced into that Bill, which must be seen in parallel with the Bill that we are considering now. Every officer who is worried about the activities of the secret service can now go to the commissioner. A civil servant who has items in his possession that he feels should be brought into the public domain can go to a Member of Parliament. He can risk facing a charge, but the test of harm and the question as to whether it is in conflict with the national interest in any way will be decided by a jury. Quite clearly, in many cases the Attorney-General will find that those matters do not necessarily do any harm and should have been brought into the public domain.

We have a new and sensible structure. It is a major step forward. I welcome it and hope that the Bill will go through the House unamended.

8.17 pm

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett (Denton and Reddish): First, I apologise to the House for not having listened to many of the speeches after the opening ones, but I understood that it would be very difficult to contribute to the debate.

The opening speeches were very interesting, but the Home Secretary slipped from the quality of the debate when he attacked the Opposition for being soft on terrorism. That was an unnecessary claim, and it was particularly mean of him not to give way after making that challenging statement. There is no dispute in the House about our abhorrence of terrorism and our feeling that it should be eliminated. The disagreement is about the methods. We believe that the most effective way to stamp out terrorism is to make sure that we do not slip from our high standards of civil rights and that we do not take short cuts which deny civil rights, because that helps rather than hinders the terrorist.

I wish to raise some questions with the Minister who will reply to the debate. A great many questions have been raised on clause 1—"The Security Service"—and most of the questions have been concentrated on subsection (2). I wonder whether the Minister can tell us a little more about subsection (3):

> "It shall also be the function of the Service to safeguard the economic well-being of the United Kingdom against threats posed by the actions or intentions of persons outside the British Islands."

Exactly what is the "economic well-being" of the United Kingdom is questionable. I am not sure why there should be a threat from people outside the United Kingdom rather than from people within it.

Mr. Heffer: Conservative Members.

Mr. Bennett: My hon. Friend makes the point: we are edging towards political argument. I hope that there will be more clarification in Committee.

I would have some interest in this subsection if we were anxious to deal with United States imperialism and the way in which the United States tries to impose restrictions on British companies so that they comply with United States rather than British law. I should have thought that, because our security services are often closely tied in with those of the United States, there may be some problems in practice. I hope that the Minister will throw more light on that subject.

As I understand it, the aim of the legislation is to deal with the security services. Those services must often work through the special branches of the individual police forces. The Metropolitan police are accountable to the House through the Home Secretary, but the rest of the police forces are not so accountable. Will actions carried out by the special branch officers on behalf of the security forces be covered by the Bill? They should be covered if the security services ask those officers to carry out a particular task.

I understand that a two-way process operates between the special branch and the security services. Often, individual special branch police forces initiate surveillance or an action and pass on information to the security services. Will those officers be covered by the Bill? Will the complaints procedure, although weak, cover them?

Vetting, or blacklisting, of individuals is another worry. Large numbers of people in the Civil Service and people who work directly for military contractors are subject to vetting, as are some individuals who supply services to military contractors. I know an individual in Stockport who works for a company that works for Ferranti in Stockport. Although he worked there for a considerable time and had gone in and out of the Ferranti plant, he became subject to vetting and was turned down. He was told that he could not have security clearance. It is difficult to check whether information held against an individual is genuine or whether there has been an error in the collecting of the information. It seems to me from my discussions with that individual that there can be no grounds for him being a security risk.

Under the Bill, will it be possible for such an individual to make a complaint and obtain satisfaction so that he can tell whether the information held against him is accurate? If he is a villain, that will be easy to demonstrate and he will know whether the information is accurate. If he is innocent, it will be almost impossible to tell such a person what information is held against him, and impossible for him to set out to disprove it. We need to consider the vetting procedure carefully.

What about the possibility of the security services trespassing or bugging or damaging property? What is the position with entrapment, or leading a person on so that he may commit a crime? Colin Breeze from my constituency is in custody in Miami in the United States. Clearly, he was entrapped by agents of the American Government into becoming involved in attempting to sell helicopters to Iran. His defence was that he was led on by agents of the American Government into a position where he could be convicted of a crime. What will happen in respect of warrants when what is normally an illegal activity is permissible? Will the legislation cover entrapment and provocation?

How accountable should the services be to Parliament? I have been amazed at the number of Conservative Members who have argued that Members of Parliament cannot be trusted. If we can trust a person to be Home Secretary, Members of Parliament—or some of them—can be trusted with that role. Most Governments would claim that at least half a dozen Members could be Home Secretary. If, in a parliamentary democracy, one says that a substantial number of people in government are capable

[Mr. Bennett]

of being Home Secretary, one must accept that a reasonable number of people in the Opposition can be trusted to fill that role.

Once one accepts that sufficient people can hold that office, there is no difficulty in finding a group of people who could sit on a parliamentary Select Committee to oversee the responsibilities of the security services. For Conservative Members to say that they do not believe that a group exists in the House that could be trusted with that role is to under-value the integrity of Members of Parliament. It is dangerous to say that, at any one time, only one Member of Parliament, the Home Secretary—or perhaps the Prime Minister—can be trusted with the knowledge of the security of the state.

I have heard the argument that we should not increase the number of people with knowledge of the security services, and that there is always the possibility that information will slip out. If we want to make the security services accountable and to guarantee the right of all individuals to live in a free society—after all, that is the purpose of democracy—we should have parliamentary accountability, not the weak accountability which the legislation proposes.

I hope that the Minister will answer some of my questions, and that we shall probe deeply into the rest in Committee.

8.27 pm

Mr. William Powell (Corby): A number of hon. Members have said that the Bill may be 79 or so years late, but that is not my line. I regret the fact that the Bill has become necessary. As a high Tory traditionalist, I admire prerogative powers and the use to which they have been put through many hundreds of years of our history. I regret the fact that developments in recent years with the security services have made the use of prerogative power —which was once so effective—a matter that must be codified in statute. Therefore, I welcome the Bill.

For the reasons given by my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary and a number of Conservative Back Benchers, including my hon. Friend the Member for Somerton and Frome (Mr. Boscawen), I support the Bill. The speech by my hon. Friend the Member for Somerton and Frome—the first speech of freedom for him in 10 years —was a powerful contribution, as were the speeches by my hon. Friend the Member for Westminster, North (Mr Wheeler), my hon. and learned Friend the Member for Burton (Mr. Lawrence) and my hon. Friend the Member for Lancashire, West (Mr. Hind). I support all the reasons they gave as to why the Bill sets the right balance of judgment and will be in our country's interests.

There has been considerable discussion about clause 1(2), which states:

> "The function of the Service shall be the protection of national security and, in particular, its protection against threats from espionage, terrorism and sabotage, from the activities of agents of foreign powers and from actions intended to overthrow or undermine parliamentary democracy by political, industrial or violent means."

I hope that hon. Members will not be naive about the vulnerability to blackmail of people in the security services, who may be of assistance to agents of foreign powers. It is entirely right and proper that, in their vigilance in upholding our democracy, the security services should have regard to blackmail, as it can undermine the democracy that we seek to protect and that they are employed to protect. It is right that they should seek to inform themselves about relevant matters on that issue.

Much of the debate has dealt with accountability. The right hon. Member for Birmingham, Sparkbrook (Mr. Hattersley) conceded, as he had to, that when it was announced that this Bill would be introduced, he welcomed it and said, both on television and in this House, that he expected, subject to its contents, to be able to support it. The question that he was reluctant to be asked and which must be asked and answered is: when he said that, did he have any reason to suppose that the Bill would contain provisions for a parliamentary scrutiny committee? So far as I am aware, in all the discussions on security issues down the years and certainly since 1979, there has been not one word or suggestion from my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister, successive Home Secretaries or any person speaking on behalf of the Government that the Government would welcome, still less introduce, a parliamentary scrutiny committee.

If he gave consideration to that question and still went ahead—he must have known that there was no possibility of any Bill containing that—the right hon. Gentleman was a fool. If he gave that commitment, subject of course to the small print—never forget that, Mr. Deputy Speaker—without considering that question, the most charitable thing that can be said on his behalf is that he will go to his grave saying with Macbeth:

> "And that which should accompany old age,
> As honour, love, obedience, troops of friends,
> I must not look to have",

because he will have made a grave error.

At no stage since 1979, in any discussions on security matters, has any person speaking on behalf of Her Majesty's Government from top to bottom suggested that the Government were in favour of a parliamentary scrutiny committee. They would have been complete fools if they had, not just for the reasons given by my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary but for the reasons given by my hon. Friend the Member for Somerton and Frome and recently underlined so effectively by my hon. Friend the Member for Lancashire, West.

When we listen to some right hon. and hon. Gentlemen, several of us feel that in opposition they wish to take part in security decisions or that they wish to be given privy information about matters which have properly been denied them. As my hon. Friend the Member for Lancashire, West said, if a scrutiny committee were to be established, the Opposition would be disappointed on all fronts. They would either be within the walls of secrecy, in which case they would be in the somewhat embarrassing position that the right hon. Member for Ashton-under-Lyne (Mr. Sheldon) found himself in on the Zircon affair, or they would be outside the walls of secrecy and would have little knowledge or information about what was happening. What a most disappointing and frustrating experience that would be.

The right hon. Member for Blaenau Gwent (Mr. Foot), in an engagingly irrelevant speech, referred to the allegations made against Sir Roger Hollis. If we had a parliamentary scrutiny committee investigating the affairs of Sir Roger Hollis, would we be any the wiser? If it reported one way or the other, would its conclusion be the correct one? Of course not. We know that, to all intents and purposes, half of MI5 think that he was a spy and the

other half are outraged by the suggestion. Only the Soviets could assist us, and even if they opened their files, several of us would conclude that disinformation was being put out and we would get no nearer the truth. A parliamentary scrutiny committee would come nowhere near resolving these issues.

Several hon. Members said that they would prefer the scope of the Bill to be wider. I am glad that it is not. These matters are properly entrusted to my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary and his successors. If the right hon. Members for Islwyn (Mr. Kinnock) and for Sparkbrook were to become First Secretary to the Treasury and Home Secretary, I would have every confidence in their abilities to carry out their constitutional functions in this area, as they would be subject, as would anybody holding those offices and having to consider these matters, to relevant pressures of a sort which I am afraid right hon. and hon. Gentlemen simply could not experience. They would be in the operational front line and would have to deal with matters as they arose in the context in which they arose. It is right and proper that those matters should be entrusted in the traditional way, and for the House to have or not to have confidence in those office holders and to be able to question them in the usual way.

The case deployed by my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary and subsequent right hon. and hon. Friends is overwhelming. I give this Bill my enthusiastic support on its Second Reading.

8.37 pm

Mr. Eric S. Heffer (Liverpool, Walton): When I heard the Queen's Speech and the proposal for this Bill, I turned to several of my colleagues, some of whom are on the other side of the House, and said, "That worries me no end because we shall put power in the hands of a Minister." Although we can ask Ministers questions in the House, I do not trust this Government to act on our behalf and in our interests. I might trust them more if they were not so authoritarian, but they are one of the most authoritarian Governments that I remember.

I remember when the Prime Minister referred to trade unionists as "the enemy within". I have not forgotten that. Clause 1(2) states that the function of the service is not only the protection of national security but its protection "from actions intended to overthrow or undermine parliamentary democracy by political, industrial or violent means."

The word "or" is used twice.

Some hon. Members may not be aware that we had to fight violently to get parliamentary democracy. People do not like to be reminded of it, but we cut off a king's head. It must be remembered that a certain amount of force was used. I am not suggesting that there should be further upheaval or that we should cut off people's heads, but there are people in this country who are not wedded to our concept of parliamentary democracy. They are democrats, but they believe that there are other forms of democracy that are better than ours. They could be regarded as subversives. Some of my friends are philosophical anarchists. In some respects, there is little difference between them and the Conservative party, because they are all individualists who believe in individualism.

Mr. Keith Mans (Wyre): Name them.

Mr. Heffer: I could name a few anarchist Conservative Members; some of them are sitting on the Front Bench.

Philosophical anarchists do not believe in our concept of parliamentary democracy, so they could be regarded as subversives.

Industrial syndicalists believe that there should be a Parliament of working people through trade unions and argue against our idea of a centralised political regime. Are they subversives? Under the Bill, they could be treated as such.

Conservative Members may not have suffered from being on a blacklist. *The Observer* phoned me recently and said, "We have the list of people on the blacklist in the north-west, and your name figures twice." I said, "Only twice? I should have thought it would have figured more than twice." Where did those people get my name? Who was watching me? Special branch was watching me. I was told by one special branch officer in Liverpool: "You are on our list; your name is well there." No doubt that fact was passed on to the Economic League, which distributed it.

Some people equate parliamentary democracy with the capitalist system. They do not believe that there can be another system, equally democratic, that does not accept capital control. What is meant by "subversion"?

I accept that we must protect ourselves against invasion. When I was a Minister, a chap came along—he never said who he was—and warned us about the Russians and east Europeans. I said, "This is very interesting, and I do not disagree with a word you have said, but does it apply to the Americans and all the others?" He said, "That is a different matter; we must be concerned about the Russians."

I hope that the Security Service is not as it is portrayed in "Game, Set and Match". In that programme, they seem to be watching and working against each other all the time. Half the members of the Security Service believe that Hollis was a spy; the other half do not. It would be better if there was an annual congress of world spies. It would save a lot of money—they could give each other their secrets—and a lot of lives, and it would be more sensible than the present position.

I am especially worried about clause 1(2) and the idea of the enemy within. We know that members of CND have been supervised, their phones bugged and some of their houses broken into. I never thought other than that my telephone was bugged. Some of the conversations that my wife has with her mother must be very interesting. The people listening must think that they are talking in a special code. This is a very dangerous Bill.

Mr. Eddie Loyden (Liverpool, Garston): Sinister.

Mr. Heffer: It is sinister.

Conservative Members have tried to knock the speech made by my right hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Sparkbrook (Mr. Hattersley), but he rightly argued for parliamentary scrutiny. It is right that we should have an extended committee. Of course it will not be able to look into every aspect of security, but it could concern itself with internal subversives, whatever that means, and who is being bugged because they are regarded as internal subversives.

The Government know that there is deep feeling in the country that something must be done about security. There is much worry and fear among people about the role of the Security Service. That worry was most apparent when the Wright story came out. We heard that people

[Mr. Heffer]

were prepared to undermine a democratically elected Government and were looking for dirt to throw at the Labour party's leaders. Mention was made earlier of an interesting book called "One Girl's War". People were entering other people's houses, going through their property and bugging their telephones quite wrongly and illegally. Under the Bill, the Government are legalising something that is fundamentally wrong.

I shall vote against Second Reading and hope that the Bill will be improved. If it is not, I hope that we will all vote against it.

8.48 pm

Mr. Andrew Mitchell (Gedling): It is always a pleasure to follow the hon. Member for Liverpool, Walton (Mr. Heffer). I am genuinely sorry that there is not more cross-party unity on this measure. The division is between those who know much about the Security Service and the rest of us who stick to important landmarks. The division is not between those who think that this is a good Bill, or those who think it is a bad Bill. Almost no hon. Member has suggested that the Bill does not have merit; the main suggestion has been that it does not go far enough.

We have had a most interesting debate. It has been much more interesting than listening to the hon. Member for Falkirk, West (Mr. Canavan) at 1.15 in the morning. A number of interesting points were made about the drafting of the Bill, many of which were somewhat churlish. The Bill is relatively simple and easy to understand and is pretty clear and concise. I have had the good fortune, if those are the right words, to sit on two Standing Committees, but it seems to me that the Bill is relatively comprehensible and easier to understand than many others.

We should be clear at the outset that there has been little public pressure for the enactment of the Bill. Few hon. Members have received correspondence from droves of anxious constituents demanding this legislation. The media have hardly conducted a sustained campaign urging us to implement this measure. The public are intrigued by the Security Service. The sense of mystery and secrecy ensures that newspaper speculation about its activities is avidly read and enjoyed, but the basic truth remains that the vast majority of our constituents know and accept that the Security Service is there to protect our liberties and freedoms from those within and without who would see them destroyed. Of necessity, it carries out its duties behind a ring of secrecy.

I go further than that. In spite of the suggestions of intrigue and incompetence which emerged into daylight last year, most people in our country accept that by and large, the Security Service does a crucial and difficult job, loyally and successfully. By its nature, the bad press that the Service has had from time to time is highly partial and, almost certainly, an inaccurate assessment of its effectiveness. However, we must be protected from rotten apples without impairing the operations of the service. That is what the legislation will achieve.

Most people who have no reason to fear the security services accept the balance between the need to protect the rights of the individual and the need to protect the security of the state. They accept also that greater public accountability cannot be at the cost of breaching the security surrounding the service's operational activities. Therefore, great duty and confidence is imposed on the director-general. Nothing in the Bill changes that key aspect of our Security Service. When Sir Findlater Stewart produced his report to the then Prime Minister in 1947, he said of the post of director-general:

> "The appointment is one of great responsibility, calling for unusual experience and a rare combination of qualities. But having got the right man, there is no alternative to giving him the widest discretion in the means he uses and the direction in which he applies them."

That must be right. It underlines the fact that, in the end, the director-general is responsible to the Home Secretary for ensuring that the balance between individual freedoms and liberties and the interests of the state is maintained. I stress that I do not believe that there is any widespread disagreement about the sufficiency of that process.

What should be our attitude to the Second Reading? First, I assume from the words used by the Home Secretary during the Queen's Speech debate that the security services wish the legislation to be enacted. If true, that is to their credit and underlines their commitment to ensuring that correct procedures are followed. Secondly, the measure is part of the Government's step-by-step reform of the minefield of official secrets and related matters.

We frequently hear high-minded statements of principle from Opposition Members, when they were in Government, they were either unable or unwilling to tackle such difficult issues. This Government have grasped them. We debate official secrets next week. The Government have also rightly received credit for the Interception of Communications Act 1985. There were all sorts of dire warnings from the Labour party at the time, but the Interception of Communications Act is widely regarded as working effectively and well. In addition, on no fewer than nine occasions, the Prime Minister has made clear and concise statements on secrecy matters that were of concern to the House.

Thirdly, this measure deals with a minority unease, in certain quarters, that the service is insufficiently accountable. There has been some public concern, and some misunderstanding perhaps, about the service's role, but the Bill goes quite far enough to counter such fears. It not only gives statutory authority for the existence of the service but makes the director-general personally responsible under the law for ensuring the political neutrality of the service and underlines that it cannot be used as a party political toy. It lays down the role and functions of the Security Service, and effectively uses a definition of subversion that was used by the Labour party when it was in Government in 1975.

Above all, the Bill sets out what we might call the public's consumer protection measures—the commissioner and the tribunal. The mechanism for a member of the service who feels a need for external complaint was brought in last year. The mechanism for an aggrieved citizen who feels that he is being unfairly treated is now clearly set in place in the Bill. The tribunal, which is able to investigate all complaints except those relating to warrants—they will be investigated by a commissioner—will be able also to award compensation, to quash warrants, and to destroy wrongly kept records.

That is an important step forward. By the nature of the issues that we are considering, it is clearly difficult for an aggrieved citizen to seek redress without breaching the ring

of secrecy that must inevitably exist and without which the effectiveness of the service would be undermined. The great success of this measure is that the Government have now found an ingenious formula for achieving just that. At present there is no redress for the public, but we are now enacting the necessary legislation to protect the right of the individual while not undermining the interests of the state. Opposition Members may care to consider that Socialist New Zealand is following exactly the same course as proposed in this short and sensible Bill. It deserves the support of the whole House tonight.

8.55 pm

Mr. Harry Cohen (Leyton): The only aspect of the Bill that I welcome is that, for the first time, it puts the Security Service on a statutory footing. I said "Security Service", but we are talking only about MI5. Does the Bill apply to MI6 and other intelligence services? There are several intelligence services scattered around the state.

When the Home Secretary introduced the Bill this afternoon, he gave a brief potted history of MI5, but he missed out a key element in the early stages of MI5—that of the Zinoviev letter, which involved MI5 interfering in the politics of the country. It was successful in bringing down a Labour Government. From that, we move on directly to the "Spycatcher" affair, which is the reason for the Bill. Central to the "Spycatcher" affair was the plot to subvert the Labour Government of Harold Wilson. There can be little doubt that MI5 acted outside its powers when it did that.

The Government spread a trail of diversion by taking "Spycatcher" through the Australian courts, claiming how terrible it was that Peter Wright had broken his pledge of silence. When we mentioned the plot to subvert the Labour Government, all we got was shock, horror. There was no action. If the boot had been on the other foot and the Conservatives had been affected, there would have been screams for court action and parliamentary scrutiny. We have had none of that.

Hon. Members know that language is important in Acts of Parliament. I draw attention to Clause 2(2)(b), which the Home Secretary quoted. It states:

> "That the Service does not take any action to further the interests of any political party."

It may not do that directly, but that does not stop it running down another political party. It could claim that it was not doing anything to the advantage of any particular party, but it could run down a party.

We know that, if the service decided to run down a party, it would be biased against the Labour Party and the trade union movement, because of the class nature of the Security Service personnel. On the one hand, there are those on the extreme Right, such as Peter Wright, who are in the service because they are cold warriors and are anti-Socialists, or there are the Oxford-Cambridge set, who we know are the ideal models to act as spies for foreign countries. Neither of those groups had its roots in the working class or in ordinary people, so there is a bias straight away against the trade union and labour movement.

I wish now to make a couple of brief but important points. I agree with my right hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Sparbrook (Mr. Hattersley) about warrants, especially when he said that the criteria should be public, precise and limited before a warrant is issued. I ask the Minister whether a warrant that he signs will be authority to break or enter into the home of one person or, when he signs his name once, will it apply to everyone within a particular organisation? That is what happened, for example, in the case of the National Council for Civil Liberties when my hon. Friend the Member for Peckham (Mrs. Harman) had her telephone tapped. The CND, too, was the subject of bugging and phone tapping.

If it will not apply to just one person, why not? Why can the Minister, with one stroke of the pen—for instance, because he is worried about the population of Liverpool revolting against the poll tax—sign a warrant so that the Security Service can break into anyone's property in Liverpool? We need to know why it is not limited to one. The Minister should explain that to the House, because it opens up dangerous precedents.

I also agree with my right hon. Friend the Member for Sparkbrook that there is no substitute for proper democratic accountability to the House. It was an insult to the intelligence of hon. Members and to the country when a previous Home Secretary said that Lord Bridge investigated over the weekend all the warrants for telephone tappings that had taken place since the 1950s and found not a mistake in any of them. We all know that that was nonsense and a whitewash and unacceptable. The question about the warrants is a serious one, which we need answered.

At the weekend, *The Observer* described the Bill as "the breaking and entering Bill" which is the serious aspect of it. The hon. Member for Thanet, South (Mr. Aitken) said that the Bill is not so much about civil liberties, as about the efficiency and effectiveness of the service. I do not agree. If we want to sort out the efficiency and effectiveness of the service, other methods could be used, such as bringing in management consultants. The civil liberties aspect is crucial. For the first time, we are authorising people in law to break into and enter other people's homes, which is a most dangerous precedent. Authorising burglary in that way is a slippery slope, which should worry us all.

My hon. Friend the Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell) has raised in this House time and time again the death of Hilda Murrell. There were strong reports that her house was the subject of an investigation of a breaking and entering, perhaps by official parties. What happens when, in such a case, the security services have authorisation from a warrant and someone dies? Does the person who killed her say, "I will not go to court. The police must let me go when I am arrested, because I have been warranted to break in. The Home Secretary signed the warrant and said I could break in. I am sorry it was an awful accident and the woman died when she found out I was burgling her home, but I had authority from the Home Secretary"? The Minister should refer to those serious and new implications.

I have thought seriously about the balance argument. We should say that the threat to life could be so important that it warranted somebody breaking and entering. However, I do not believe that that is a good enough argument, because in such circumstances powers already exist in the normal course of the law. A police officer can always arrest someone and obtain a proper warrant signed by a magistrate to search legally, and not without the individual's knowledge. If someone is regarded as a serious threat to the lives of other people, the surveillance should

[Mr. Harry Cohen]

be done properly. The authorisation of breaking and entering is the most dangerous aspect of the Bill. This is an anti-civil liberties Bill and it is wrong.

9.5 pm

Mr. Patrick Thompson (Norwich, North): I am grateful for the opportunity to speak briefly in support of the Bill. I shall not follow the arguments of the hon. Member for Leyton (Mr. Cohen) except to say that he did not make it clear how parliamentary scrutiny would meet any of the criticisms that he has made. I support the remarks of my hon. Friend the Member for Gedling (Mr. Mitchell), who spoke about the drafting of the Bill. It is clear and straightforward to understand. Although I am not a lawyer and have great difficulty understanding many Bills, the intention of this Bill is clear and for that reason I am happy to support it.

Despite having read much of the fiction mentioned by my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary, I hope that it is possible to be reasonably objective about the Bill. There is little doubt that, bearing in mind the fact that the Government have no more important duty than the maintenance of internal and external security, this measure is a rational response to recent events and discussion inside and outside Parliament. As a layman, it has been interesting to note the contrast between the constructive points and criticisms made by my hon. Friend the Member for Torbay (Mr. Allason) and the weakness of the Opposition position during this debate.

It is especially unfortunate that the Opposition leadership, apparently following a U-turn, now wish to attack the Bill. The Opposition are on uncertain ground here and, although it was mentioned earlier by the hon. Member for Denton Reddish (Mr. Bennett), I make no apology for reminding Opposition Members that they are on uncertain ground in relation to other aspects of defence and security. One example was the Prevention of Terrorism Bill, which was debated last week, and another was the overturning of the Labour party leadership on defence issues at the Labour party conference.

It was clear from the speech of the right hon. Member for Birmingham, Sparkbrook (Mr. Hattersley) that the Opposition, although they may mount a critique, have no alternative proposals of any value. They depart from common sense in their approach to the matter. In recent years, MI5 has been involved in creating a network of governmental defences against threats from the extreme Left and the extreme Right. Those threats come from espionage, terrorism, sabotage and subversion. I agree with those who say that we must carefully consider the definitions of those words, and I am sure that they will be discussed in more detail in Committee. My right hon. Friend the Home Secretary was right to refer to the sophistication of some terrorist and related organisations.

The Bill provides greater ministerial control over the Security Service. In the words of the deputy leader of the Labour party—before his U-turn—it is a step in the right direction. Opposition Members have called repeatedly for the necessity for parliamentary control of the Security Service. The call has come at various times from people with views as diverse as those of the right hon. Member for Plymouth, Devonport (Dr. Owen) on the Right and of the right hon. Member for Chesterfield (Mr. Benn) on the Left.

To widen through parliamentary scrutiny the number of people who, to use the phrase, "need to know", flies in the face of common sense. There have been many convincing speeches by Conservative Members which explain why it would be wrong to break the barrier of secrecy and to go outside the tradition in this matter. Even a person who knows little about the secret services in this country must accept that it would be wrong to do that. I have been further convinced by the arguments that I have heard this evening.

Mr. John Greenway: It has been suggested in the debate that the Security Service sought to bring down the Labour Prime Minister in the 1970s. As the head of the Security Service was unable to detect what was happening, how could a Committee of the House have any better opportunity to find out what the Security Service was doing?

Mr. Thompson: I accept that argument.

My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister stated in May 1985:

> "The need for external oversight has been argued at length in the House and came up again during the passage of the Interception of Communications Bill. All Governments run the security services in the same way and on the same lines, because they know they are in power that that is the best way to run them. They must run under unified management. They cannot be referred to an external group."—[*Official Report*, 9 May 1985; Vol. 78, c. 897.]

My hon. Friend the Member for Ryedale (Mr. Greenway) has emphasised that point well, and I agree with it.

The suggestion of the opponents of the Bill would risk the confidence of our allies in the secrecy of operations of our secret service. The Master of the Rolls, Sir John Donaldson, in his "Spycatcher" judgment, said:

> "It may be that the time has come when Parliament should regularise the position of the service."

That is exactly what the Bill seeks to do, and that is why it is a good Bill. I find suspect many of the criticisms that I have heard tonight.

The vital responsibilities of the modern Security Service —MI5—stem from its great and rapid expansion during the second world war, which my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary described in his opening speech. The recent priorities of the Security Service have been determined by the extent to which hostile intelligence services had succeeded in the 1930s in recruiting ideologically motivated spies in the United Kingdom. The right hon. Member for Sparkbrook made it clear that he did not fully understand the Bill, because he kept referring to the secret "services". It is clear from the remarks of my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary and from the wording of the Bill that we are discussing the secret "service"—MI5.

I believe that it is a good and well drafted Bill. The arguments, particularly by Conservative Members, mean that it should have the full-hearted support of all hon. Members tonight. It is sad that we do not have cross-party unity on this important issue affecting the defence and security of this country.

9.13 pm

Mr. Stuart Randall (Kingston upon Hull, West): We have had an interesting and informative debate on the Security Service and the Bill. It has become clear to me that the question of scrutiny, or accountability, is now firmly on the political agenda and that it is only a question of time before some mechanism is introduced to enhance the accountability of the service. That would improve not only the confidence in the service and the outside perception of it, but the feeling of trust that we have in the service.

Every hon. Member—with no exceptions—who has taken part in the debate believes in the need for an effective and efficient Security Service to look after our national interest and protect our parliamentary democracy. There is no dispute about that. The dispute has been on the balance between national interests in security terms and civil liberties. The Government have got the skew wrong and have taken too little account of civil liberties.

During the debate on the Queen's speech, the Home Secretary referred to the Bill as "an essay in openness." Essentially, however, the Bill is about maintaining MI5 as a closed and secret society. The inevitable consequence is that the freedom of the individual is impaired through the intrusion of the state into his private life.

Mr. Whitney: The hon. Gentleman said that the Government "had the skew wrong" and implied that civil liberties were under threat. Will he cite examples to show how civil liberties have been damaged by the security services in recent years and say in what measure the Bill will fail to safeguard civil liberties better than they have been safeguarded hitherto?

Mr. Randall: I shall cite some instances in which it has been alleged that civil liberties have been impaired.

Mr. Whitney: It has been alleged.

Mr. Randall: There are other cases, too. What Cathy Massiter had to say showed unequivocally that there was an abuse of civil liberties. Such abuse has resulted in a loss of confidence in the service, and that is not good for our nation, our national security or our democracy.

The Bill is a minimalist Bill produced by the Home Secretary to deal with the pressures that are now emerging from the European Court of Human rights, especially now that the Hewitt-Harman case has been declared admissible. The Government have been forced to introduce the Bill rather hurriedly and it has not been subject to the consultation that it deserved.

The Home Secretary said that the Bill had been given "cool consideration", in conjunction with MI5. He said that one of the reasons for it was that the political kaleidoscope had changed, whatever that may mean, and added that the Government had not been forced to produce the Bill.

The Bill has been introduced in this hurried way because in the Hewitt-Harman case there is an alleged violation of civil rights by the security services in the course of their investigations. The case arises from article 13 of the European convention of human rights, which is all about right and freedoms. It says:

"Everyone whose rights and freedoms . . . are violated"—

even by the Government—

"shall have an effective remedy before a national authority".

It is that effective remedy which allegedly does not exist.

The Bill represents a wasted opportunity. The members of the Security Service accept that parliamentarians have to take civil liberties into account and I believe that many members of MI5 would not object to a more open system that allowed parliamentary or external scrutiny. I do not know who wrote the Bill, but one has the impression that it was written not by the Home Secretary but by a technocrat or a member of the Security Service who does not understand parliamentary drafting. The Bill has serious weaknesses.

The Home Secretary is letting the Security Service down in failing to restore the public's confidence and trust. In his opening speech he failed to deal adequately with the question why other countries feel that they can proceed with a more open arrangement. The hon. Member for Aldridge-Brownhills (Mr. Shepherd) dealt with the McDonald report in detail, saying that there were lessons to be learned from that system. Other hon. Members have referred to what is happening in Australia and elsewhere.

What is it that makes Britain so different? I hope that the Minister of State will tell us why we have gone for a closed rather than the more liberal approach that is being adopted in other friendly countries with systems based on ours.

Mr. William Powell: When the right hon. Member for Birmingham, Sparkbrook (Mr. Hattersley) said, both in the Chamber and outside, that he expected to support the Bill subject to its small print, did he have any reasonable cause to believe that the Bill would contain provision for parliamentary scrutiny?

Mr. Randall: At the time that that statement was made, no information was available. My right hon. Friend has said that the Bill does not meet three criteria which he laid down clearly and which everybody will be able to read in *Hansard* tomorrow. That is why the Opposition feel that the Bill in its present form is not acceptable. The notion of putting the Security Service on a statutory footing naturally appeals to all hon. Members because it is at least a step forward. Unfortunately, as I have already said, the Bill does not go far enough, and the skew away from civil liberties is unacceptable.

The White Paper on the interception of communications in February 1985 defined national security. It said:

"The Secretary of State may issue warrants on grounds of national security if he considers that the information to be acquired under the warrant is necessary in the interests of national security"—

and it goes on—

"in support of the Government's defence and foreign policies."

What does that mean for a member of CND? That question has already been asked several times. In an earlier debate, the Home Secretary's predecessor attempted to say that CND members would not be regarded as subversives and need not fear being regarded as acting against the interests of national security.

I hope that CND members are not regarded as subversives. Although the right hon. and learned Member for Richmond, Yorks (Mr. Brittan) said that we can be sure that in practice CND members are not regarded as subversive, how can we be confident about that? My hon. Friend the Member for Workington (Mr. Campbell-Savours) gave us four definitions of "subversive" tonight. There are no definitions in the Bill, and that

[Mr. Randall]

leaves us unclear about what it is all about. I hope that in Committee we shall have some definitions and that the Minister will give us some information about that tonight.

The hon. Member for Somerton and Frome (Mr. Boscawen) gave the impression that he believed that none of the disclosures could lead to the idea that there was something wrong with the service. Yet the hon. Member for Aldridge-Brownhills said that Sir John Donaldson had said that we should be naive to think that bugging and burglary did not take place in the service. During the "Spycatcher" hearing, Sir John said:

"In defence of the realm there must be stringent limits of what breeches of the law are considered excusable . . . covert invasions of privacy (what Peter Wright called burglary) may in certain circumstances be a different matter . . . it is absurd to contend that any breeches of the law will constitute such a "wrong doing" as to deprive MI5 of the secrecy without which it cannot operate."

So Sir John was saying that crimes were committed but that some of them were excusable.

Clause 3(2) speaks of the authorising of actions specified in warrants. Certain actions will be unlawful unless they are covered by a warrant. What are the limits on what can be specified in a warrant? For example, may the Security Service install bugging equipment? Would it be included in the warrant? The House should note that bugging and other surveillance equipment is still unregulated by the law, despite recommendations of controls by the Royal Commission on criminal procedure, the Young committee on privacy and the Law Commission report on breach of confidence. The only guidelines we now have are the Home Office's guidelines to the police on the use of such equipment. If the service used such equipment, would not that violate article 8 of the European convention on human rights? If it would, should not the use of such devices be included in the Bill?

Why has not the Home Secretary made warrants subject to judicial authority rather than to administrative decision by himself, bearing in mind the fact that the Royal Commission on criminal procedure recommended that a person should have his interests represented by the Official Solicitor at a hearing before authorisation by judicial authority? That was the question raised by several hon. Members, who asked about the way in which the warrants should be issued and about the mechanisms for dealing with them.

Again, in the context of warrants, what criteria will the Home Secretary use in deeming it necessary for action to be taken to obtain information? Clause 3(2)(a) states that the Secretary of State

"may . . . issue a warrant . . . if the Secretary of State thinks it necessary".

How does he decide what is necessary? Further on, the clause expands on that as necessary to obtain information which

"cannot reasonably be obtained".

We are being asked again to sign a blank cheque for the Government. How can the House be confident that the proposals on warrants will work in the way that the Home Secretary believes they will?

I want to say a word or two about the Security Service tribunal. Schedule 1(1) states:

"Any person may complain to the Tribunal if he is aggrieved by anything . . . the Service has done . . . to him".

How will a citizen lawfully be able to discover that he has been the subject of action by the Security Service? Does the Minister agree that the Bill's provisions make it exceedingly difficult—nay, impossible—to obtain such information? In West Germany, if a person's telephone is tapped, when the surveillance work has been completed that person is notified that it has been. Why cannot we do the same in this country?

It has been alleged that there are files on people such as CND members. What will be their status? How will that information be used by the Security Service? Would it affect job and career prospects? I want further information on that.

Mr. Mullin: Will my hon. Friend pause to contemplate the front page of the *Sunday Express* of 14 February 1988? It is headed:

"Labour MP and the Girl Reds".

There is a large photograph of a former Labour Minister. The photograph is 20 years old and was leaked this year to the *Sunday Express*, obviously by someone in the Security Service. Is there any mechanism in the Bill to ensure that the person responsible for that leak accounts to Parliament for his actions?

Mr. Randall: My hon. Friend has asked an interesting question, and I hope that the Minister will make an appropriate comment on it.

Clause 2 refers to the director-general. Once the Bill receives Royal Assent, the service will be placed on a statutory footing. Will the director-general become a more public figure? Will he appear on television? Will he start to educate people in order to build up their trust? Those are serious questions because, until there is contact with the public, trust and confidence will be eroded. That is a practical suggestion, and if I were a Conservative Member, I would positively encourage the director-general to have more contact with the public.

There is a political section at the end of the clause. I am not sure why it has been included, but I wonder whether it is to reassure the House and the country that the Bill contains measures to prevent the overthrow by the Security Service of a future Government of any political complexion.

The Wright book contained allegations that MI5 was playing that role. How will that be enforced to ensure that there is no political bias? How will misdemeanours be brought to light? What penalties will there be if something goes wrong inside the service? Is the Home Secretary using that clause, together with Sir Philip Woodfield, the staff counsellor, to create the illusion that there will be no political bias in the Security Service? That is nothing more than window dressing.

The hon. Member for Thanet, South (Mr. Aitken), who is not in his seat, said that there was a divergence between clause 2 and paragraph 4 of the Maxwell Fyfe directive. The Maxwell Fyfe description is stronger, and I cannot understand why there is a divergence. I put it down to bad drafting.

The clause dealing with warrants asks Parliament to approve actions by the service that will become legal as a result of the warrants being issued. For other members of society, such actions would be regarded as illegal. Parliament is being asked to do that without any information about the extent to which illegal practices have taken place in the past. If the Minister answers no other questions, will he tell us specifically what the warrants will be used for? I do not want him to use the

words in the Bill. Similarly, when a person is vetted for employment purposes, why should he not be informed subsequently that that has happened?

The Bill is a great disappointment. It is vague, it is imprecise, and it will have little effect on the way in which the Security Service operates. The Bill fails to provide adequate safeguards against abuse and illegal activity by MI5. It contains no measures to improve the service's efficiency and effectiveness. Of special importance is the fact that the Bill includes little to enhance the civil liberties and genuine freedoms of the people of Britain.

At the same time, the Bill contains no measures to introduce external oversight, which we believe is vital to the service. the Bill is a wasted opportunity, and we shall be voting against it tonight.

9.35 pm

The Minister of State, Home Office (Mr. John Patten): I congratulate the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, West (Mr. Randall) on his excellent speech. In the course of my remarks, I shall answer the one question to which he sought an answer above all else, but I shall be unable to deal with his 16 or 17 other questions, which will have to wait until the Committee stage. I agree with the hon. Gentleman that the question of oversight will play a major part in our debates, which are certain to be interesting.

Several notable speeches have been made this evening, particularly by my hon. and gallant Friend the Member for Somerton and Frome (Mr. Boscawen), my hon. and learned Friend the Member for Burton (Mr. Lawrence). There were also four short, precise and pointed speeches by my hon. Friends the Members for Lancashire, West (Mr. Hind), for Corby (Mr. Powell), for Gedling (Mr. Mitchell) and for Norwich, North (Mr. Thompson).

I also listened with great care to the constructive criticisms made of the Bill by my hon. Friends the Members for Aldridge-Brownhills (Mr. Shepherd), for Thanet, South (Mr. Aitken) and for Torbay (Mr. Allason). For one extraordinary moment, I thought that I might agree with the hon. Member for Workington (Mr. Campbell-Savours), at least for the first three minutes of his speech, but that proved not to be the case.

There were misconceived speeches as well. I may tell the hon. Member for Walsall, North (Mr. Winnick) and all his right hon. and hon. Friends that I shall not comment on the security service's operational details. I shall not comment either, and nor will my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Home Department, on cases that are currently before the European Court. I say to the hon. Member for Leyton (Mr. Cohen), who is not in his place at present, that my hon. Friend the Member for Norwich, North was right in stating that the Bill refers to the Security Service and to the Security Service alone.

The Bill is about the trust and the confidence that is placed upon Parliament and upon Government to keep our country in peace and safety.

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett *rose*——

Mr. Patten: I hope to respond to at least one of the points made by the hon. Gentleman in his speech. I have little time in which to reply to all right hon. and hon. Members who spoke in what has been a very full debate.

The Bill places on Parliament a responsibility for establishing the scope of the Security Service's work, upon which so many lives depend—and I do not use that phrase lightly. For the first time ever, a Government of this country are prepared to bring this issue openly to Parliament and to let Parliament decide. Upon that, almost every right hon. and hon. Member who has spoken is agreed. I welcome the fact that the hon. Member for Caithness and Sutherland (Mr. Maclennan) was able to go at least that far.

When this issue was first discussed during our debate on the Loyal Address, the right hon. Member for Birmingham, Sparkbrook (Mr. Hattersley) heard my right hon. Friend's description of the Bill and told the House that he welcomed it. I quote him exactly:

> "This is a small concession . . . We welcome it and hope —hope subject to examination of the Bill—to support what the Home Secretary proposes."—[*Official Report*, 23 November 1988; Vol. 142, c.137.]

The right hon. Gentleman's judgement was right then, but deeply flawed later. He made his statement of support both in the House and, on television to the nation later that night on "Newsnight", after my right hon. Friend's Bill was published.

The right hon. Member for Sparkbrook is a very good writer, and a very good writer generally has to be a very good and rapid reader. My right hon. Friend's Bill is very short and succinct, and I simply do not believe that the right hon. Member for Sparkbrook did not fully understand what it contained before he went on television that night. Who knows what went on around the shadow Cabinet table after Labour's fiasco over the vote on the Prevention of Terrorism (Temporary Provisions) Bill vote?

Mr. Barry Sheerman (Huddersfield): It is a secret!

Mr. Patten: It is indeed a secret.

This is a very sad half-turn by the right hon. Member for Sparkbrook. The Bill is a liberating measure: first, it puts the Security Service on a firm statutory basis under the clear authority of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State.

Mr. William Powell: Can my hon. Friend tell me whether at any stage since 1979 any spokesman for Her Majesty's Government has given the House any cause to believe that the Government would favour a parliamentary scrutiny committee? Was that information available at the time when the right hon. Gentleman spoke?

Mr. Patten: On no occasion has such an impression been given. We have made the information freely available, and it was of course available to the right hon. Gentleman when he spoke, both in the House and on television.

Secondly, the Bill is a liberating measure in that my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary will personally authorise certain actions only when he is satisfied in the light of statutory safeguards. Thirdly, it provides for the independent review by a commissioner—not a member of the Government, but a senior member of the judiciary—of the exercise of those powers. Fourthly, it allows any person or organisation to complain and to seek remedies in respect of any alleged actions by the service that have affected them.

The Bill sits alongside my right hon. Friend's proposals for restricting the scope of official secrets legislation. We shall debate those proposals next week. The true effect of the two measures together is to provide reassurance and an avenue for complaints about matters relating to the

[Mr. Patten]

authority and control of the Security Service, while continuing to ensure that the secrets on which all our lives depend can be fully protected.

Both my hon. Friend the Member for Thanet, South (Mr. Aitken) and the hon. Member for Denton and Reddish (Mr. Bennett)—and, I think, the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, West—raised the important issue of economic well-being and exactly what that meant. The term is embodied in article 8 of the European convention on human rights. The function defined in clause 1(3) represents no change in the work that the service has been undertaking for many years. It follows exactly the careful and narrow drafting already approved by Parliament in the Interception of Communications Act 1985, and it addresses the safeguarding of the country against hostile foreign actions and adverse developments which could affect our economic well-being. Of course, the Security Service is not solely responsible for those matters. Others are concerned—the Army, the special branch and the police. It is nevertheless essential that the service should be able to contribute where it can do so.

I must say that I welcomed the defence by the hon. Member for Hackney, North and Stoke Newington (Ms. Abbott) of the excellence of the Home Office draftsmen. The Bill is indeed excellently drafted; it is a first-rate Bill, and I hope that the hon. Lady recognises that. She, of course, spent some time as an administrative trainee in the Home Office, and I understand that she was marked down at an early stage for speedy promotion. I can reveal what could well be an official secret and get me into trouble. A member of the personnel department in the Home Office came to me recently and said that the department wanted to launch a competition for that most important of posts, my replacement principal private secretary. He said that had the hon. Lady still been in the Civil Service she might well have been a leading competitor.

My hon. Friend the Member for Aldridge-Brownhills referred to the definition of national security, a matter that concerns many hon. Members. The concept of national security is recognised in the European convention on human rights. It is also recognised in legislation that was introduced by the last Labour Administration—in the industrial relations legislation, equal opportunities legislation and other measures. The definition of national security is entirely consistent with the interpretation that is referred to in the White Paper. The Bill covers more than the Security Service. My right hon. Friend the Home Secretary said in his opening speech that the Security Service is not primarily concerned with matters that relate to defence and foreign policy. However, the Security Service cannot be inert if it is to contribute to thwarting threats to national security.

National security is generally understood to refer to matters that relate to the survival or the well-being of the nation. That must cover matters relating to defence and foreign policy. It would be inexcusable if the Security Service were to be disbarred, in a statutory sense, from helping to thwart an armed attack on this country, or if it failed to act if it came across a possible act of sabotage, or if it failed to act if it could contribute to identifying or frustrating the hostile intentions of a foreign Government.

Mr. Richard Shepherd: The anxiety is that the words are phrased in such a way as to countenance Government policy in relation to foreign affairs and that the definition is so broad that ordinary citizens, going about the legitimate task of challenging Government policy, could be designated under the provisions of the Bill.

Mr. Patten: I can only repeat the words of my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary when he responded to an earlier intervention by my hon. Friend: such an interpretation is entirely wrong. Of course, there will be an opportunity to return to these points in detail in Committee.

There can be no question of the Security Service acting in circumstances where the security of the nation as a whole is not under threat, nor could there be any circumstances in which the Security Service could act in a way that tended to further the interests of any political party. That is clearly and specifically set out in clause 2.

Mr. Mullin: Will the Minister give way?

Mr. Patten: I have so many points to refer to that I hope the hon. Gentleman will forgive me for not giving way.

I promised to reply to the point that was made by the hon. Member for Denton and Reddish about the powers of police officers and the special branch. Police officers act under the authority of their own legislation. The special branch is part of the police force, which is under the authority of the chief constable. Any complaints about the special branch go to the Police Complaints Authority.

The hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, West referred to the extremely important issue of accountability. *[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. I hope that the hon. Member for Sunderland, South (Mr. Mullin) will not display what he is holding in his hand.

Mr. Mullin: I was just reading it, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Patten: In a Bill such as this, whose objectives must be clarity and certainty when dealing with the security of the nation, there is no place for proposals, however well intentioned, that could lead to confusion. In practice, the effective oversight of the Security Service is inseparable from overall responsibility for the Security Service. I urge the House not to accept, under the guise of what may seem to be a reasonable person's response, something that in practice turns out to be a fudge.

We cannot safely divide up the responsibility for the Security Service. That is recognised by other English-speaking parliamentary systems. My hon. Friend the Member for Gedling (Mr. Mitchell) referred to New Zealand. Socialist New Zealand has chosen to go down a route that is similar to ours in many ways. New Zealand has a commissioner. It has also decided that there should not be parliamentary scrutiny.

The right hon. Member for Sparkbrook's points about supervision displayed a very muddled——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I must tell the hon. Gentleman that we do not display placards in the Chamber.

Mr. Mullin: It is not a placard. It is the front page of the *Sunday Express*. I was merely trying to remind the Minister of my intervention earlier in the hope that he would reply to it.

Mr. Lawrence: I think that the hon. Gentleman was reading a blank page.

Mr. Patten: The hon. Member for Sunderland, South is well known in the House for his frivolity and his lack of serious attention to these matters.

The right hon. Member for Sparkbrook wanted general supervision. He completely failed to understand the workings of the tribunal and barely mentioned the important role of the commissioner. He did not realise that the generalised supervision for which he was apparently calling at the beginning of his speech could never deal with the individual misdemeanours of those in the service. The only people who would ever have such information available to them would be the management of the service, the director-general, the Home Secretary and of course the commissioner, who is an independent figure, a judge from the high judiciary at the right or left shoulder of my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary.

When the right hon. Member for Sparkbrook began to talk about general supervision, I thought that he was suggesting a body such as that which had been described to the House earlier by the right hon. Member for Plymouth, Devonport (Dr. Owen), who is not his place —a general checking body. The right hon. Member for Sparkbrook then put before the House a model of that general supervision. He suggested that my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary would be going off to the Cabinet at 9.45 am on a Thursday and someone would come up to him with a warrant. The right hon. Member for Sparkbrook went on to say that what he expected to be interposed between my right hon. Friend and his decision-making process was some sort of parliamentary body. *[Interruption.]* It will be in *Hansard* for all to see.

If only the right hon. Gentleman could have seen the looks of amazement and then embarrassment on the faces of his colleagues. He had suggested a concept which would put parliamentary scrutiny between the bringing of a warrant and the decision by the Home Secretary of the day. No democracy in the western world operates parliamentary scrutiny over the operational decisions of the service which guards it. That was the precise remedy that the right hon. Gentleman put before the House. I dare say that he did not mean it.

The hon. Member for Walsall, North well illustrated the problem of parliamentary oversight. It was noted very carefully that he wanted to require my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary to come to the House and answer allegations about the reasons for the service allegedly targeting particular individuals or organisations. What an absolute gift to any organisation which threatens our security to ask the Home Secretary through Parliament so that the Home Secretary will have to tell Parliament the exact facts. That would be a gift to anyone.

I turn to the central question about warrants that the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, West so wanted me to answer. In his notable speech my hon. Friend the Member for Westminster, North, from his considerable experience of the difficulties of the Select Committee in trying to examine the workings of special branch, encapsulated the problems that would face any parliamentary oversight should the House decide that there should be one.

Mr. Winnick: Will the Minister give way?

Mr. Patten: I am afraid that the hon. Gentleman must forgive me. I was replying to the point made by the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, West and I hope that he has the decency to recognise that.

For the first time ever, Parliament will have the assurance that there is a proper statutory procedure for the examination of warrants and, for the first time ever, the commissioner, the independent judge, will make a report on such matters, subject to security exclusions, to which his report drew specific attention. That report will be published and laid before Parliament. These are important provisions, providing significant new safeguards. The House would be wise to welcome them.

The warrant procedure is public. The right hon. Member for Sparkbrook asked that it should be made public, as did the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, West. That provision is in clause 3. The system will provide for considerable oversight of all the warrant activities involved in the Bill.

Public confidence will be greatly improved and deepened by the Bill. It will be impossible to deal in depth with every point made by hon. Members. I hope that in the answers which I have given—I have tried to be as even-handed as I could be across the Floor of the House —I have demonstrated that I have listened with care. We shall continue to do so and to reflect on hon. Members' points during the Bill's progress. We believe that the Bill is a good answer to difficult questions about the role of the Security Service in our system. Of course they are difficult questions to answer. We have answered them by a short, comprehensible and clear Bill which is easily understandable. It apportions directly the fundamental responsibilities on matters of security and recognises this country's traditions.

The Bill and the spirit with which we have brought if forward compare ill with the carefully measured attack by the right hon. Member for Sparkbrook on the record of the Security Service, which has helped this country so much. That statement will be in *Hansard* tomorrow. The right hon. Member for Sparkbrook sits giggling. In the Europeanwide fight against terrorism—for example, in the Trevi group—my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary finds that our European partners recognise and appreciate the skill and professionalism of the Security Service. That is why they can operate with it. The right hon. Gentleman should not have attacked the Security Service. He will live to regret those words—[HON. MEMBERS: "That is a threat."] The right hon. Gentleman should have listened carefully to the speech——

Mr. Heffer: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. Surely the Minister must think carefully about the words which he used. They can be interpreted as a threat. He should be prepared to say that he did not mean that formulation of words in the sense in which he used it.

Mr. Patten: The right hon. Member for Sparkbrook should have listened to the moving speech by my hon. and gallant Friend the Member for Somerton and Frome, one of the last Members who can speak without a hint of humbug about spilling blood to defend freedom. There was a time when the Labour party could, in the interests of national security, be counted upon to put the nation's interests beyond the internal problems of its party

[Mr. Patten]

managers, following the fiasco across that party after the muddle last week over the Prevention of Terrorism (Temporary Provisions) Bill.

The Labour party condemns terrorism, but it does little to help. We have not a single constructive alternative to the policies which we have laid before the House in the last couple of weeks to deal with terrorism—powers to detain suspected terrorists for questioning, no; exclusion orders, no; restrictions on terrorists' access to the media, no; and now, putting the Security Service on a statutory footing, no. Whatever the reason, the Labour party shows by those attitudes that it has quit its role as the reasonable alternative party of government.

Question put, That the Bill be now read a Second time:—

The House divided: Ayes 204, Noes 105.

Division No. 21] **[10 pm**

AYES

Adley, Robert
Aitken, Jonathan
Alexander, Richard
Allason, Rupert
Amess, David
Amos, Alan
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Tom *(Hazel Grove)*
Ashby, David
Atkins, Robert
Baldry, Tony
Barnes, Mrs Rosie *(Greenwich)*
Batiste, Spencer
Beggs, Roy
Bellingham, Henry
Bennett, Nicholas *(Pembroke)*
Benyon, W.
Body, Sir Richard
Boscawen, Hon Robert
Bottomley, Peter
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Bowis, John
Braine, Rt Hon Sir Bernard
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brooke, Rt Hon Peter
Browne, John *(Winchester)*
Bruce, Ian *(Dorset South)*
Burt, Alistair
Butler, Chris
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, John, *(Luton N)*
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Cartwright, John
Cash, William
Chalker, Rt Hon Mrs Lynda
Chapman, Sydney
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre F'rest)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cormack, Patrick
Cran, James
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Devlin, Tim
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Tony
Eggar, Tim
Emery, Sir Peter
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatf'd)*
Fallon, Michael
Favell, Tony
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Finsberg, Sir Geoffrey
Fishburn, John Dudley
Fookes, Miss Janet
Forman, Nigel
Forth, Eric
Fowler, Rt Hon Norman
Fox, Sir Marcus
Franks, Cecil
French, Douglas
Gale, Roger
Gardiner, George
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Gill, Christopher
Goodhart, Sir Philip
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Griffiths, Sir Eldon *(Bury St E')*
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth N)*
Grist, Ian
Ground, Patrick
Grylls, Michael
Gummer, Rt Hon John Selwyn
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hanley, Jeremy
Hargreaves, A. *(B'ham H'll Gr')*
Hargreaves, Ken *(Hyndburn)*
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, Christopher
Hayes, Jerry
Hayhoe, Rt Hon Sir Barney
Hayward, Robert
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Higgins, Rt Hon Terence L.
Hill, James
Hind, Kenneth
Hogg, Hon Douglas *(Gr'th'm)*
Holt, Richard
Hordern, Sir Peter
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'd-on-A)*
Howarth, G. *(Cannock & B'wd)*
Howe, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Howell, Ralph *(North Norfolk)*
Hughes, Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, David *(Wirral W)*
Hunter, Andrew
Hurd, Rt Hon Douglas
Irvine, Michael
Jack, Michael
Janman, Tim
Jessel, Toby
Jones, Robert B *(Herts W)*
Key, Robert
King, Roger *(B'ham N'thfield)*
King, Rt Hon Tom *(Bridgwater)*
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Greg *(Derby North)*
Knowles, Michael
Lawrence, Ivan
Lee, John *(Pendle)*
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Maclean, David
Marshall, Michael *(Arundel)*
Mates, Michael
Mellor, David
Meyer, Sir Anthony
Miller, Sir Hal
Mills, Iain
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, Sir David
Moate, Roger
Molyneaux, Rt Hon James
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Morrison, Sir Charles
Morrison, Rt Hon P *(Chester)*
Moss, Malcolm
Needham, Richard
Neubert, Michael
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Onslow, Rt Hon Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Owen, Rt Hon Dr David
Page, Richard
Patten, John *(Oxford W)*
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Raffan, Keith
Redwood, John
Renton, Tim
Rhodes James, Robert
Riddick, Graham
Ridsdale, Sir Julian
Ross, William *(Londonderry E)*
Sackville, Hon Tom
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Shephard, Mrs G. *(Norfolk SW)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Sims, Roger
Smith, Sir Dudley *(Warwick)*
Smyth, Rev Martin *(Belfast S)*
Soames, Hon Nicholas
Spicer, Sir Jim *(Dorset W)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Stanbrook, Ivor
Steen, Anthony
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis
Stewart, Andy *(Sherwood)*
Stradling Thomas, Sir John
Summerson, Hugo
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M. *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Teddy *(S'end E)*
Tebbit, Rt Hon Norman
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thatcher, Rt Hon Margaret
Thompson, D. *(Calder Valley)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thorne, Neil
Thurnham, Peter
Townsend, Cyril D. *(B'heath)*
Tracey, Richard
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
Viggers, Peter
Waddington, Rt Hon David
Wakeham, Rt Hon John
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Warren, Kenneth
Watts, John
Wheeler, John
Whitney, Ray
Widdecombe, Ann
Wilkinson, John
Winterton, Mrs Ann
Winterton, Nicholas
Wood, Timothy
Yeo, Tim

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. David Lightbown and
Mr. Kenneth Carlisle.

NOES

Abbott, Ms Diane
Alton, David
Anderson, Donald
Armstrong, Hilary
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnes, Harry *(Derbyshire NE)*
Barron, Kevin
Beckett, Margaret
Bennett, A. F. *(D'nt'n & R'dish)*
Bermingham, Gerald
Boateng, Paul
Boyes, Roland
Bradley, Keith
Brown, Gordon *(D'mline E)*
Brown, Nicholas *(Newcastle E)*
Buchan, Norman
Campbell, Ron *(Blyth Valley)*
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Carlile, Alex *(Mont'g)*
Clark, Dr David *(S Shields)*
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Cohen, Harry
Corbett, Robin
Corbyn, Jeremy
Cousins, Jim
Crowther, Stan
Cryer, Bob
Cummings, John
Darling, Alistair
Doran, Frank
Dunnachie, Jimmy
Dunwoody, Hon Mrs Gwyneth
Eastham, Ken
Faulds, Andrew
Fearn, Ronald
Fields, Terry *(L'pool B G'n)*
Fisher, Mark
Foot, Rt Hon Michael
Foster, Derek
Foulkes, George
Fyfe, Maria
Golding, Mrs Llin
Gould, Bryan
Graham, Thomas
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Hardy, Peter
Hattersley, Rt Hon Roy
Heffer, Eric S.
Holland, Stuart
Hughes, John *(Coventry NE)*
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Ingram, Adam
Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd S W)*
Kennedy, Charles
Kinnock, Rt Hon Neil
Kirkwood, Archy
Leighton, Ron

Livingstone, Ken
Loyden, Eddie
McAllion, John
McAvoy, Thomas
Macdonald, Calum A.
McKelvey, William
Maclennan, Robert
McNamara, Kevin
McWilliam, John
Mahon, Mrs Alice
Marek, Dr John
Meale, Alan
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(W'shawe)*
Morris, Rt Hon J. *(Aberavon)*
Mowlam, Marjorie
Mullin, Chris
Murphy, Paul
Nellist, Dave
Pendry, Tom
Pike, Peter L.
Quin, Ms Joyce
Randall, Stuart
Redmond, Martin
Rooker, Jeff
Ross, Ernie *(Dundee W)*
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheerman, Barry
Sillars, Jim
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton & F'bury)*
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Straw, Jack
Vaz, Keith
Wall, Pat
Wallace, James
Wareing, Robert N.
Welsh, Michael *(Doncaster N)*
Wigley, Dafydd
Williams, Rt Hon Alan
Williams, Alan W. *(Carm'then)*
Wilson, Brian
Winnick, David
Wise, Mrs Audrey
Worthington, Tony

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Frank Haynes and
Mr. Allen McKay.

Question accordingly agreed to.

Bill accordingly read a Second time.

Bill committed to a Committee of the whole House—*[Mr. Maclean.]*

Committee tomorrow.

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Ordered,

That, at this day's sitting, the Petroleum Royalties (Relief) and Continental Shelf Bill may be proceeded with, though opposed, until any hour.—*[Mr. Maclean.]*

Security Service Bill *[Money]*

Queen's Recommendation having been signified—

Motion made, and Question proposed,

That, for the purposes of any Act resulting from the Security Service Bill, it is expedient to authorise the payment out of money provided by Parliament of any expenses incurred by the Secretary of State under that Act.—*[Mr. Maclean.]*

10.12 pm

Mr. Bob Cryer (Bradford, South): The money resolution should not go by without my making a few comments, as there are some issues to raise. The money resolution is broadly based. *[Interruption.]* In spite of Tory Members shouting for me to sit down, we should carry on with our investigation. Threats should not be uttered in Parliament. Free speech should be allowed.

Clause 6 of the Bill deals with money. According to the explanation at the top of the Bill, the amount involved will be about £360,000. I shall ask the Minister a few questions, because the money resolution provides for any Act arising out of the Bill to be financed by Parliament. Naturally, one must look at all the consequences flowing from the legislation. It behoves us to undertake such scrutiny.

First of all, there is the question of a commissioner, because he will undertake the task of reviewing the warrants. He will peer over the Minister's shoulder metaphorically, and possibly in some cases literally, to see whether the Minister is exercising the powers under this legislation correctly. Therefore, when he reviews the warrants that are being issued for burglaring and bugging —as Peter Wright explained in his much-read book—the commissioner will be undertaking an important task.

Because we are authorising payment to the commissioner under clause 4(2), it is worth while studying the amount of money that the commissioner will receive. The Minister should tell us, because there is a line between a very good salary and what people in the street might think of as bribery to keep his mouth shut. I say to the Minister that if he raises his eyebrows and says, "Tut, tut, what a thing to suggest"——

The Minister of State, Home Office (Mr. John Patten): I did not say that.

Mr. Cryer: I could see something flashing across the hon. Gentleman's face, and I thought that that might be going through his mind.

People on ordinary wages, supplementary benefit or other low incomes, when they hear about some of these salaries—£50,000, or £60,000 or whatever the range is, and it has not been mentioned so far——

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): Egg producers are going bust.

Mr. Cryer: As my hon. Friend has said, egg producers are going bust.

Mr. Skinner: In Buxton, Derbyshire.

Mr. Cryer: I wonder whether £360,000 is enough, because the Government will spend £500,000 remedying the damage done by the Under-Secretary of State for Health, the hon. Member for Derbyshire, South (Mrs. Currie) in her attack on the poultry industry.

[Mr. Cryer]

However, I shall come back to the salary of the commissioner. What range will it be in, because we do not necessarily want someone who will be a pillar of the establishment? Indeed, I believe that we would want someone who is not. It does not reassure me when I read in clause 4(1):

"The Prime Minister shall appoint a Commissioner for the purposes of this Act a person who holds or has held high judicial office within the meaning of the Appelate Jurisdiction Act 1876."

It does not reassure me because those people come from a privileged educational position. The majority of judges were barristers—although there are some qualifications to that—and the education of barristers has been designed by the establishment to keep the sons and daughters of the working class out. *[Laughter.]* The hon. Member for Bromsgrove (Sir H. Miller) laughs, but how does he suppose that the bricklayer's son or daughter can afford to take their dinners for a number of years before taking their Bar final examination? How can he or she afford the expensive monopolist charges for wig and gown? The realities of ordinary working-class life is that this money must be found. By and large, the people who get onto the judicial bench are not the sons and daughters of the working class. I ask the Minister to tell us first of all the salary range of the commissioner.

Mr. Skinner: My hon. Friend is right that the people who get the jobs with the kinky clothes come from the belly of the establishment, just like those who finish up spying. Nearly every spy who has been caught in the past 30 to 40 years has come straight out of the belly of the establishment. That is important in relation to this Bill and the money involved in it. I must say that what is even worse is that 500 people have just been thrown out of work because of that chicken farm at Buxton going bust.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Harold Walker): Order. What has this to do with the money resolution?

Mr. Skinner: Five hundred jobs have been lost and not one of those people who have lost his job will get the job to which my hon. Friend the Member for Bradford, South (Mr. Cryer) has referred.

Mr. Cryer: My hon. Friend has a point, and it arises from the money resolution. By and large, people in the poultry industry are poorly paid and have not been well organised. They would wish to be satisfied that the commissioner will exercise proper scrutiny. When they see the sort of salary that I believe the Minister has in mind, they will wonder whether this is not just another job for a public schoolboy.

Another area of expenditure covered by the money resolution is the tribunal which, under clause 5(1), will be established

"for the purpose of investigating complaints about the Service in the manner specified in Schedule 1 to this Act."

The expenses and salaries of the tribunal's members will be paid by the Home Secretary, with the consent of the Treasury, as he determines. What sort of salaries and expenses will they receive? The job is so important that we should not gauge it by the amount of money being paid. We must always ask whether the salary and expenses are so large that they would represent to the ordinary man and woman in the street not so much a salary as a way of keeping people's mouths shut.

The Minister said that the Bill is designed to create confidence in the operation of the security services. If the salaries are as astronomic as they usually are for such jobs, many people will believe that the tribunal is not scrutinising the Security Service properly.

It would be much more radical and interesting if the Government included on the tribunal people who are not barristers, advocates or solicitors of 10 years' standing. They should have an ordinary citizen or two on the tribunal instead of trawling the legal profession, as they always do to fill such positions.

When dealing with investigations, the tribunal may have to undertake extensive investigations. Under clause 1(3),

"it shall also be the function of the Service to safeguard the economic well-being of the United Kingdom against threats posed by the actions or intentions of persons outside the British Islands."

Such acts or intentions may arise from the French water companies wishing to buy the British water industry, which the Tories are putting on the market. If MI5 decided that the French water companies represented a threat as defined in clause 1(3) it could investigate the activities of any British citizen who was employed by a French company. If that citizen complained to the tribunal, it would have to investigate not only activities here but the link with the French water companies.

The total cost of establishing and staffing the tribunal and assisting the commissioner is envisaged to be about £360,000 a year, with an additional public service manpower requirement of about 12 officers. The cost and manpower requirements, obviously, will depend on the volume and nature of the tribunal's work. Let me give the Minister a concrete example.

The old firm is at it again. MI5 is leaking secrets to the *Sunday Express*. It did it when Chapman Pincher was the paper's defence correspondent and, with the authority of the Prime Minister, MI5 poured out secrets, so that Chapman Pincher—

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. It is difficult to see what that has to do with the money resolution.

Mr. Cryer: I am merely pointing out, by way of example, that the *Sunday Express* appears to have a monopoly—perhaps it has been granted a royal warrant by MI5—to leak secrets, as it did for Chapman Pincher's book "Their Trade is Treachery". My comments relate to the money resolution. The tribunal will investigate complaints and the money resolution will provide the finance for that.

I have here a photocopy of the *Sunday Express* of 14 February 1988. It contains a picture of John Diamond and somebody else. The picture could provide a perfectly legitimate basis for a complaint that MI5 had taken this picture and had leaked it to the *Sunday Express* for its use. The picture is of a citizen who has nothing to do with the claims of MI5. That is precisely what the Bill concerns. The citizen sees the picture——

Mr. Roger King (Birmingham, Northfield): The money resolution.

Mr. Cryer: I am speaking about the money resolution.

The photograph was published in the *Sunday Express*, so that citizen would have the right to go to the tribunal. MI5 is up to that sort of dirty trick. It is precisely because of its dirty tricks that the Minister is promoting the Bill —and the Bill will not function without the money. I know that the hon. Member for Birmingham, Northfield (Mr. King) does not understand such matters, although if he is here for another 25 years—which is unlikely—he might eventually grasp a few basic simplicities. My example illustrates the sort of complaint that the tribunal will investigate.

Does the Minister agree that I have sketched such a complaint? It will be no good for the Minister to say that the Government have little idea because the matter is dealt with in the Bill. The Minister complained earlier that the Opposition have not been putting forward positive or constructive suggestions. I have given a positive example of the way in which such a complaint might arise.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The hon. Gentleman has illustrated his point well with one example. I hope that he will not give too many examples.

Mr. Cryer: I know that my comments have been rather drawn out, but may I tell you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that I have been subjected to continuous harassment from the hon. Members for Northfield and for Pembroke (Mr. Bennett) and I know that you would want to draw their attention to the rules of order—and the Minister's attention as well. He has been making snide little comments all the time. I do not mind, but I am interested in the rules of good conduct in the House and I do not want to see the rules broken while you are in the Chair. I try to help you to bring a bit of order on these occasions. Unfortunately, in trying to help you, it sometimes reflects on me in carrying out my duty as a Member of the House.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. It is fair enough for the hon. Gentleman to illustrate and sharpen his point by one example, but it is not necessary for him to give too many examples to make his point.

Mr. Cryer: I entirely agree. I am making the point that such an investigation would involve the *Sunday Express* and the reporter. The photograph was taken, I believe, in Vienna in Austria, so it might involve investigations in other countries where the complaint was based. Those investigations would be, potentially, expensive. So I hope that the Minister will assure us that the £360,000 will be sufficient. Indeed, will it be sufficient to prevent him having to return to Parliament, as did the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, with two further money resolutions.

We need a response from the Minister which will enable us to assess the importance of the points mentioned in the explanatory and financial memorandum, remembering that such comments will aid the whole House when the Bill is considered in Committee. We have an opportunity on this resolution to have a mini-debate about money. The Minister now has sufficient time in which to give a reasoned response to the points that I have raised.

I appreciate that, because the Bill represents a new venture for the Government, we cannot have concrete assurances about expenditure. For example, the complaints about which we are talking have not before had a legitimate channel through which to be raised. Having asked about the fees to be paid to the commissioner and members of the tribunal, I trust that the Minister will make at least an attempt to answer those questions.

10.32 pm

The Minister of State, Home Office (Mr. John Patten): I am sorry that, even in debating the money resolution, the only hon. Gentleman to speak from the Labour Benches felt it necessary to attack the Security Service, as, alas, did many of his hon. Friends when we debated the Bill. Although sad, it shows their real attitude, including their attitude to the service.

I shall certainly answer the questions asked by the hon. Gentleman, who is the money resolution specialist in the House this century, and probably the next century as well, judging from the way in which he talks. The money resolution makes provision for expenditure which would be incurred under the Bill. The undertakings embodied in clauses 1 and 2 will not lead to any increase in public service manpower. The Bill has the effect of providing statutory authority for the Security Service and its expenditure.

The Bill will involve additional expenditure in only three areas, two of which were mentioned by the hon. Member whose constituency I have temporarily forgotten, since he rolls from one to another. I refer, of course, to the hon. Member for Bradford, South (Mr. Cryer). That is his present constituency; he moves around a great deal.

Clause 3 enables the Secretary of State to issue warrants authorising the taking of specified actions in respect of property, only where he is satisfied that this is necessary to obtain essential information which cannot be obtained by other means. The administration of procedures for applying, issuing, cancelling and renewing these warrants is a consequence of the legislation, and the additional costs have been included in the financial memorandum as part of the estimate of the total costs of the Bill.

The hon. Gentleman who at present represents Bradford, South asked some leading questions about the commissioner. Clause 4 requires the Prime Minister to appoint a commissioner. The clause provides that the Secretary of State shall pay to him out of voted money such allowances as the Treasury determines.

The Commissioner has to be a serving or a former judge. If a serving judge is appointed—I imagine that under most circumstances that that would be most likely —the commissioner will not receive any additional salary. There will be no additional public expenditure because that judge will already be being paid. The costs of the post would then be confined to the incidental expenses and adequate support. The estimated cost is within the figure quoted in the financial memorandum and judges' salaries are a matter of public knowledge, as the hon. Gentleman knows.

Thirdly, clause 5 and schedule 2 provide for the establishment of a tribunal and for the cost of that also to be met out of voted money. Those costs can be the remuneration and allowances of the tribunal members who will be drawn from the classes that the hon. Gentleman so contemptuously described, or other expenses which include the costs of office accommodation and support services.

The hon. Gentleman fairly said that we could not calculate those costs precisely. As the hon. Gentleman will appreciate, a great deal will depend on the number of

[Mr. John Patten]

complaints received, which cannot be estimated at this stage with any accuracy. But our estimates have been made on the basis of providing the tribunal with three officers and allowing for accommodation and for paying the members on a daily rate. Those estimated costs are also incorporated in the costs quoted in the financial memorandum.

Mr. Skinner: I want to ask the Minister about the application of the money resolution in respect of investigations into, for example, the case of Roberto Fiore, the Italian who has been here for seven years——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I do not see what that has to do with the money resolution.

Mr. Skinner: I shall tell you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. That Italian is wanted by the Italian Government as a major suspect in the railway bombing which killed 85 people in Italy. Although Italy has been trying to extradite that man, who could be regarded as a spy——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. Be that as it may, it has nothing to do with the motion before the House.

Mr. Patten: With the leave of the House, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I should say, simply for the avoidance of doubt, that the hon. Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner) is characteristically talking complete nonsense. The case——

Mr. Skinner: It is in *The Daily Telegraph*.

Mr. Patten: Just because it is in *The Daily Telegraph* does not mean that it is true.

Mr. Skinner: It is the Minister's paper.

Mr. Patten: The issue to which the hon. Gentleman is referring——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. We are now getting into a matter that I fear has nothing to do with the motion before the House.

Question put and agreed to.

Resolved,

That, for the purposes of any Act resulting from the Security Service Bill, it is expedient to authorise the payment out of money provided by Parliament of any expenses incurred by the Secretary of State under that Act.

Petroleum Royalties (Relief) and Continental Shelf Bill

Considered in Committee.

[MR. HAROLD WALKER *in the Chair*]

Clause 1

ROYALTY EXEMPTION FOR PETROLEUM FROM CERTAIN SOUTHERN BASIN AND LANDWARD AREAS

Question proposed, That the clause stand part of the Bill.

10.38 pm

Mr. Frank Doran (Aberdeen, South): We had a fairly lengthy debate on Second Reading on the general aspects of North sea oil and gas recovery, but one or two specific points remain open for question.

First, will the Minister give us some idea of what possibilities he sees for the extension of the philosophy behind the Bill? We have seen the removal of the royalty payments in the northern sector of the North Sea in 1983 and now we see them being removed from the southern basin. But some fields are coming to the end of their useful life and there will be a growing number of such fields in the next few years. What proposals do the Government have for those older fields? We hope that his proposals will lead to improved investment in technology which would encourage an increase in the recovery rate from those fields.

My next point was raised on Second Reading and it concerns the British Gas monopoly. Ministers referred us to the proposal within the report of the Monopolies and Mergers Commission that 10 per cent. of the recovered gas should be sold to parties other than British Gas. However, we did not get a statement about the Government's position. Opposition Members are concerned that British Gas controls the rate of development because it is the monopoly purchaser. What proposals does the Minister have to open up the sale of gas and to encourage the development of the marginal fields that we discussed on Second Reading?

Will the Minister comment on the impact of the electricity privatisation?

The Chairman of Ways and Means (Mr. Harold Walker): Order. I do not see how that can possibly arise under clause 1.

Mr. Doran: I am talking about the monopoly purchasing power of British Gas. It is a matter for debate under the clause. I was about to ask the Minister whether he thinks that the privatisation of electricity and the opening up of what the Government claim to be new electricity suppliers will bring about any improvement. On Second Reading the Minister gave the example of the purchase by the North of Scotland Hydro-Electric Board of gas from the Miller field for burning in the Peterhead power station.

The Chairman: Order. Perhaps I am not following the clause. It is about royalty exemption for petroleum from certain southern basin and landward areas. It has nothing to do with electricity generation and gas supplies.

Mr. Doran: I thought that I had made it clear that I was talking about the sale of gas. I was asking the Minister whether he thinks that there will be any improvement after privatisation and whether there will be encouragement for exploration in the southern basin.

In Britain, gas and oil are publicly owned. The establishment and payment of royalties was an expression of that public ownership. Opposition Members regret the fact that the Government have taken what appears to be a blunderbuss approach and simply removed the royalties completely rather than taking a field-by-field approach. They have breached the principle of public ownership which royalties represent.

The Minister of State, Department of Energy (Mr. Peter Morrison): I can assure the hon. Member for Aberdeen, South (Mr. Doran) that the mineral rights remain vested in the Crown, and that will remain the case. The philosophy about the longevity of the fields is not quite within the confines of clause 1. However, the hon. Gentleman will be aware that I have placed much emphasis on further research and development. Only yesterday in Edinburgh I launched a new institute which will have, among other things, to consider that aspect.

I would expect the privatisation of electricity to help the southern basin in terms of further gas exploration and discoveries. As the hon. Gentleman will appreciate, and as we discussed on Second Reading, the point of the Bill is to encourage further exploration and development. I am sure that he and his right hon. and hon. Friends think that that is the right way to proceed.

Question put and agreed to.

Clause 1 ordered to stand part of the Bill.

Clause 2

EXTENSION OF ROYALTY EXEMPTION FOR PETROLEUM FROM CERTAIN NEW OFFSHORE FIELDS

Question proposed, That the clause stand part of the Bill.

Mr. Doran: I want to deal with the link between the licence conditions specified in clause 2 and health and safety. There is a power for the Minister to insist on the execution of works under the regulations referred to in the Bill and to revoke the licences of operators where there are breaches of safety. Safety was a major feature of our earlier discussions on the Bill. Will the Minister comment on his powers and tell us whether they have ever been used?

Mr. Peter Morrision: I can assure the hon. Gentleman that the licences are approved subject to certain conditions. He rightly highlights the safety conditions in terms of exploration and production. If my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State or I saw fit to look carefully at or withdraw a licence because the conditions were not being met, we would have no hesitation in so doing. I believe I am right in saying that so far no licence has been withdrawn, which is a good reflection on the industry.

Question put and agreed to.

Clause 2 ordered to stand part of the Bill.

Clause 3

POWER TO AMEND DESIGNATION ORDER RELATING TO CONTINENTAL SHELF BETWEEN THE UNITED KINGDOM AND THE REPUBLIC OF IRELAND

Question proposed, That the clause stand part of the Bill.

Mr. Doran: This clause establishes the treaty between our Government and that of the Irish Republic. It opens up the possibility of exploration of the north-west coast of Scotland and the south-west coasts of England and Wales. It would be useful to know what the Government's proposals in respect of licensing in this area are, and what prospects there are for development and industrial improvement in these parts of the country.

Mr. Peter Morrison: The hon. Gentleman flatters me by suggesting that I can look into a crystal ball and see what the possibilities are. I wish I knew. The reason for this agreement, and for the clause that ensures that it will be put into practice, is that the areas concerned can be put up for licence. At some stage in the future it is possible that, given the development of technology in the much deeper waters, that this area by and large covers, it will be explored and that more production will ensue.

Question put and agreed to.

Clause 3 ordered to stand part of the Bill.

Clause 4 ordered to stand part of the Bill.

Schedule agreed to.

Bill reported, without amendment; read the Third time, and passed.

STATUTORY INSTRUMENTS, &c.

Motion made, and Question put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 101(5) (Standing Committees on Statutory Instruments, &c.).

AGRICULTURE

That the Agriculture Improvement (Variation) (No. 2) Scheme 1988 (S.I., 1988, No. 1983), a copy of which was laid before this House on 16th November 1988 in the last Session of Parliament, be approved.

CUSTOMS AND EXCISE

That the Customs Duties (ECSC) (Amendment No. 3) Order 1988 (S.I., 1988, No. 2055), dated 24th November 1988, a copy of which was laid before this House on 24th November, be approved.—*[Mr. Dorrell.]*

Question agreed to.

Transport (Scotland)

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Dorrell.]*

10.47 pm

Mr. Allan Stewart (Eastwood): I am grateful for this opportunity to put to my hon. Friend the Minister a number of points about transport in Scotland.

This debate comes at the end of a week in which this subject has been at the forefront of debate in the House. On Tuesday, the Secretary of State for Scotland made an excellent statement on public expenditure. Yesterday, the House gave a Second Reading to the Transport (Scotland) Bill, after a long debate that was fully answered by my hon. Friend the Minister. After these events, there is a great deal of interest in transport in Scotland. I want to ask my hon. Friend some detailed questions about Scotland in general and about issues of great importance to my constituents in Eastwood.

I welcome my right hon. and learned Friend's substantial extra provision for roads and transport—an increase of about £40 million on the previously announced plans for 1989-90. That enables the implementation of the manifesto commitment to upgrade the A74 to motorway status to begin.

After the statement made by my right hon. and learned Friend, I asked him about the Ayr road route—the dual carriageway extension from the M77 at Dumbreck, bypassing the built-up areas of the south side of Glasgow and Giffnock, Newton Mearns and Barrhead, to the present A77 at the Malletsheugh. I am sure my hon. Friend the Minister will welcome this chance to expand on what our right hon. and learned Friend said in answer to my question.

The Ayr road route is crucial to the economic health and environmental health of the areas I mentioned, and to Ayrshire. It would help, if not resolve, the critical traffic situation in Eaglesham village, to which subject I will return later. It will mean that, for the first time, a good road link will exist between Prestwick airport and the central Scotland motorway system. That is why the then Select Committee on Scottish Affairs recommended that it be given "a high priority". The Government's response was positive and clear. I quote the Government response dated 2 March 1983, paragraph 19:

"As regards the A77, preparatory activity is already in hand with a view to starting work on the trunk road section"—

that is, the section outside the Glasgow city boundary for which the Government are responsible—

"in 1986-87. Strathclyde regional council have proposals in the TPP to being work on the proposed section within the city boundary in 1985-86, but with the main work starting in 1986-87. This is the earliest timetable currently considered feasible for the construction of the trunk road section, taking account of the preliminary survey and design work and the statutory procedures that have still to be undertaken. The Government will, however, take all necessary steps to adhere to this timetable."

That was very clear and unequivocal:

"The Government will, however, take all necessary steps to adhere to this timetable."

That leaves no room for doubt, but the timetable has slipped considerably.

I appreciate that perhaps this is because of delay resulting from objections and the complexity of statutory procedures. Nevertheless, I welcome Strathclyde regional council's strong support for the road, and disagree with the rather petty objections made by Glasgow district council. However, as I said on Tuesday, answers to parliamentary questions put by the hon. Member for Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley (Mr. Foulkes) have revealed that the northern Ayrshire and Renfrewshire sections of the A77 are much more dangerous than the A74, which is being upgraded to motorway status—welcome though that decision is.

My hon. Friend's predecessor told me in an answer to a parliamentary question on 18 February 1987 that the Ayr road route would take 6 million vehicles a year in 1991. On 8 April 1987, my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland wrote to me:

"The start of the Ayr road route is held back by procedural and not financial constraints."

I shall be glad if my hon. Friend will confirm that that is so, and indicate the up-to-date position in respect of the public inquiry and his right hon. and learned Friend's consideration of it. On the assumption that the scheme is approved, can he give the timetable for both the start and the completion of the construction period?

Earlier, I mentioned the village of Eaglesham in my constituency. It is a village that my hon. Friend knows well, as it is the one in which Rudolf Hess landed—as described in my hon. Friend's first-class book. It is a charming conservation village with much new housing. It is represented on Eastwood district council by Councillor Basil Baird, on whose family farm Hess landed.

The village has seen a sharp increase in traffic, and of goods vehicle traffic in particular. That has created serious problems. I quote from one of the many letters I have received from constituents:

"Over the past few years there has been a dramatic increase in the amount and nature of the traffic using the road. I have recently been involved in a traffic count over a twelve hour period, and I am appalled by the result: 988 heavy goods vehicles, 1,163 lorries, and 8,578 cars. This means one heavy goods vehicle trundles, or more accurately, hurtles, past my front door every 45 seconds".

It is a narrow road.

"There has also been a marked increase in speed and a dramatic rise in the number of accidents. I must also point out the damage to the environment, with the steep gradient and constant gear changes there is an unacceptable level of lead in the atmosphere."

That is typical of the huge volume of complaints.

I welcome the interim measures that have been taken by Strathclyde regional council—the roundabout at one end and the lights halfway down Montgomery street in the middle of the village. Councillors and Eaglesham community council have made unremitting efforts, and it was owing to pressure from the previous regional councillor Robbie Robertson that the Eaglesham bypass was put into Strathclyde region's plans. It has, however, been delayed. In his letter of 5 December, my hon. Friend confirmed to me that it was now scheduled for the spring of 1993. Given the extra resources for road investment announced by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State earlier this week, I should like to know whether there is any possibility of a general speeding up of the Strathclyde programme, which would help Eaglesham.

I appreciate that decisions on such matters will reflect the priorities of Strathclyde regional council, but it is not quite as simple as that. Tonight's Adjournment debate was originally to have been about the causeway to Vatersay, but the hon. Member for Western Isles (Mr. Macdonald) withdrew his application, for the good reason that my

right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State yesterday announced a special capital allocation to enable the causeway to go ahead. I congratulate the hon. Gentleman: I think that this is the first recorded example of the threat of an Adjournment debate achieving its objective.

I do not necessarily threaten my hon. Friend the Minister with constant Adjournment debates on this issue, but this is an important constituency matter, and I know that he or his officials will be having technical discussions with Strathclyde regional council. Obviously, the Scottish Development Department is involved in such discussions when determining Strathclyde's total allocation, and I hope that my hon. Friend will view the problem sympathetically.

On a more general note, my hon. Friend knows of my interest in bus privatisation and the need for proper competition between Strathclyde Buses and the present Clydeside group, which will be linked after privatisation, and also my interest in McGills of Barrhead, an excellent and long-established independent bus operator. These are vital matters for my constituents. We shall, however, have plenty of time to discuss buses in the future. I should like tonight to ask my hon. Friend a number of questions about CalMac.

I congratulate the Government on their proposals, which represent a proper balance and reflect the different circumstances in different areas of the islands. Yesterday, my hon. Friend answered very fully the general debate on Second Reading of the Scottish Transport Bill. There was then an unscheduled—for many of us—addendum, then a closure motion and then a debate on the money resolution, when the hon. Member for Cunninghame, North (Mr. Wilson) took the whole of the allotted 45 minutes. It was the first time that I had seen a Labour Front Bencher filibuster to keep Opposition Back Benchers out. Be that as it may, my hon. Friend did not have a chance to put on record his response to the money resolution, and it is that on which I wish to speak tonight. I wish particularly to refer to the investment record of CalMac since 1979.

It is important that the House should hear my hon. Friend's account of the position, and I hope that he will be able to tell us about CalMac's general record and prospects. Perhaps he will take the opportunity, if the information is available to him, to answer some specific questions, which would be of value to everyone with an interest in the future of the services.

Let me ask my hon. Friend four such questions. First, how much grant have the Government provided for ships and piers since they came into office? Secondly, and related to that, how much has CalMac invested since then? Thirdly, how many new ships will be built under this programme? Fourthly, all hon. Members with an interest in the subject recognise the importance of the roll-on roll-off facilities for the islands. Can my hon. Friend say whether those facilities have been extended?

I have two general questions for my hon. Friend. First, what has been the general reaction to the Government's proposals for the future of Caledonian MacBrayne since my right hon. and learned Friend's statement to the House? Secondly, now that the Transport (Scotland) Bill has been given a Second Reading, will my hon. Friend take this opportunity to make a statement about the Government's policy on ferry services?

I could refer to many other aspects of transport policy: to the rail network and air transport. My hon. Friend knows my views about continental air flights from Glasgow airport. However, I want my hon. Friend to have time fully to reply to the questions I have asked. In conclusion, therefore, I congratulate him on the Second Reading of the Transport (Scotland) Bill and on his contribution to a public expenditure statement earlier this week, which is good news for transport in Scotland.

11 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Scotland (Lord James Douglas-Hamilton): My hon. Friend the Member for Eastwood (Mr. Stewart) serves both his constituents and the House well by referring to such important and relevant matters. It is typical of my hon. Friend's extremely dedicated, hard-working and vigorous approach as the Member of Parliament for East Renfrewshire. It is a particular pleasure for me to reply to this debate. Many years ago, my father was the Member of Parliament for my hon. Friend's constituents.

My hon. Friend referred to the proposed Ayr road route and the possible timetable for its completion. The proposed Ayr road route is a joint Scottish Development Department-Strathclyde regional council project to link the M77 spur at Dumbreck to the existing A77 at Malletsheugh. The effect of this will be to provide a dual carriageway between the M8 on the south of the Kingston bridge and Malletsheugh, which lies to the south of Newton Mearns. The section between Dumbreck and the former Glasgow city boundary, approximately 7 km, will be a local road for which Strathclyde regional council will be responsible and the section between the city boundary and Malletsheugh, approximately 4 km, will be a trunk road for which my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State will be responsible. The trunk section is effectively a bypass of Newton Mearns. The total cost of the joint project will be at least £55 million, of which the trunk section will be at least £15 million.

A large number of objections were made to the Strathclyde region section of the road, and some 32 objections to the trunk section remained outstanding at the beginning of this year. Accordingly, it was decided to hold a public local inquiry. The inquiry, which was held in Glasgow, began in March 1988 and ended some 10 weeks later in May.

The reporter to the inquiry completed part I of his report, his findings of fact, only recently and it was distributed to the parties to the inquiry on 9 December. There now follows a period for adjustment of the findings of fact. Then the next step is for the reporter to compile part II of his report—his conclusions and recommendations—for submission to the Secretary of State. Normally, part II is produced much more quickly than part I, and I would expect my right hon. and learned Friend to issue his decision on whether the new road should go ahead in the first half of 1989.

My hon. Friend also referred to the need to bypass Eaglesham. Strathclyde regional council's latest transport policies and programme submission includes a scheme to bypass Eaglesham. The council acknowledges that the road through the village is carrying increasing volumes of traffic between Ayrshire and East Kilbride, including a high proportion of heavy goods vehicles. The environmental problems resulting from the increased use of the

[Lord James Douglas-Hamilton]

road are also recognised. The promotion of the bypass scheme is intended to remove all the heavy through traffic from the village and to reduce accidents.

The council's financial plans, submitted to the Department in November 1988, show that the scheme is scheduled for a March 1993 start, as are two similar by-pass schemes for Strathaven and Darvel. But the timing of specific projects is a matter for Strathclyde regional council. The council, within its overall allocation for capital expenditure on roads and transport, is free to determine which projects it will undertake and their relative priority in the light of local circumstances.

The Government also make substantial provision for local roads and transport. Strathclyde regional council, as the largest authority, is a major benefactor of the capital allocations given to regional and islands authorities. The council's allocation is £57 million in the current year—a substantial sum.

As for trunk roads, the Government already have a substantial programme from which Strathclyde benefits. The forward trunk road programme for Scotland contains a good number of proposed schemes in Strathclyde. There are 26 major schemes with a total estimated value of at least £270 million. In addition, major works on upgrading the A74 to motorway should be starting in due course. In the Renfrew district area there are four major trunk schemes—the A77 Ayr road route, the A77 Fenwick-to-B764-junction scheme, the scheme from there to Malletsheugh and the M8 St. James interchange. The first three of the schemes mentioned will complete a dual carriageway from Glasgow to Ayr. The trunk element of the Ayr road route along with the other three Renfrew district area schemes represent an estimated Government expenditure of at least £50 million.

I listened carefully to what my hon. Friend said about investment in Caledonian MacBrayne, and I shall describe the background briefly. CalMac operates passenger, vehicle and freight shipping services to the islands off the west coast of Scotland and in the Clyde estuary. There are 26 scheduled services in addition to which the company provides seasonal cruising, livestock runs and charter/contract services. The company-owned fleet consists of 28 vessels—12 major vehicle ferries, 14 small vehicle ferries and two passenger-only vessels. The newest major vessel, the MV Isle of Mull, was launched at Port Glasgow on 7 December 1987 and came into service on the Oban-Mull route this year. A further major ferry is on order from Appledore-Ferguson Ltd. Shipbuilders and will enter service on the Oban-Barra/Lochboisdale route in place of two aging vessels in 1989.

Other major new vessels which have come into service since 1979 are the Isle of Arran in 1984, which, as its name suggests, serves Arran, and the Hebrides Isles in 1985, serving the triangular route between Uig in Skye, Tarbert in Harris and Lochmaddy in North Uist. There has also been investment in the smaller vessels which are so important in the short crossings to the smaller islands.

The total of new investment by CalMac in new ships since 1979 is £22 million. Those years have seen a welcome improvement in the standard of ships provided, which is much appreciated by the islanders, as well as by the tourists attracted to visit the islands, in no small part by the modern car ferries provided.

There has also been substantial investment in piers by Caledonian MacBrayne, which has been directly responsible for investment of £6 million in new piers. Of course, it does not own all the piers to which it operates. The Government have also provided substantial grant assistance to local authorities and independent harbour trusts to improve their piers. A special feature, to which my hon. Friend referred, has been the spread of roll-on roll-off facilities cutting out the need for the time-consuming use of side lifts to unload the increasing number of cars carried on CalMac's ships. That is very welcome.

Link spans for roll-on roll-off purposes have been built at Uig, Tarbert, Lochmaddy, Lochboisdale and Colonsay. Work is proceeding on a linkspan at Castlebay in Barra. A total of £22 million has been paid out in pier grants throughout Scotland since 1979.

It may help if I describe the basis on which help is given to Caledonian MacBrayne by the Secretary of State. The Secretary of State is empowered to give financial assistance to operators of sea transport to the Highlands and Islands by the provisions of the Highlands and Islands Shipping Services Act 1960. In accordance with that Act, the Secretary of State entered into an undertaking with CalMac and the STG in 1975. The undertaking allows grants to be made to CalMac to maintain and improve sea transport services serving the Highlands and Islands.

Those grants take the form of a revenue support grant which covers the annual deficit which the Secretary of State estimates that the company is likely to incur in providing approved services—23 in all in 1988—during a specified period, in practice the company's trading year between 1 January and 31 December. That grant is at present running at about £6 million a year. Capital grants not exceeding 75 per cent. of the actual capital expenditure incurred by the company are provided for pier works. No capital grant assistance is paid towards the cost of ship purchases.

CalMac's financial target is to break even after receipt of the revenue support grant which I have mentioned Since 1986, a clawback system to recover any surplus of revenue support grant over actual requirements has been in force. The sytem allows the company to retain up to a maximum of £300,000 of any surplus as an incentive to efficiency. CalMac's performance has shown a healthy upturn in recent years and subsidy requirement has fallen in cash and real terms. That is partly due to increased carrying for all types of traffic and, consequently, increased revenue. Although credit must be given to the company for much improved marketing techniques, the other important factor is lower fuel costs. Fares have been held for several years at or below the general level of inflation.

Last night, we discussed the arrangements proposed under the Transport (Scotland) Bill for Caledonian MacBrayne. The principal objective is to maintain at least the present standard of service. It may be helpful if I remind the House of the proposals.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Harold Walker): Order. Hon. Members cannot discuss legislation in an Adjournment debate. I hope that the Minister will not try to do a rerun of yesterday's debate, because that would be out of order.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: I shall restrict my comments to the investment in CalMac.

For the most part, CalMac services do not make a profit, and a subsidy of about £6 million a year is required. We have always been clear that Caledonian MacBrayne was not a straightforward case for privatisation. The first priority in any arrangements is to guarantee the lifeline services which it provides. It is for that reason that, having studied the issues carefully, we decided that, on the dissolution of the Scottish Transport Group, the ownership of Caledonian MacBrayne should be transferred to the Secretary of State.

We intend to appoint a new board for the company, which will contain persons with commercial expertise, including some with first-hand knowledge of the islands served and their needs. I feel that that is vital to ensure the responsiveness of the company to its customers.

As a matter of priority, we would look to the new board to examine the possibilities of relocating the headquarters nearer the centre of the area which it serves. Oban seems likely to prove a suitable place for that purpose. We shall ask the new board to explore the possibility of transferring to the private sector the Gourock-Dunoon and Wemyss bay-Rothesay routes. I consider it anomalous that CalMac is operating a subsidised service on a similar route to an unsubsidised private operation.

In the longer term, we will expect the board to examine carefully all existing practices in the company's operation with a view to providing more efficient and cost-effective ways of providing at least the present standard of service. No options for the longer term will be excluded, subject to the overriding proviso that we must ensure at least the present quality of service to the Islands. I consider that, with its own board and independence, CalMac will be well placed to continue and improve on the present level of services.

The views of the ferry users are important, and we intend to continue to consult them. At present, the main means of consultation for ferry users to make their views known are through shipping services advisory committees and the Scottish Transport Users Consultative Committee. They are doing a good job and that will continue.

In its 1987 manifesto, the Conservative party made it clear that it would continue the substantially increased financial support for the provision and upgrading of ferries and terminals which are vital to the islands. In Scotland, in the period from 1979 to date, the Government have provided grant for ferry pierworks and vessels in Scotland totalling £23·33 million. In the same period, we have also subsidised ferry travel by a total of £78·7 million. For Caledonian MacBrayne, £22 million has been invested in new vessels and £6 million in new piers over the same period. These are substantial sums and demonstrate the importance which the Government attach to investment in shipping services, particularly in Caledonian MacBrayne.

Question put and agreed to.

Adjourned accordingly at fifteeen minutes past Eleven o'clock.

House of Commons

Friday 16 December 1988

The House met at half-past Nine o'clock

PRAYERS

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

Egg Industry

9.35 am

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. Like myself and others, you will probably have heard that the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food is very concerned about the state of the egg industry, and that it has been widely trailed that a Minister's job is on the line. We hear that a £10 million package is being drawn up by the Government as a result of the statements made by the Under-Secretary of State for Health.

In view of all the controversy, I think that it is necessary for the Government to intervene at some point today and make a statement about this supposed £10 million package of taxpayers' money. We hear the Prime Minister saying constantly that taxpayers' money should not be used to subsidise this, that or the other. After the 150,000 bankruptcies that have taken place in the 10 years of the Thatcher regime, if egg producers are to be subsidised because of Government policy I think that the Government should be subsidising a lot of others and saving a lot of jobs, and paying compensation as well. Is there to be a statement, Mr. Speaker?

Mr. Speaker: I have not heard yet, but I may hear before 10 am, which is the appropriate time.

The Unborn Child

9.36 am

Mr. John Watts (Slough): I beg to move,

That this House notes the growing public concern about experiments on unborn children and abuses of the Abortion Act 1967; recalls the substantial and sustained majorities given to the Abortion (Amendment) Bill in the last Session and to the Unborn Children (Protection) Bill in successive Sessions; and calls upon Her Majesty's Government to bring forward at an early date the proposed legislation concerning research on human embryos and to consider introducing a Bill with alternative sets of clauses to reform the Abortion Act 1967 in order to allow the House, on a free vote, to reach a decision on this important matter.

It is with a measure of sadness that I move the motion. After 21 inglorious years of the Abortion Act 1967, introduced by the right hon. Member for Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale (Mr. Steel), 2·6 million unborn children have been killed under cover of that Act. Only 123 abortions out of that appalling total—0·005 per cent.—have been performed in emergencies to save the mother's life. Four out of five abortions are performed for social reasons under ground two—

"risk . . . of injury to the physical or mental health of the . . . woman".

That cover is used to allow abortion effectively on demand.

I do not believe that the House intended in 1967 to legalise abortion on demand, but in practice that is what has happened. The House demonstrated in the last Session with a substantial majority for the Abortion (Amendment) Bill that it has the will to act to curb the practice of late abortions, many of which must be in contravention of the Infant Life (Preservation) Act 1929. I am very concerned at the apparent unwillingness of Her Majesty's Government to take action to enforce effectively the provisions of that Act.

I wrote to my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State for Health about the matter. In her reply, she said:

"The Infant Life (Preservation) Act protects any child capable of being born alive, regardless of the gestational age at which this point is reached."

That is a clear and precise explanation of the letter of the law and of the intentions of the law. However, the objective is not achieved if the Director of Public Prosecutions is unwilling to prosecute doctors who commit offences by aborting a baby who, despite their worst endeavours, is born alive and who then compound their offence by failing to take the necessary steps to sustain that life.

Although I was not in the House at Question Time yesterday, I understand that this matter was raised by my hon. Friend the Member for Congleton (Mrs. Winterton) and other right hon. and hon. Friends. My hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State for Health said that she did not see the need for action by her Department to remind doctors of the law. Perhaps of late her mind has been too much on other things and if she were in her place, my advice to her would be——

Mr. Bob Cryer (Bradford, South): Resign.

Mr. Watts: Well, I would not go quite as far as the hon. Gentleman suggests. My advice to her would be to switch her attention from embryonic chickens to embryonic human beings.

[Mr. Watts]

There is clearly a will in the House at least to tackle some of the worst abuses of abortion, yet our procedures frustrate us in that desire, and meanwhile abortions continue at the rate of 170,000 per year. If just a fraction of that number of babies die every year because of inadequate medical care or from curable or preventable diseases, there would be an outcry in the country and in this House. However, supporters of the status quo in abortion law and those who support its further relaxation are capable of drawing a distinction between the death of a wanted baby and the legalised killing of a baby who would be a social inconvenience. It is not a distinction that I can understand.

I do not hope or expect that there could be agreement within the House on the rights and wrongs of abortion because I know that just as I hold my views deeply, many of my hon. Friends and Opposition Members hold contrary views with equal sincerity. It is important that we respect each other's views on such weighty issues.

Mr. Peter Thurnham (Bolton, North-East): My hon. Friend and I share great concern about the care of the born —we are not concerned only about the unborn. In many cases the unborn may be severely handicapped. I do not know my hon. Friend's views about a mother who does not want to give birth to a severely handicapped child, but perhaps he could say a little more about care for the born who are severely handicapped and who may be so severely handicapped that there parents cannot manage to look after them and they are in institutional care.

Does my hon. Friend know that there are hundreds —no, thousands—of severely handicapped children in institutions because their parents cannot manage to look after them and that there is great difficulty in finding foster parents or people to adopt them? Would my hon. Friend put his children into an institution?

Do not handicapped children deserve just as much love and care—or even more love and care—than ordinary children? Can he give me the names of a mere 100 families who would be prepared to adopt or foster a handicapped child?

Mr. Watts: I cannot answer my hon. Friend in the terms in which he asked his question. I know that many thousands of both physically and mentally handicapped children are loved and cared for by their parents or foster parents. I hope that my hon. Friend is not trying to lead me down the route of agreeing that any child who is likely to be born severely handicapped—either mentally or physically—should automatically be aborted.

Sir Bernard Braine (Castle Point): In order that this matter might be kept in perspective, is it not a fact that of late abortions—that is to say, after 18 weeks—92 per cent., if allowed to have been born would have been perfectly fit and healthy children, and that of those who were aborted for so-called handicap reasons, quite a high proportion were aborted for trivial handicap reasons? That does not minimise the point that my hon. Friend the Member for Bolton, North-East (Mr. Thurnham) properly made a moment ago, but for goodness sake, let's keep it in perspective.

Mr. Watts: My hon. Friend is entirely right. The number of abortions performed because there is concern that the child will be born severely physically or mentally handicapped are miniscule against the appalling death total of 2·6 million since the Abortion Act was passed in 1967.

These difficult issues face parents every time they are expecting a child. My wife and I made a conscious decision not to seek to find out by tests whether any of our four children was likely to be born handicapped because we did not wish to put ourselves in the position of having the pressure of that knowledge upon us before the birth. However, all parents must be able to consider such matters for themselves.

As I said before my hon. Friend the Member for Bolton, North-East (Mr. Thurnham) intervened, it is important that we recognise the differences of opinion within the House and have a mutual respect for the views that each of us holds. However, I hope that there can be some agreement within the House on the issue of reform of the Abortion Act 1967 because it should be resolved by the House.

It is our procedures that have prevented us from coming to a conclusion. I say "our procedures" rather than our opponents, if that is how I may refer to those who take a different view from me. I accept that the procedures of the House are there to be used. I say frankly that if a Bill were to be introduced in the House to make abortion legal on demand, I would use every device that I could think of to try to prevent it from reaching the statute book. Therefore, I make no criticism of my hon. Friends and Opposition Members who used the procedures of the House to prevent the law from being reformed in a way of which they would not approve.

Mr. Andrew MacKay (Berkshire, East): Is my hon. Friend aware that in the proceedings on the Bill in the previous Session to which he has referred, a clear majority in the House was in favour of my amendment of 24 weeks —*[Interruption.]* Well, it was absolutely clear that if the hon. Member for Liverpool, Mossley Hill (Mr. Alton) had so wanted to get his Bill on to the statute book, the 24-week amendment would have ensured that, but he and other supporters of his Bill had no desire to do that because they wanted to make abortion illegal.

Mr. Watts: I am not sure whether what my hon. Friend says is correct. I am sure that there was a majority in the House for 24 weeks, instead of for a significantly lower limit.

Mr. David Alton (Liverpool, Mossley Hill): Is it not the case that on 22 January when the House voted there was a majority of 45, with 296 hon. Members—the biggest pro-life vote ever—voting for 18 weeks? If hon. Members of all parties had not decided to try to frustrate the Report stage by using procedural devices, we could have had a vote not just on 20 weeks or 22 weeks, but on 24 weeks. We would have been happy to have that vote because we are certain that we would have won something far less than a time limit, which would not have saved a single life.

Mr. Watts: I am inclined to agree with the hon. Gentleman that the majority in this House favours a limit lower than 24 weeks, and probably a limit that is much closer to 18 weeks——

Sir Bernard Braine: So does the majority in the country.

Mr. Watts: The sadness is that the House was not enabled to bring the debate to a conclusion and to enact its will.

Mr. Cryer: The hon. Gentleman is fair in his comment on the behaviour of the House. Does he think it unfair and unwarranted for Members who took part in the proceedings, which were carried out perfectly in accordance with the rules of the House, to go outside and talk about parliamentary skulduggery and cheating?

Mr. Watts: Right hon. and hon. Members must be answerable for their views on these matters. I did not indulge in any criticism of those who opposed the reform which I supported because if there were a reform of which I disapproved, I would use the same tactics to prevent it from being enacted. The use of parliamentary procedure is a perfectly fair way for right hon. and hon. Members to seek to block legislation of which they disapprove.

Miss Emma Nicholson (Torridge and Devon, West): Does my hon. Friend agree, therefore, that it was improper for the hon. Member for Liverpool, Mossley Hill (Mr. Alton) to write to my constituents—he subsequently apologised, for which I am grateful—accusing me of filibustering and delaying the passage of the Bill by speaking at length to delay the Committee stage of another Bill on which I spoke for less than one minute? Does he agree that it was disgraceful conduct to send that letter to my constituents without my knowledge?

Mr. Watts: I do not wish to be drawn into a disagreement between my hon. Friend and the hon. Member for Mossley Hill. If this is still a live issue for them, no doubt they can slug it out later.

Our procedures should not prevent the will of a substantial majority of the House from prevailing. If Session after Session there is the will to reform this appalling Act but the procedures prevent it, it will lower the standing of the House in the eyes of the public whom we serve. We shall look foolish as an institution if we cannot allow the will of the majority to prevail.

Last Session, at a late stage in the proceedings on the Abortion (Amendment) Bill, it was suggested to the Government that they should provide extra time to allow the Bill to complete its stages. At that time I supported the proposal, partly because it was clear that the disastrous 1967 Act would never have reached the statute book had it not received extra time from the Labour Government. Last year my right hon. Friends in Government resisted that proposal and I can see that granting extra time to one private Member's Bill could be the start of a slippery slope. If one Bill were favoured, why should not every private Member's Bill that could not succeed for lack of time also be given more time?

Two wrongs would not make a right. The first wrong was for extra time to have been granted in 1967. In effect, that Bill was not a private Member's Bill but a Government Bill which the Labour Government lacked the courage to introduce. The right hon. Member for Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale was merely the stalking horse for that Labour measure.

In order to amend what was effectively a Government Bill in private Member's clothing, we need a Government Bill to allow reform to proceed. We have a model in the Government's proposals to introduce a Bill to regulate research on human embryos. They have told the House that they intend to introduce a Bill during this Parliament which has alternative sets of clauses so that the House can reach a decision on a free vote. As it is a Government Bill, it will have both time and the weight of Government behind it so that it can reach the statute book.

I urge my hon. and learned Friend the Minister of State and my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State to consider whether a Bill of similar format could be introduced to permit the reform of the Abortion Act 1967 which the House has often clearly shown it wishes to reform. If there were a Government Bill, even with unlimited time, the worry is that it, as with private Members' attempts to reform the law, would be obstructed by whichever side of the debate did not like the outcome of the free votes on its constituent clauses. Clearly that is a danger, but it does not present an insuperable problem.

I have always been in favour of timetable motions for all legislation. I know, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that you will not allow me to sidetrack the House into a debate on that broader issue this morning, but the danger of obstruction to such a Bill could be overcome with prior agreement on a generous timetable to cover all its stages. In that way, the House would decide that a Bill to reform the 1967 Act would reach the statute book. We would agree on the amount of time that would be needed to debate its provisions and we would know before Second Reading that it would reach the statute book. That would bring to a conclusion our long-running and consecutive debates on this issue. The House would then have an opportunity for a full and fair debate on the issue and to reach a final conclusion.

I hope that there will be a consensus in the House on the desirability of finding a means to reach a conclusion on this. Otherwise, in successive Sessions, much of private Members' time will be taken up by private Members' Bills to reform the Abortion Act which cannot succeed because we are essentially seeking to reform a Government Bill in private Members' clothing. Without the time which a Government Bill can command, such a reform will never find its way on to the statute book, although I shall continue to come to the House on every occasion when such a Bill is before it to vote in support of reform.

I am aware that many right hon. and hon. Members wish to speak on this motion and possibly even on following motions if time allows. One of my purposes this morning is to provide an opportunity for a wide-ranging debate on the pro-life issues and I do not wish to prevent others from taking part by speaking for too long. I have already been on my feet for close on half an hour, so I shall touch only briefly on research on human embryos.

Over four years ago the House debated the Warnock report. On that occasion the time available to me was limited. I had about three minutes at 1.45 pm. I concluded my brief speech by saying:

"there is urgent need for legislation to outlaw any experimentation on human embryos and to provide full protection for all human embryos."—[*Official Report*, 23 November 1984; Vol. 68, c. 580.]

Mr. David Steel (Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale): Whatever may be the strong feelings in this House on it, we recognise that this is a very difficult ethical consideration. Will the hon. Gentleman address himself to the latest opinion published the other day which was repeated this morning on the radio by Professor Robert Winston of Hammersmith hospital? He told us of a patient who had watched four brothers and a nephew die from a form of

[Mr. David Steel]

muscular dystrophy and in addition had had two late abortions at 20 weeks after it was discovered that the foetus was affected by muscular dystrophy. Professor Winston is conducting research into embryos to provide a way to allow women to carry healthy embryos to term. He made the point that if embryo research is outlawed, late abortions will continue. People who campaign to ban embryo research are encouraging late abortions to continue by preventing medical research. Another purpose of embryo research is to get to the root of natural abortion which greatly exceeds the rate of medical abortion in this country. The campaigners never address themselves to that.

Mr. Watts: I did not hear the radio interview to which the hon. Gentleman referred. Of course there are always persuasive arguments that benefits may arise from such research. However, at the end of the day we must decide whether the ends justify the means. I do not think that they do.

Mr. Alton: I urge the hon. Member not to be misled by the bogus arguments put forward by my right hon. Friend the Member for Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale (Mr. Steel). My right hon. Friend's comments are totally misleading because 92 per cent. of late abortions are on perfectly healthy children who are aborted under the social clause. That has nothing to do with disability. The hon. Member for Slough (Mr. Watts) should be aware of the comments of Professor Jerome Lejeune, professor of fundamental genetics, who said:

"I explained that human embryo research as recommended by the Warnock Committee could not produce any positive results in the investigation and treatment of congenital and genetic diseases because at 14 days the organs and systems affected by these conditions have not yet developed."

Mr. Watts: As the hon. Gentleman has expressed so clearly, medical and scientific opinion on the necessity for such experiments is divided. We can find supporters on both sides of the argument to support our case. For example, I am persuaded by the views of Sir John Peel, the Queen's former gynaecologist, and 26 fellows of the Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists—including two of the college's past presidents—who issued a statement which read:

"The rejection of experimentation on human embryos is implicit in the code of professional ethics, relating to all human experimentation, which has from time immemorial been endorsed by the medical profession and repeatedly confirmed by the World Medical Association and other professional bodies. The central principle of this code is that concern for the interests of the subject, namely the patient, must always prevail over the interests of science or society. The human embryo conceived by in vitro fertilisation is the subject of the doctors concerned, and as with an adult patient, may not be put at risk for any reason other than to enhance his or her own well-being.

The effective investigation of pathological conditions developing during pre-natal life should not require the killing of human embryos."

I prefer to align myself with that professional and ethical opinion.

That view is put even more succinctly by the Royal College of Nursing, which described all such research techniques as "repugnant and unacceptable and in direct conflict with the RCN's view that basic human rights are applicable from the moment of conception."

I am not a scientist and I am not burdened by their knowledge. However, it seems to me that from the moment of conception there is no other significant event in the development of human life before it reaches the stage at which a child can be born. Arguments such as those rehearsed in the Warnock report about whether experiments on an embryo up to 14 days are acceptable, but not beyond, or perhaps at 40 days or two months are an attempt at moral hair splitting. I see no moral or logical difference in experimenting on human life at any stage. I reject such proposals.

Inevitably there are widely differing views on whether experiments on human embryos should be allowed and in what circumstances. Whatever view one takes, there should be a general agreement that it is totally unsatisfactory for such experiments to be conducted outside the law because this House has failed to provide a legislative framework.

The Government have undertaken to ensure that a Bill will be introduced during this Parliament. However, we are already into the second Session and there is still no sign of it. I recognise that the legislative timetable is crowded and that the Department of Health has a very important Bill this Session, the Children Bill, which deals with protection of the born child. It will be a pity if that Bill comes forward only at the expense of a Bill to protect the unborn child. If my right hon. Friend the Leader of the House is looking for some space in the legislative programme, I suggest that the Department of the Environment is overburdened with legislation this Session. Perhaps the half-baked proposal for a football membership scheme could be dropped to make way for this much more important Bill for which the House has been waiting for more than four years.

No matter how it may be achieved, I urge the business managers to provide the House with an early opportunity to consider a Bill on embryo research. If my proposal for reforming the Abortion Act 1967 finds favour, there is a prospect that progress could be made in this Parliament to provide comprehensive protection for the unborn child at every stage of its development. I believe that my supporters are in the majority in this House. I ask the Government to provide the House with the time.

10.7 am

Mr. David Alton (Liverpool, Mossley Hill): We are all indebted to the hon. Member for Slough (Mr. Watts) for giving us the opportunity to debate these important questions this morning. Far too often there is a conspiracy of silence about the unborn child. The media as well as the House regularly minimise and eliminate the importance of these questions. It is shocking that the second most widely practised operation in the National Health Service, abortion, is never seen on our television screens. If the video, "The Eclipse of Reason", which was sent to hon. Members earlier this year, was seen by the British public, it would radically alter attitudes and change minds. Far too many people in the media and in this House are still steeped in 1960s attitudes and reflect the sterile slogans that were chanted then. They are not looking more deeply at the questions raised by pro-life supporters.

Attitudes have been changing. It is not without significance that when my Abortion (Amendment) Bill came to the House earlier this year, we achieved the biggest

pro-life vote ever and 296 hon. Members are now in favour of pro-life legislation compared with only 29 hon. Members who opposed the Third Reading of the Bill introduced by my right hon. Friend the Member for Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale (Mr. Steel) in 1967. That shows how attitudes have changed.

Since 1974, there have been 15 pro-life Bills and not one was defeated on a fair and free vote. They were all defeated by the use of procedural devices, techniques and tactics. However legitimate that may be in terms of parliamentary procedure, there is a growing body of opinion in this House and elsewhere that Parliament is brought into disrepute when tactics and not arguments can win the day.

Mr. Thurnham: The hon. Gentleman is talking about tactics. Will he say a little more about the tactics in which he engaged in the last Session? He and his hon. Friends were up to such tricks as writing to constituents, making false allegations and issuing a "list of shame". Will he say more about that "list of shame" and why he did not retract it?

Mr. Alton: As the hon. Member for Bolton, North-East (Mr. Thurnham) knows I spoke to hundreds of people in his constituency who were very much in favour of the Bill that I promoted. All over the country, thousands of people supported the Bill. I received 18,000 letters in favour of my Bill and only 2,000 against it. Every opinion poll showed a massive majority in favour of what we were trying to do, yet the hon. Member for Bolton, North-East expects me to say, naively, that it was mere coincidence that the Committee that considered the Licensing Bill, which was just ahead of my Bill in the Committee queue, was made up of the same people who were doing their best to try to thwart the progress of the Bill. An actuary tells me that the mathematical probability was millions to one against the likelihood of that happening. All this may be fair in terms of the way in which Parliament operates, but I ask hon. Members to consider whether that is the way to deal with important, life and death questions.

Mr. Andrew MacKay: I promoted the Licensing Bill. I do not mind if the hon. Gentleman abuses me, but I object when he abuses a senior and distinguished Member of the House who chaired the Committee extremely well—my hon. Friend the Member for Staffordshire, (South (Mr. Cormack)—who knows that filibustering is not allowed. the hon. Gentleman seems to be suggesting that my hon. Friend, who is a distinguished member of the Chairman's Panel, was incompetent and did not chair the Committee properly. I refute that and put on record that I have every faith in my hon. Friend the Member for Staffordshire South.

Mr. Alton: So have I. That is not the issue. Hon. Members know that it is a question not of filibustering but of using legitimate procedures. Hon. Members can talk on and on and can move as many amendments as they want. That is perfectly in order. Then there is injured innocence, as though they had no intention of trying to prevent my Bill from making progress. They must think that I have just got off the banana boat.

Miss Emma Nicholson (Torridge and Devon, West): When talking about the composition of Committees, does the hon. Gentleman agree that it was perfectly proper for me, as a sponsor of the Bill of my hon. Friend the Member for Winchester (Mr. Browne) on cruelty to animals—a subject on which I have a long-term interest as witnessed by my own private Member's Bill on the slaughter of deer in the same parliamentary Session—to sit on that Committee? I was immensely restrained in speaking for less than one minute in that Committee. Will the hon. Gentleman explain, therefore, to the House rather than in a private apology, why he wrote to my constituents behind my back—and to people all over the country—from whom I subsequently received letters accusing me of action that I had not taken? Will he explain how, when he cannot conduct a case honestly himself, he expects me to respect his own parliamentary concept?

Mr. Alton: I understand the strength of feeling of the hon. Member for Torridge and Devon, West (Miss Nicholson), but she will remember that many members of the Committee—such as the hon. Member for Leyton (Mr. Cohen)—spoke at length on many amendments. Although I am happy to recognise that the hon. Lady was not one of the people who were speaking at length in that Committee, other people were. It was my right, as a Member of Parliament, to write to constituents to explain that some members of the Committee were speaking at length, and although I am happy to say that the hon. Lady was not one of those who sought to draw out proceedings, others did.

Ms. Jo Richardson (Barking): Does the hon. Gentleman agree that when my hon. Friend the Member for Leyton (Mr. Cohen) was intervening in the previous Animal Protection (Amendment) Bill, he actually effected some improvements to that Bill? If he had not persisted, that might not have happened.

Mr. Alton: The hon. Member for Barking (Ms. Richardson) is right. I know that the hon. Member for Leyton has an interest in such questions, but if the hon. Lady examines the record, she will come to the same conclusion as I have—that it was unnecessary to protract the proceedings at such length. Hon. Members should not be frightened of a vote on the substantive question about whether there should be a lower time limit. If we could have moved to that vote—we were a tantalising twelve and a half minutes away—we could have subsequently decided whether the vote should have been on 18, 22 or 24 weeks. That would have been a matter for the House to decide, if people had wanted genuinely to arrive at a conclusion.

We must contrast what happened in January 1988 with what happened in 1967, when the Government provided 25 hours for the Bill promoted by the right hon. Member for Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale (Mr. Steel) to become law. The hon. Member for Grantham (Mr. Hogg) said yesterday, at Question Time, that he thought that the proper way to proceed with the matter was through a private Member's Bill. We are caught in a constitutional lacuna. The original Bill was neither private nor public legislation. It became law because it received public time, as the hon. Member for Slough has pointed out. It is in a unique constitutional position and has been turned into a great untouchable. It will not do for Ministers to say that we should bring in more private Member's Bills.

I will support the hon. Member for Maidstone (Miss Widdecombe) when she brings in her Bill to limit the time for abortions, but the Government should face the issue head on and introduce a Bill on which the House could debate the merits of the argument rather than allowing the Bill to fail as a result of being frustrated in Committee. If

[Mr. Alton]

it will always be a matter of tactics, I am afraid that people will grow increasingly frustrated and angry at the barbarism that takes place daily in our name with the full connivance of British law.

Mr. Steel: I think that my hon. Friend was not in the House yesterday when the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Home Office said:

"My hon. Friend puts his point very firmly. The 1929 Act provides that at 28 weeks of development, there is a rebuttable presumption that the foetus is capable of survival. There is quite clear and compelling evidence that the rebuttable presumption should arise not at 28 weeks, but at 24 weeks, but the House may feel that this matter could be best tackled by Private Member's legislation."—[*Official Report*, 15 December 1988; Vol. 143, c. 1077.]

The 1929 Act is a Government measure. Does my hon. Friend agree that the matter could be resolved if Ministers in the Department of Health and the Home Office were to bring forward an amendment, in one of the criminal Bills, to the Infant Life (Preservation) Act 1929 for a 24 week limit, which the House could then discuss? My hon. Friend and others could press for a lower limit. That would get rid of the matter and we could then leave the Abortion Act 1967 alone.

Mr. Alton: I shall not be tempted down that road. The legislation that needs to be amended is the right hon. Gentleman's 1967 legislation and not the flimsy legislation that exists to protect the unborn child. I am interested to see the Minister of State for Health agreeing with a 24-week limit.

The Minister of State for Health (Mr. David Mellor): I do not want to mislead the hon. Gentleman inadvertently. I was agreeing with the statement by my hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Home Department, which was quoted by the right hon. Member for Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale (Mr. Steel), which describes the position as we understand it. I agree with the diagnosis, but not with the remedy.

Mr. Alton: I feel reassured by that because a limit of 24 weeks would not save a single life. That is why those who introduced the 1967 legislation are so enthusiastic about such a limit. We should search our hearts occasionally about the double standards that we apply. The slogan makers confidently demand the right to choose. Can it ever be right to take the life of someone else on the spurious ground of choice? Choices should be made earlier. The right to life must always be paramount. Plainly, it is inconsistent to demand rights for animals, welfare rights, women's rights and minority rights and yet to ignore the basic right to life.

Lord Houghton of Sowerby is a great opponent of any pro-life legislation, but he is also the president of the Scottish Society for the Prevention of Vivisection. He said in its 1987 report:

"In other fields of animal welfare higher standards of human behaviour towards animals are emerging. There are no Victorian values we can fall back upon. We are now having to formulate our own against a background of conventional indifference and cruelty."

Page 58 of the report shows a chimpanzee foetus. People could say it was an emotive photograph if it showed an unborn child. It shows a chimpanzee foetus at 126 days —just 18 weeks gestation. It is inconsistent to oppose the practice of vivisection on an animal—which I, too, oppose —while giving the unborn child no protection whatever.

Last week, Parliament square was decked out in United Nations flags as we celebrated the 40th anniversary of the Declaration of Human Rights. We should remember the depravity, barbarism inhumanity and indifference that necessitated that declaration. After all that had gone before, during the preceeding 20 years, it was thought necessary to affirm the right to life. We said 40 years ago that everyone had a right to life, and that right is being affirmed again today by those of us who recognise the consistency of protecting the rights of the vulnerable, weak and powerless by protecting those of unborn children.

Paradoxically, during a debate on the reintroduction of capital punishment the right hon. Member for Birmingham, Sparkbrook (Mr. Hattersley), who speaks on home affairs matters, said that all our laws were based on the principle of the sanctity of human life. How inconsistent it is to oppose capital punishment and yet to be in favour of abortion. A society that condones experiments on the unborn child and abortions of its own species condemns itself and loses the right to call itself civilised.

What do we allow under British law? We allow abortions later than any other western European country —up to seven months into pregnancy. The average EEC time limit is 12 to 14 weeks. We do not believe that the compromise that we are told is necessary falls at 24 weeks. The House must recognise that there is a difference between humanity and viability.

Yesterday we raked over the entrails of the Carlisle baby case. That baby would not have been saved if there had been a time limit of 21 weeks. Last year, at Carlisle general hospital, a baby was aborted after 21 weeks gestation because its mother had been told that it would be "a monster". She was told that it would have a life-threatening disease. In fact, no life-threatening disability was involved; it was a non-recurrent skin disorder which was not a serious disability in the terms of the disability clause of the 1967 Act. No resuscitation equipment was available in the ward where that abortion took place. They subsequently failed to tell the mother that the baby had struggled for three hours for life. There was no registration of that baby's birth, after those events had taken place. In an answer given on 13 June the then Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State said:

"Following the decision made by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Home Department not to direct that an inquest should be held"—

although the local coroner took the view that an inquest should be held and referred the matter to the Home Office—

"the Registrar General has made her own inquiries and these indicate that the requirements of the legislation governing the registration of births and deaths do apply in this case."—[*Official Report*, 13 June 1988; Vol. 135 c. *64*.]

I hope that the Minister will explain why that birth has still not been registered, as implied in the written answer on 13 June.

My right hon. Friend the Member for Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale referred to the 1929 Act, which refers to a baby being protected if it is capable of being born alive. What did happen in the Carlisle case if the baby was not born alive? It could not survive beccause it was not sufficiently developed. It had not reached the 23 or 24 weeks of gestation that meet the criteria that hon.

Members constantly cite. It was at 21 weeks, but it struggled for life for three hours. It had undisputed life for three hours and then it was unceremoniously put into a black sack and incinerated.

What else do we allow under our law? We know that 88 per cent. of late abortions are carried out in private clinics rather than in the National Health Service. We know that the majority of them are done using dilation and evacuation. We can only consider as barabric and uncivilised the mutilation of children which we allow. Everyone knows what happens in the procedure. The baby is between 10 and 12 ins long and pumps 50 pints of blood a day. All its organs are in place and it is clearly recognisable as a human being. A pliars-like instrument is inserted, the baby's skull is crushed and it is removed piece by piece.

Mr. Steel: Same old speech.

Mr. Alton: Yes, it is the same old stuff and I make no apology for it. Since the legislation of the right hon. Gentleman—whom I often call my right hon. Friend—has been introduced, 3 million babies have been aborted in this country at a rate of 174,000 a year or 600 every working day. I do not believe that the right hon. Gentleman thought that that would happen when he introduced his Bill in 1967.

In the procedures, no anaesthetic is used and no account is taken of the pain inflicted on the child. The publication entitled "Human Procreation—Ethical Aspects of the New Techniques", published by the Council for Science and Society, says that pain is experienced

"after the foetus has developed a nervous system, six weeks after pregnancy being the earliest."

Mr. Peter McCulloch, an eminent immunologist says:

"babies can be in agony during abortions."

Mr. Nicholas Bennett (Pembroke): I am the hon. Gentleman's hon. Friend on this matter. Can he confirm that no less than 60 per cent. of late abortions are carried out by the same 11 doctors and that there is clear evidence of abuse?

Mr. Alton: Yes, and last year they netted £2 million for their efforts. It is inconsistent that the Opposition who complain about the private sector and the profit motive, to be the first to jump into the breach to defend those people. In the first three months of this year alone, £4·5 million changed hands in the abortion business. There are financial links between the clinics and counselling agencies: 32 of the people who run counselling agencies run clinics as well, and they have a clear profit motive in sending people to have abortions. Those financial links should be severed and the financial exploitation of women ended.

Only the pro-lifers in the House can say that they care for both the woman and the child. We are the only ones who can point to the mounting evidence of the massive increase in post-abortion trauma. I should like to read some letters that I have received in the past few months. One lady wrote:

"I was only 7 weeks pregnant when I had a termination many years ago, but the trauma and nightmare are still with me. The damages mentally and physically are awful, but no one bothered to tell me the facts and that it could affect my chances of having a normal pregnancy"

Another wrote:

"I had an abortion which nearly destroyed me and that was eight years ago. I was an older mother and therefore high risk. I panicked a bit as I already had three children and had heard that older mothers have more disabled babies. The doctors all encouraged me to have the abortion and no one told me what could happen. I became very depressed and thought another child might help but as it turns out both my tubes were blocked as a result of that abortion. I think that women should be told that some people never get over an abortion."

A third said:

"The memory of my abortion nearly three years ago was until six months ago with me every day—destroying my life and eroding my marriage. My husband agreed to have another baby and now I am six months pregnant and we are both overjoyed."

In 1976 the Royal College of General Practitioners established a study in the Manchester unit to examine post-abortion trauma. Can the Minister tell us when the promise made in Committee that that report would be published will be honoured?

Abortion clearly has consequences for all involved. I have shown the consequences that it has for the child and for the women. In 1967, we were told that abortion would give women new rights. Clearly, it has not. In 1967, we were told it would reduce illegitimacy because it would mean that every child would be wanted, yet 15 per cent. of all births today are of illegitimate children. We were told that it would end child abuse. What nonsense that is. Hardly a day passes without an example of physical or sexual abuse of a child. Surely, the ultimate form of child abuse is taking the life of a child in the womb.

Miss Nicholson: I must ask the hon. Gentleman not to use the term "illegitimate". I am very pleased indeed that illegitimacy no longer exists. Children are born to one-parent families. There are no bars on children whether they are born of one-parent or two-parent families. I believe that that point must be made because it will help many people whose parents were not married when they were born.

Mr. Alton: The hon. Lady must accept that a child's prospects are far better if it is born inside marriage than outside marriage. I did not use the word "illegitimacy" in a legal sense, but simply to make the point about the way in which a child will be brought up and cared for.

Part of the trouble is that people get behind slogans but do not examine the details. They do not use words such as "child" or "baby". It is much easier for them to use phrases such as "pre-embryo", "product of conception" or euphemisms such as "foetus" or "zygote". We must look more deeply at the consequences of abortion for all involved and recognise it as a violent and degrading act that takes life and turns our doctors and nurses into destroyers rather than defenders of life. It is the counsel of despair. It is sheer defeatism. As a society, we must be able to do better than that.

It is not enough merely to be anti-abortion, and I am not. We must be positively pro-life. We must look for radical alternatives that are based on decent human values, not on mere utility. We must consider adoption as a way of providing people with the chance of bringing up a child instead of encouraging the never-ending tide of abortion. We should seek more positive pro-life counselling. We should remove the fear of disability that people often try to engender. The amniocentesis test is used increasingly as the first part of a search and destroy mission. If we use a form of perfection test to decide who may or may not live, it will bring society to a sorry state.

[Mr. Alton]

Two hundred years ago in the House people challenged what was then regarded as the greatest contemporary evil —slavery. These days, the greatest contemporary evil is abortion. Just as in the 1970s the peace movement caught the imagination of the country, as did the green and the ecological movement in the 1980s, in the 1990s people from all sorts of backgrounds and from across the political spectrum will make the pro-life issue no longer a marginal or cranky issue that can be pushed to one side, but a subject central to debates in the House and in the country. We in the pro-life movement in the House and the other place will ensure that Parliament will not be allowed to run away from the debate. That is why I shall support the hon. Member for Maidstone (Miss Widdecombe), who will introduce a Bill to lower the time limits, and I hope that the Duke of Norfolk's Bill on embryo experimentation will make progress in the other place.

Perhaps in 20 years' time another William Wilberforce will rise up and abortion will wither on the vine. Two hundred years ago, Wilberforce began his final assault on the slavery laws from the constituency of Maidstone. I hope that we can take comfort from his words—that the bravest of all are not those who win but those who take the first steps.

10.53 am

Sir Bernard Braine (Castle Point): I join the hon. Member for Liverpool, Mossley Hill (Mr. Alton) in congratulating my hon. Friend the Member for Slough (Mr. Watts) on his good fortune in the ballot and on choosing this pressing and moving subject for debate. With the right hon. Member for Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale (Mr. Steel). I am one of the few hon. Members who have been involved in the debate on and the fight against the present abortion law from the time that his Bill reached its Committee stage in 1966. It became obvious to some of us that if the Bill reached the statute book it would be little more than a licence to print money for the shady end of the medical profession.

It gives me no satisfaction to say that all our predictions then and subsequently have proved to be mild compared with the reality. My hon. Friend the Member for Slough said that almost 3 million unborn children have been killed. The authors of the Abortion Act 1967 swore to Parliament and to the British public that they had no intention of leaving the door wide open to abortion on demand—I wish to be fair to the right hon. Gentleman in that respect—yet from the very day that the Act became law it has been abused constantly. One cliché after another has been used to pull the wool over people's eyes and to render respectable what in effect has been abortion on demand.

We regularly hear hackneyed phrases such as "abortion on request" "every child a wanted child" and "a woman's right to choose". The first—"abortion on request"—is illegal. The second is hypocrisy of the worst order, especially because since 1967 child abuse has spiralled. Yet because of the wholesale slaughter that has been encouraged it has been impossible to meet the pleas of decent childless couples whose heart's desire is to adopt and care for children.

I wish the House to consider further the third slogan —"a woman's right to choose". It has become increasingly obvious that the last thing that abortionism inspires is choice. That applies even to the women themselves. There is no doubt that unborn children are not the only victims of abortion. Like the hon. Member for Mossley Hill, over the years I have received hundreds of letters—probably because of my known interest in the matter—from women who have had abortions and have regretted it or have suffered as a consequence. Women involved in this terrible procedure are victims of a deliberate and malicious campaign promoted by the moneymakers and those who have built their careers on an acceptance of killing unborn children—sometimes using them for experiments. It involves a conspiracy of silence and lies regarding the nature of the unborn child and the physical and psychological effects of abortion on the mother. I shall not repeat the arguments in detail because they were put to the House clearly and succinctly by the hon. Member for Mossley Hill.

Mr. Steel: The right hon. Gentleman said that he has received letters from people who regret that they had abortions, and my hon. Friend the Member for Liverpool, Mossley Hill (Mr. Alton)—he is still my hon. Friend despite our differences on this issue—read out some of them. But I hope that both will accept that some of us have received letters from women who were deeply grateful for the opportunity to have a legal and safe termination of pregnancy. We could all exchange emotive letters on the subject. None of us has ever denied that abortion is an unpleasant process.

Sir Bernard Braine: In 1966 and 1967 there was a need to revise the abortion law. There is no argument about that. My argument is that the 1967 Act has led to widespread abuse. The right hon. Gentleman knows that it led to so much abuse that Bills seeking to amend it were introduced in Parliament. The James White Bill which called for reform had a substantial majority, but he was bought off by a promise from the Government that they would set up a Select Committee. The Committee, of which I was a member and which had a distinguished Labour Chairman, met for two years and made recommendations, none of which was implemented by the Government. The Act has been open to abuse from the beginning. I do not malign the right hon. Gentleman's intentions. He has said many times that it was not his intention to introduce legislation that would lead to abortion on demand.

All over the world doctors are speaking out about post-abortion syndrome and about the many women who suffer from psychological trauma, sometimes for the rest of their lives. In Britain most of the information comes not from doctors, as it should, but from moving letters that women write to newspapers, magazines and hon. Members. It is an appalling indictment of some members of the medical profession. It has been the women who have undergone abortions—not the doctors—who have come together to support and counsel their sisters suffering from the trauma of which they have an intimate knowledge through their own painful experiences.

Mrs. Maria Fyfe (Glasgow, Maryhill): While clearly some women may regret having had an abortion, is the right hon. Gentleman saying to such women, "I will help you to make up your mind, because I shall make you a criminal if you decide to have an abortion"?

Sir Bernard Braine: I am not quarrelling in any way with the hon. Lady's views on this subject. It is capable of being looked at, I hope, with charity, understanding and sympathy from many different points of view. I am not, therefore, railing against abortions in those circumstances where the mother's life is at risk or where the mother's health and that of her other children may be gravely impaired. One can think of other circumstances, which are all laid down in the Act. All I am saying is that there has been a steady resistance to any kind of reform to ensure that the Act is not abused.

A second indictment of some doctors is that for years they have insisted that the physical after-effects of abortion are minimal. In debate after debate in the House, we have had letters and statements read from doctors who laughed at and scorned any claim regarding the possible dangers of abortion. Here in December 1988 we are faced with the development of the well advertised French abortifacient pill, RU486. We see doctors attacking the pro-life movement for opposing this obnoxious form of chemical warfare on unborn children. They justify this pill on the ground that it is so much safer for a woman than are abortion techniques, such as the suction method, which is so repellant that I did not intend to say anything about it. However, a description of it was given by the hon. Member for Mossley Hill. For nearly two decades the same doctors have sworn that that method is safe. It is so repellant that I advise hon. Members who really care about the matter to find out what happens in abortion clinics and hospitals throughout the country.

We must ask whether RU486 is safe any more than the suction method has been safe. What long-term studies have been carried out into the possible effects of deliberately imbalancing the chemistry of a woman's body to ensure an early abortion? Furthermore, we know from statements of the makers of RU486 that it was intended ultimately for use by Third world women. With all the concern that we express in the House from time to time about the plight of the deprived and the poor in the Third world, they were no doubt expecting us to remain silent while women from poorer countries are used as their long-term guinea pigs.

However, one thing of which we can be sure is that those who advocate freedom of choice are bitterly opposed to informed choice. We know that they do not want women to be made aware of the dangers to themselves. We must also ask why they object so strongly when the public are shown scientific pictures on the development of the unborn child.

For example, the hon. Member for Mossley Hill will remember that during the campaign on the Abortion (Amendment) Bill we used the picture of a baby of 18 weeks gestation. In their fury, the pro-abortionists immediately launched a campaign claiming that the picture was a fraud because the baby was already dead. I had never heard such hypocrisy. The picture was from a medical text book used in nursing and medical schools throughout the world. The book sold more than 1 million copies in many different languages and is lauded in many countries because of the realistic manner in which it shows babies at different stages of development before birth. Pro-abortionists told us that the picture must be discounted because the photograph had been taken after the baby had died. They were frightened because women would realise, having seen that picture, that abortion involved the destruction of a human baby. By those standards, a woman may have the right to choose an abortion so long as she pays and is left in ignorance as to the full implications of the choice she has taken.

We heard recently of a medical secretary who was sacked because she refused to write a letter for an appointment for a woman having an abortion——

Mr. Thurnham: Quite right too.

Sir Bernard Braine: My hon. Friend says, "Quite right", but he should not rush to judgment until he hears the facts. The facts are terrifying.

After the secretary was sacked, she appealed. However, according to the Law Lords, she had no right to object because she was not directly involved in the abortion and, therefore, was not covered by the conscience clause in the Abortion Act, for which we fought so hard through the Committee and Report stages of the original Bill. Why should anyone lose her job because she refused to write a letter which revolted her conscience? It is monstrous that a tribunal should have ruled that she had been properly dismissed for misconduct. Section 4(1) of the Abortion Act 1967 provides that no person should have to participate in any abortion to which they have a conscientious objection. Making arrangements for an abortion is participation. The law is clearly defective and is one more example of the way in which common sense has failed to prevail in respect of the workings of the 1967 Act.

We have also heard the case of a young hospital chaplain, who was sacked. I use the word "sacked" deliberately because pro-abortionists will claim that he was not sacked and his contract simply was not renewed. I served on the Select Committee on the Abortion (Amendment) Bill and in our third special report, published in July 1975, we recommended that no abortion should be carried out after 20 weeks in centres unless resuscitation equipment was available for live babies and staff trained in its use. A copy of that report is available in the Library. That recommendation was correctly accepted and embraced by the DHSS.

However, more than 13 years later, at the hospital about which the chaplain complained, a baby was aborted at 21 weeks and lived for three hours. The child was not given resuscitation at that hospital, and one of the excuses was that, although such equipment existed, it was not in the same building. In other words, the hospital—the Carlisle City hospital, referred to by the hon. Member for Mossley Hill—acted in breach of the requirements laid down by the DHSS. The fact that the child lived for so long showed that it was capable of being born alive, making the abortion an act in breach of the Infant Life Preservation Act 1929, which stipulates that abortion may not take place if the child is capable of being born alive.

I ask my hon. and learned Friend why there has still not been an inquest. Why was not the resuscitation equipment used in such circumstances? This case raises serious issues and there are questions to be answered.

On 9 February, *The Times* stated:

"The foetus, of a baby girl, was born in July 1987 in Carlisle City General Hospital after its mother had an abortion. It lay in a kidney dish for nearly three hours, allegedly gasping for breath and with a heartbeat of 80 beats a minute, and was then wrapped in a plastic bag and incinerated.

The doctor on duty apparently did not know what to do. One of the nurses present performed an unofficial baptism.

[Sir Bernard Braine]

The story came to light earlier this month when a Roman Catholic priest, Father Peter Houghton, revealed that three nurses had come to him for advice.

Following correspondence with Mr. Alton, Mr. Ian Morton, coroner for North-east Cumbria, asked the police to investigate, and said yesterday that he intended to apply to the Home Office for an inquest. Home Office permission must be sought if there is no corpse and is usually a formality".

I repeat my question: why was there no inquest? Who stopped it? What was the reason for the cover-up? There was a cover-up, because the ground for abortion in this case was that the child would be handicapped. One must presume that the child would have been seriously handicapped, because that was the intention of the authors of the Act. However, the handicap from which the child was apparently suffering, Elhers syndrome, in no way threatens life. Some adults have that disability throughout their lives without being conscious of having it. It was an excuse for the abortion. Incidentally, the mother had been advised against the abortion by her general practitioner. She was never told the nature of her child's disability, nor that the baby was born alive.

The House is entitled to know why there was no inquest, the purpose of which would have been to establish not only the cause of death, but the circumstances surrounding it. It was a matter of public concern and interest. I have little doubt that, if the coroner had ruled that a wrong-doing had occurred, swift Government action would have resulted. Why was no inquest ordered? Why was it stopped?

The Select Committee on the Abortion (Amendment) Bill of which I was a member also stressed that the conscience clause in the Abortion Act needed strengthening mainly because of objections that the Committee had received from members of the nursing and medical professions who had been discriminated against because of their objections to abortions on social grounds. However, 13 years later, the nurses involved with the abortion at the Carlisle City general hospital were deeply upset by what happened, but terrified to speak out in case they were sacked or penalised. They were right to be terrified because, although nothing was done about the consultant gynaecologist or the registrar who induced the abortion, the chaplain, whose calling requires him to care and to speak the truth, was sacked. The rights of the innocent were thrown to the wind.

Ever since 1975, Bills to amend the abortion law have had substantial majorities in this House. We also know from polls conducted in the country that there is a substantial majority in favour of such amending legislation. However, the procedures governing private Members' time are such that, on each occasion, the amending Bills have been talked out by a minority. I am not questioning the right of those hon. Members to do that under the existing procedures. That is a sterile argument. All hon. Members are entitled to their views.

My complaint is against the authorities of the House that have permitted procedures to obtain that blatantly frustrate the will of the majority. The authorities say that it is not a matter for the Government and that they do not provide extra time. What does that mean? It means that the substantive Act of 1967, which got on to the statute book only with Government help, is written in letters of stone. It will never be amended because time will never be found to do so. Such an abuse could continue. How much longer do we have to rail in the House against such wickedness before the Government take hold of the matter and act responsibly?

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: Although my right hon. Friend says that the opponents of the Abortion (Amendment) Bill used the procedures correctly, the use of parliamentary procedures as delaying tactics suggests a failure in their argument. They were scared to let the matter go to a vote. That is the strength or weakness of their argument.

Sir Bernard Braine: I know that my hon. Friend feels passionately about this and I strongly sympathise with him.

The House of Commons has many functions, and we seek to persuade one another. I am not impugning hon. Members who abuse our procedures. For many years I held the record for making the longest speech from the Back Benches since 1828. The Government of the day, a Labour Government, recognised that I was speaking in defence of a threatened community, the people of Canvey Island. The Government realised that something had to be done and they ordered inquiries to be conducted. The Health and Safety Executive carried out what I understand to be the only comprehensive safety survey of an entire community to be conducted. Three Canvey Island safety reports have been issued by the House as a consequence. I do not apologise for that speech and many people felt that I struck a blow for my constituency, but that is not for me to say.

I used the procedures of the House. I cannot agree with what my hon. Friend the Member for Pembroke (Mr. Bennett) has said. If hon. Members have strong objections they should use our procedures in the way in which they think fit.

Those opponents of the Abortion (Amendment) Bill, however, ignore the fact that the will of the majority in this House should, in the end, prevail. They ignore the fact that there is an overwhelming majority of people who want reform—they may not wish to go the whole way with us in the pro-life movement, but they want reform.

Mr. Steel: The point that the right hon. Gentleman repeatedly ignores is that there is no majority in this House for a limit lower than 24 weeks——

Sir Bernard Braine: There is.

Mr. Steel: No. When my hon. Friend the Member for Liverpool, Mossley Hill (Mr. Alton) quoted the votes on Second Reading, he forgot that he had promised the House that there would be amendments in Committee.

Sir Bernard Braine: There were.

Mr. Steel: Oh yes, but not on the central issue of the deadline. There is no majority in this House for a time limit below 24 weeks. It is a minority of Members who keep introducing such Bills.

Sir Bernard Braine: I am astonished that the right hon. Gentleman, with his considerable parliamentary experience, should put up such a phoney argument. The Bill called for an 18-week limitation and he knows perfectly well that the House gave it a substantial majority vote. He also knows that the only votes taken that morning in the limited time available gave us a substantial majority. He

does not know what the House would agree to. All he knows is that it threw out an amendment for a 26-week limit.

We took a careful sounding among hon. Members and we believe that there was a majority in favour of a 20-week limitation.

Mr. Steel *indicated dissent.*

Sir Bernard Braine: We had that majority. I do not wish to speculate on that. The point is that the House was not given the opportunity to pronounce on the matter. That is my complaint.

I do not wish to delay the House as other hon. Members wish to speak. People outside this place, however, cannot understand how we can permit this scandal to continue. It is high time that we resolved this matter once and for all by insisting that our procedures should facilitate, not block, the will of the majority. I believe that the Government have a clear duty to give that lead. I commend the motion tabled by my hon. Friend the Member for Slouth (Mr. Watts) to the House.

10.58 am

Mr. Dafydd Wigley (Caernarfon): I do not wish to detain the House too long because a number of other hon. Members wish to speak and we have already had three speeches that have each lasted about 30 minutes. Earlier this year we also had an opportunity to take part in a debate on abortion, embryonic research and the possibility of restrictive legislation preventing research into congenital handicap. On 4 February I spoke at some length and I do not see much point in repeating the arguments now.

When the hon. Member for Liverpool, Mossley Hill (Mr. Alton) spoke he said one thing that caused offence to Members on both sides of the House. He suggested that only those people who agree with his stance have regard to the needs of the mother and her children. I took offence at that statement and I intervened from a sedentary position to register my offence.

Mr. Alton: I am sorry if the hon. Gentleman interpreted my remark in that way. I would not suggest that he or any other hon. Member had no concern for the woman and the child. What I meant to say was: no concern for the woman and the unborn child.

Mr. Wigley: That is slightly different. The issue is whether there is a continuum of regard and responsibility and whether the unborn child, as the hon. Gentleman calls it, or perhaps even the most elementary cluster of cells 24 or 48 hours old, should have the same status in law and in our perception.

Mr. Steel: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I apologise to the hon. Member for Caernarfon (Mr. Wigley), but I gave him notice that at 11 am I would raise a point of order again pursuant to that raised earlier by the hon. Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner). Mr. Speaker said that there might be a statement at 11 am. There is no sign of one. Have you anything to tell us on the matter?

Dr. David Clark (South Shields): Further to that point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. It has been widely reported in the media this morning that, following the grossly irresponsible statement by the Under-Secretary of State for Health about eggs, which has literally devastated the egg and poultry industry in Britain, the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food is to be forced to introduce a scheme costing up to £40 million to compensate egg producers for their loss of income and to gas millions of healthy hens. The hon. Lady truly has the most expensive mouth in history and should resign.

We believe that the House should hear details of any compensation scheme first. I have asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food to come to the House to make an urgent statement, but neither he nor the Under-Secretary is present. Can you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, advise us whether we may have an assurance that the Minister will be present at 2.30 pm to tell us about the situation?

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Sir Paul Dean): I think that I can help the House and save time by dealing with these points of order. I have been informed that the Government will seek to make a statement to the House on Monday.

Mr. Steel: Further to that point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I support what was said by the Opposition spokesman. On the radio this morning we were led to believe that the scheme was in preparation and details of it were given. If we are not given a statement, which has to do with the conduct of a Minister, until Monday, and if we have to wait over the weekend while we read more details in the Sunday newspapers we are being treated with contempt. This is quite intolerable.

Mr. Cryer: Further to that point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. On the House Press Association tapes, which are provided for hon. Members' information, there is a report which clearly implies that the Government will make a statement today about the details of the scheme, so we shall be presented with a fait accompli.

The massive damage done by the Under-Secretary of State for Health will give rise to a scheme whose details will be given in the press. I have no doubt that secret briefings are going on now—with two tape recorders running because these occasions are so important. We shall be left trailing after the Government, after they have made a statement and the press have had the information.

I know that you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, are concerned with the status of this Chamber and the accountability of the Government to Parliament. It is outrageous for the Government to ignore Parliament and to tell the press that they will issue a statement over the weekend, although the House is sitting this morning and Opposition Members are willing and able to listen to a statement and ask questions about it.

I ask you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, to use your influence with the Government to tell them that they are accountable. I know that you are not responsible for statements to the House; but I also know that if you and Mr. Speaker intimate to the Government that you regard them as accountable to the House for the deprivation caused by, and the savage irresponsibility of, the Under-Secretary of State, they will reconsider.

Mr. Kevin Barron (Rother Valley): Further to the point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. In view of the actions of the past 24 hours, it seems that the chickens of the Under-Secretary of State for Health are coming home to roost. The House should be the first to be able to question

[Mr. Kevin Barron]

what looks like a massive amount of public expenditure which appears to have come from her mouth. We should have the statement before it is given to the Sunday press.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. Before I take more points of order, I remind the House that we are taking time from the debate. It is private Members' time. All I sought to do earlier was to convey to the House the information that has been conveyed to Mr. Speaker by the Government. I cannot add to that.

Mr. Frank Dobson (Holborn and St. Pancras): Further to that point of order Mr. Deputy Speaker. It is quite clear that the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food heavily briefed the press yesterday and was willing to tell it about its proposals. The chief medical officer of the Department of Health appeared on almost every television and radio channel that would take him this morning to give a briefing.

We want to know why no Minister is here to answer to the House,. We do not believe undertakings that no statements will be made over the weekend. We want to know why the Minister apperently has to clear this with the bureaucrats in Brussels before he can sort out the mess made by his hon. Friend the Member for Derbyshire, South (Mrs. Currie)—but he is not willing to come to the House. This is a most important matter.

You, Mr. Deputy Speaker, have conveyed to the House your understanding of the position. We should be grateful if you would convey to the Government our belief that it is unsatisfactory that the Minister is not prepared to tell the House what is happening. Perhaps he cannot positively say what has been agreed because he needs to clear it with Brussels if it involves extra money, but we are happy to listen to the interim position, which the people of this country and we are entitled to know. We do not want this leaked to the Sunday papers; we are sick to death of that.

Mr. Mellor: Further to that point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I agree with you that the sooner we can return to the important matters for debate the better, but I hope that I shall be able to assist right hon. and hon. Members who have spoken.

As you have said, Mr. Deputy Speaker, a statement will be made on Monday by my right hon. Friend the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, but I understand the concern that has been expressed about details of any scheme, if scheme there be, being the subject of briefings that might then appear in the press. I certainly accept that Parliament should be the first to know of any such scheme and that the first knowledge of it should come from any statement on Monday.

That is why I undertake to the House on behalf of my right hon. Friend the Minister of Agriculture that there will be no question of any press statement or briefing giving details of any of the matters that will be the subject of a statement to the House until that statement has been made. I give that undertaking in good faith, and I hope that those who raised the point in good faith will accept the spirit in which it is given.

Mr. Dobson: Further to that point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. It is all very well talking about undertakings not being given this weekend, but the briefings have already been given. I do not believe that 10 British newspapers suddenly concocted a story about a compensation scheme. They were told by press officers or Ministers, or both.

We also want to know, if the writ against the hon. Member for Derbyshire, South (Mrs. Currie) is proceeded with between now and Monday, whether we shall be obstructed by the sub judice rule from raising this matter. It is important that we be able to raise it untrammelled by anything, particularly the sub judice rule. We want that clarified, if not now, then at least by 2.30 pm.

Mr. Allen McKay (Barnsley, West and Penistone): It is arrogant of the Government to tell us we shall have a statement on Monday. At 7.30 and at 8 o'clock this morning we heard on the radio that a scheme had been devised. The headline in today's *Daily Mail* was written based on information given not this morning but last night. The Government know about the scheme they are bringing in. They are arrogant to think that they can steamroller the Opposition, the House, the House rules and Mr. Speaker. They should make a statement here this morning to let hon. Members and the country know what is going on. Hundreds of people have been put out of work and there are hundreds of bankruptcies and impending bankruptcies. The Government say that they will leave it until Monday. That is just not on.

Mr. Donald Anderson (Swansea, East): Will you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, undertake to convey to the Government the deep feelings of the House? We are again being presented with a fait accompli. We accept the good faith of the Minister of State, Department of Health in relation to any future briefings. However, the Government have already given briefings and the Sunday press will be full of them. Given the nature of this case, Monday's statement should be made not by the Minister, because it is about the personal responsibility of a junior Minister. We can imagine what would happen if a Labour local authority had cost the public purse so much. In that case a statement would have been made immediately to the House and there would be a surcharge. In this instance the House is being ignored. Is the Prime Minister afraid of dismissing a junior Minister?

Mr. Alan Williams (Swansea, West): We are in a somewhat unique situation because we have just had news that a writ is to be issued against a Minister. At the very least the Secretary of State for Health should be in the Chamber to tell us what the procedure will be. We already know that the blunder by the Under-Secretary of State for Health has cost £500,000 in advertising and will cost many millions more in a scheme to protect producers. Will the British taxpayer be placed in the absurd position of having to pay the legal protection costs of this loud-mouthed junior Minister?

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): It has already been trailed by the press, as you probably know and have heard this morning, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that the junior Minister's mouth has already cost the British taxpayer £10 million. No statement will be made today and that means that over the weekend, as a result of more bankruptcies and further bailings out that will undoubtedly take place, the figure of £10 million will probably increase. The taxpayer needs a statement today to clear up the mess and

to stop this financial seepage. We are constantly being told by the Prime Minister that taxpayers' money is sacrosanct and that there should be no subsidies, no bailing out.

We have already heard that £10 million is to be paid out to subsidise firms that have gone bankrupt or are likely to go bankrupt as a result of the junior Minister opening her big gob. It is high time that the Government had a message conveyed to them through you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that there should be a statement today to stop any further financial leakage. I am informed that briefings are now taking place with Bernard Ingham and other Government spokesmen and that half the press lobby has gone to them. If Bernard Ingham is doing the briefing, the Prime Minister should be brought to the House to answer the charges. Why is the Minister of State, Department of Health replying to a debate that should be answered by the Under-Secretary of State, who is in Liverpool with her mother and has been there for three days? What kind of Government do we have? There is a big financial scandal and the Prime Minister does not have the guts to sack the person who has caused it. Thousands of workers have been thrown on the scrap heap and Government spokesmen do not have the guts to explain to the House what is going on. It is time that that situation was altered.

Mr. Andrew MacKay: Further to these points of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Could it be that some of this indignation is a shade frothy? If we had a statement today, would there not be general indignation in the House that on a sparsely attended day many hon. Members who have a particular interest in poultry farming are in their constituencies talking to people in the industry and are therefore unable to take part? There would have been genuine indignation, and that is why it is much more sensible to have the statement on Monday when those hon. Members can contribute.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I have allowed a good run on these points of order, which are interrupting an important debate in private Members' time. I have given from the Chair the information that is available to Mr. Speaker, and the Minister of State, Department of Health has added his contribution. I suggest to the House that it is high time that we got back to the debate.

Mr. Cryer: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I have called the hon. Member for Bradford, South (Mr. Cryer) and shall call him again, but there is nothing that I can add from the Chair. These points of order are cutting into private Members' time.

Mr. Cryer: On the tapes and in the newspapers there is a story that a large egg-producing company is to sue and intends to issue a writ against the junior Minister in question.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: So what?

Mr. Cryer: The hon. Gentleman says, "So what?" This week Mr. Speaker said that the House cannot discuss the sale of 50 residential homes in Bradford because the matter is sub judice and subject to judicial review. May I have your assurance, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that the issue of a writ will not prejudice a statement being made in the House on Monday by the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food or the Prime Minister or any personal statement by the Minister involved?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The hon. Gentleman will understand that I cannot give rulings on hypothetical situations. There are Ministers present and I am quite certain that they have heard all that has been said in these exchanges. I call Mr. Wigley.

Mr. Wigley: I did not expect to be interrupted in the way that I was. On this rare occasion, had I not been speaking when the points of order were raised, I would have come in on them myself. A chicken farmer in my constituency has already had to slaughter a third of his birds and expects to slaughter another third very soon, so I have every sympathy with the points that have been raised, albeit at my expense. One thing that clearly emerges is the greater interest in chickens than in the debate about the protection of the unborn child. I am not sure what we should read into that.

It is clear from what has been said by the three hon. Members who have spoken so far that basically the same arguments have been advanced at this time towards the end of 1988 as were advanced in earlier debates on this subject. Of course, that does not in any way debase the argument. I respect the sincerity of hon. Members who put forward such arguments. I wondered why the debate was taking place now and thought that it might be because there were new arguments and points to be considered. Hon. Members have spoken about Professor Lejeune. He seems to be the perennial professor put on parade in such debates. Given the amount of attention that hon. Members have paid to the Carlisle case, it might have been better for the motion to refer directly to that case rather than in general.

Once again, we have had debate about the legitimacy or otherwise of pictures that were used in the previous campaign, and we have had debate about parliamentary procedures. It seems that we are going round in the same circle. I want to speak about one or two new developments that may well help the argument more than the points that have been made so far. Before doing so, however, I should like to refer to two other matters. One concerns the votes that have taken place in the House. I accept that the hon. Member for Mossley Hill had a vote for a Second Reading of his Bill, and I know that many hon. Members voted in favour of Second Reading and wanted to see amendments to the Bill about a different termination time. I talked to colleagues on both sides of the House, and it seemed that the most favoured time limit was 24 weeks. That came through loud and clear. The hon. Member for Maidstone (Miss Widdecombe) shakes her head, but I spoke to at least three or four dozen people who voted in favour of the Bill but who were in favour of a limit of 24 weeks.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: If the hon. Gentleman believes that to be the case, why was it that the opponents of the Bill made sure that the House did not have an opportunity to vote on the longer time limit, through obstructing the vote by tabling bogus amendments?

Mr. Wigley: Those who prevented the vote taking place were those who supported the Bill and wanted the votes to be taken in a certain order to ensure that the vote on the 24-week limit did not take place earlier. One can cast aspersions on both sides of the House, but that is a

[Mr. Wigley]

reflection of the unsatisfactory ways in which we deal with such matters. The hon. Member for Mossley Hill made an error of judgment in the way that he handled that vote, and as a result, he lost the Bill. The House might have passed a Bill introducing a limit of 24 weeks. I doubt whether a 22-week limit would have passed, but I accept that other hon. Members think that it would. From what the hon. Member for Mossley Hill has said today and before, a Bill imposing a 24-week limit would not be acceptable to him. In other words, what appeared to be the judgment of the House was not what he wanted.

The motion, and the debate, have linked two different matters. One is research into and using embryos, and the other is abortion reform. Those who tabled the motion have a fundamentalist approach on these matters. In other words, it is a question not of drawing a line at 22, 20 or 18 weeks, but of not drawing a line at all. If that were not so, the two matters would not have been linked as they are. We have already heard comments about the sanctity of clusters of cells at an early stage of development.

Mr. Barron: That fundamentalist approach would be honest if those who advocated it were prepared to test the House on it and instead of playing games with the number of weeks introduced a Bill to stop abortion to see what the House thought about that.

Mr. Wigley: The hon. Gentleman is right. Some hon. Members do not take a fundamentalist view but believe that there is a need to examine the abortion laws. If a Bill to amend the abortion law were introduced on a bona fide basis that included taking note of the changes in medical science since 1967 and 1969, with a view to reducing the abortion limit from 28 to 24 weeks, or whatever is appropriate, rather than on the basis of a fundamentalist attack on the whole law, there would be more sympathy in the House towards it. I voted against the Abortion (Amendment) Bill introduced by the hon. Member for Mossley Hill on Second Reading not because I would oppose consideration of cutting the limit to 24 weeks but because it was the thin end of the wedge and if the hon. Gentleman had had his way the limit would not be 18 weeks or 12 weeks—there would be no limit at all. He has acknowledged that his Bill was a compromise, and he would like to go further.

Mr. Alton: It is a bit like the nuclear arms race. I should like to see the dismantling of all nuclear weapons systems, but if we could get rid of one I would regard that as progress. The hon. Gentleman implies that there is something dishonest about saying that one is opposed to abortion but recognises that there should be changes in the light of medical advances. Surely it is legitimate for an hon. Member to test the attitude of the House about a matter of public policy, which is all that my Bill tried to do.

Mr. Wigley: I am explaining to the hon. Gentleman why some who might be willing to consider moderate changes to the 1967 Act will vote against Bills in principle, although some will vote for them on Second Reading but be sympathetic to stopping them, as happened with the hon. Gentleman's Bill, because of the fear that such Bills would be a vehicle for going very much further than is wanted.

The hon. Member for Mossley Hill cannot have it both ways. He cannot pander as a fundamentalist to the extreme lobby with which he is associated and at the same time appear as a moderate reformer. I understand the passion with which he holds his beliefs and I hold my beliefs with an equal passion, but if there is a move to reform the 1967 Act, with a reduction of the limit from 28 to 24 weeks, it will have to be done differently from the way in which it has been done so far.

Unfortunately, the motion does not address this problem in any detail and there is no reference to the exact changes that those who tabled it wish to see. The terms are general, and the generality provides an umbrella for people of many different persuasions. Some may be uneasy about the workings of the Act and whether resuscitation equipment is available, which is a legitimate concern, while others want to see the end of abortion altogether because they believe that the abortion of an early embryo only a few days old, is murder. Hon. Members will have received letters and correspondence earlier this year suggesting that that is so, and I respect people who have such religious beliefs, but that is a belief that neither I nor, I believe, the vast majority of hon. Members share.

Mr. Thurnham: Many millions of women throughout the world use the IUD coil as a method of contraception, but I am sure that none of them believes that she is committing murder every month.

Mr. Wigley: I am sure that that is so. Nevertheless, many hon. Members and others campaigning on this issue are wholly opposed to contraception. That is the great irony. Because of the lack of contraception and contraception advice, many young women become pregnant when they do not want to be. That is a basic inconsistency in the position taken by some, though not all, hon. Members taking part in this debate.

I find the reference to "private profit" strange. I am opposed to the making of private profit out of abortion or any other NHS service, but the argument should be that the NHS must provide a better service so that people do not have to resort to private health provision.

There is also the question of research into congenital handicap. I find it strange that people who are willing to accept, even as a compromise position, a limit of 18 weeks for abortion are not prepared to countenance any period during which research can be undertaken on early clusters of cells. In other words, they take a fundamentalist position on that, but a compromise position on abortion. We know that in the in vitro fertilisation work that is undertaken, half a dozen clusters of small cells may be produced, of which only two or three will be used for re-implantation. Some are frozen and held for possible further use, some may be used for research purposes, and some may be thrown away.

If restrictive legislation were passed along the lines of Bills introduced in earlier Parliaments which have had no support yet in this Parliament, there would be a block on valuable research that is being undertaken. On 14 December, *The Guardian* published a report on research being undertaken at Hammersmith hospital. It said:

"Those facing cystic fibrosis, muscular dystrophy and haemophilia are the individuals who will benefit from in vitro genetic screening, a technique first described on Monday at a meeting of scientists at the Royal Society."

In other words, rapid progress is being made on this medical frontier. The questions and the potentials change from month to month and the potential is immense. The report continues:

"The work about to be carried out at the Hammersmith, which may eventually benefit thousands of families plagued with inherited and incurable diseases,falls within the present guidelines laid down by the Voluntary Licensing Authority. This means it would be done before the embryo reaches 14 days, when, it is thought, the cells that will eventually form the baby organise themselves along a line called 'the primitive streak.' This could not even have been attempted if Enoch Powell had had his way in 1985 with his Unborn Children Protection Act.".

In other words, exciting research of major relevance to people who are suffering from genetic diseases of that sort would be threatened if the type of legislation supported by the hon. Member for Slough (Mr. Watts) were to reach the statute book.

There is public concern that abuse could take place. I still accept the Warnock recommendation of 14 days. One can argue about where to draw the line. I accept that some people want legislative safeguards so that the decision is not left wholly to the voluntary sector. For that reason, the motion is a bit of mixture and I am not opposed to many parts of it. I want legislation that does not ban vital research which holds out the possibility of cures for some congenital handicaps and conditions.

Given the advances in medical science, made even since our earlier debate in February of this year, I urge the Government to give greater weight to the alternative clause in the White Paper which allows research to take place for up to 14 days. An overwhelming majority of people would accept that as a reasonable compromise. I urge hon. Members, although there are few in the Chanber at the moment, who seek an 18-week limit for abortion but who say that they would regard 20 or 22 weeks as preferable to 28, to search their consciences when they say that they are not prepared to compromise in that way on research which has such an effect on so many people. Those questions are of considerable interest and we need specific proposals before the House if we are to reach decisions on them.

The motion facilitates debate but does not take the argument much further forward. The best result of the debate would be some sign of the Government's most recent thinking on controls on research in view of the enormous progress that has been made even during the past year.

11.32 am

Mr. Peter Thurnham (Bolton, North-East): I am glad to have this opportunity to follow the hon. Member for Caenarfon (Mr. Wigley) who made an excellent and helpful speech. His stance on the subject has been clearly stated and is helpful. Hon. Members from both sides of the House know that his views are sincerely and personally held.

I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Slough (Mr. Watts) on his success in the ballot. I have entered the ballot whenever I have had the opportunity, but I have never reached anywhere near first place. I am a little surprised that my hon. Friend should put forward a motion linking the Abortion (Amendment) Bill and the Unborn Children (Protection) Bill. They deal with separate issues and it is only because of the confused attempt to follow matters of principle right through that my hon. Friend has linked them.

Mr. Frank Dobson (Holborn and St. Pancras): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I apologise to the hon. Member for Bolton, North-East (Mr. Thurnham) for interrupting his speech. May I make it clear that I am in no way challenging the good faith of the Minister when he assured us earlier, when we raised points of order about whether there would be a statement on what the Government are to do about eggs and chickens, that there was no question of the Government making a press statement or issuing any briefing outside the House before a statement was made to the House on Monday. It has come to our attention that, while that assurance was being given, Mr. Bernard Ingham's deputy from the Cabinet press office was in the Press Gallery briefing journalists and saying that the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food is to make a statement outside the House this afternoon. Since then the MAFF press office has been in touch with other press people to tell them that that is indeed the case.

I am sure that the Minister, the hon. and learned Member for Putney (Mr. Mellor) was speaking in good faith earlier, but I think that you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, will agree that it is essential to get this matter cleared up. We must establish who is deciding policy. Is it the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, the Department of Health or Mr. Bernard Ingham? We are entitled to know. We must have a statement at 2.30 pm. This is a gross abuse of the House and of egg producers who are bothered about their future. Some of them may have to make desperately difficult decisions about their flocks and how to dispose of their eggs during the weekend. They will want to know whether, if they gas 10,000 chickens this weekend, they will receive compensation, but they will not know until a scheme is announced on Monday. It is imperative that we have a statement. This is the grossest abuse of the House and of the poor Minister of State who was put up to tell us something that turned out not to be true.

Mr. Steel: Further to that point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I hope that you will be able to convey to the Government before 2.30 pm the strength of feeling on this matter in the House. It is not simply, a question of how the House has been treated, but fundamental ministerial responsibility to the House that is at the heart of the argument. With great respect to the Minister, even having him here will not do, because this issue concerns the damage that a Minister has caused to the interests of taxpayers whom we are elected to represent and protect. That is at the root of the argument. I hope that you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, will relay that and the strength of feeling in the House to the Government so that they might reconsider the decision to delay the statement until Monday.

Mr. Kevin Barron (Rother Valley): Further to that point of order Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. The House will appreciate that these are not matters for the Chair. I am sure that what has been said will have been noted by those on the Government Front Bench. I do not think that we can carry the matter any further. We are taking valuable time out of

[Mr. Deputy Speaker]

a private Members' day. I hope that we can leave the matter there and that these clearly important issues will be pursued in other ways.

Mr. Dobson: Further to that point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. As you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and other hon. Members know, I am interested in, and recognise, the fundamental nature of the debate about the protection of the unborn child—as it is described—so I do not wish to interfere with that debate at any great length. However, an assurance was given to the House and to Mr. Speaker, but at the time that assurance was being broken. The matter affects the Chair directly. The understandings on which you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, based your response to the point of order turned out not to be true. That was not your fault, nor that of the Minister, but the Government appear to be in total chaos. We must have a statement in the House today to clear up who is making the policy and what the policy is. We would like a statement from the Minister now, if he can give it, that he will set about getting the matter clarified. I am not accusing him of doing anything wrong. The Government are wholly at fault and the matter must be sorted out in the House today.

Mr. Mellor: Further to that point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I am grateful to the hon. Member for Holborn and St. Pancras (Mr. Dobson) for what he said about my earlier intervention. I assure him that it will be honoured to the letter.

Mr. Allen McKay *rose*——

Mr. Thurnham *rose*——

Mr Deputy Speaker: Order. I recognise that there is a problem here. There may or may not be misunderstandings. Whether there are or not, they will not be sorted out on the Floor of the House. The most prudent course, and that most likely to bring satisfaction to all involved, is to have discussions elsewhere to try to get the matter sorted rather than taking up valuable time in this debate.

Mr. Thurnham: I am grateful for the opportunity to continue with the debate. I was saying that I regretted that my hon. Friend had linked two Bills which I saw as being quite separate. It would, however, be unfair for me to blame him for moving his motion on a day when we have become tangled up with another "eggs" issue. We are talking here about the development of the human embryo and the child, and I trust that we can concentrate on that. I look forward to hearing the reply from my hon. and learned Friend the Minister, and I hope that he does not continue to be harassed about other matters which I am sure would be better dealt with on Monday, when a full House will be here.

I intend to concentrate mainly on in vitro fertilisation research. I do not intend to say much about the Abortion (Amendment) Bill. However, public opinion—a question that is constantly raised by the hon. Member for Liverpool, Mossley Hill (Mr. Alton)—is quite clear on the issue. A Marplan poll carried out in 1987 for the Abortion Law Reform Association found that 79 per cent. of those questioned thought that the decision whether a woman should continue her pregnancy should be left to the woman, in consultation with her doctors. Let me remind the hon. Gentleman and his friends that that is the position, and that I shall continue to support it.

That public feeling is reinforced by a British attitudes survey which shows that attitudes in general have become more liberal since 1983. There is, in fact, a clear global trend towards the liberalisation of abortion laws. Over the past 20 years 65 jurisidictions have liberalised the laws, and only four have subsequently restricted them. Many countries now place much less restriction on abortion than does this country. It is grossly unfair to suggest that a freak Act in 1967 led to today's laws, which the public support.

The debate on IVF research is not taking place in this country alone; it is taking place worldwide. The more informed people are, the better they are able to make wise judgments. As new medical technology improves, so do the chances of survival both before and after birth. This country is a world leader in the field, and I should like to pay tribute to all who have made that possible. We lead the world not only in medical science but in the philosophers and religious thinkers who found a basis on which the research could be carried out in a proper and moral way.

Let me pay tribute especially to the Rev. Professor Gordon Dunstan, and refer hon. Members to his recently published book "The Status of the Human Embryo". In it he sets out the moral justification for such research, commenting not only on the position of the Church of England—which has come down in favour of the research—but on that of the Roman Catholic Church. There is a useful chapter written by Dr. Brendan Soane which illustrates the extent of disagreement within that Church.

We should pay the greatest possible regard to the care of those who are born as well as those who are unborn. We should remember that in this country alone more than 10,000 babies are born handicapped each year. We are still waiting for the report by the Office of Population Censuses and Surveys on handicapped children. The data are not very clear, but the figures that I have seen suggest that more than 2,000 severely handicapped children are born each year, many of whom end up in institutional care if their parents are unable to cope with their afflictions and if adoptive or foster parents cannot be found. Thousands of children are still in institutional care in this country.

The risk of congenital handicap is very real. Premature babies are more prone to such handicap, and the younger the baby—the closer its age to the lowest age at which survival is possible, whether it is 24 weeks or any other age—the greater the risk. One of the most important recent developments, referred to by the hon. Member for Caernarfon (Mr. Wigley), is in pre-natal genetic diagnosis. A meeting of the Royal Society this week discussed the good work that has been done at Hammersmith hospital. Such work provides a chance for fewer children to be born with congenital handicaps as the research proves. It will also mean fewer abortions at 20 weeks on the ground of foetal diagnosis. I should have thought that those who want fewer abortions would therefore favour it.

In the 10 years in which IVF babies have been produced 10,000 have been born throughout the world, but that was only possible because of the 10 years of research that preceded it. I ask those who condemn the research what harm has come from it. Is the world a worse place because of it? I do not think so; I think that it is a much better place. We must face the challenge, not run away. Throughout the history of mankind we have faced up to technological advance. We discovered fire and learnt to

use it, but there is of course an attendant risk. We discovered the use of the wheel. That has benefited mankind, but there is still a risk, as is shown by the recent rail disaster at Clapham Junction. We have come to terms with such risks and learnt how to control them so that we can use technology for our benefit.

The secrets of the atom were discovered earlier this century at Cambridge. Much of the IVF research has also been done there. We should be proud of that work, and not run away from it. We should try to establish exactly what limits and controls there should be and how they should be exercised, rather than attempt to introduce legislation to ban the work.

Mr. William Cash (Stafford): My hon. Friend and I have crossed swords on this subject for many years. Does he agree, in the context of his analogy with the nuclear bomb and the uses of nuclear power, that the manipulation of human characteristics by genetic engineering falls into about the same category of importance? Whereas it is possible to reorganise and scale down nuclear power, human genetic engineering, once engaged in, is irreversibly built into the future. If there are benefits to be derived, they must be weighed most seriously against the incredible dangers.

Mr. Thurnham: My hon. Friend is talking about genetic engineering. The voluntary licensing authority which sets down the criteria for research work in this country has listed that as one of the four criteria that it is not allowing. There are arguments in favour of genetic engineering if it can be shown to reduce the incidence of illnesses such as diabetes. I believe that work has been done in America to show that it is possible to work on a mouse embryo and to remove the gene responsible for diabetes. If that could be done in this country and we could reduce the suffering that results from the common illness of diabetes, that would be welcomed.

However, I agree with my hon. Friend that we should think carefully about genetic engineering and, indeed, the voluntary licensing authority lists genetic engineering as one of its key criteria. We should bear in mind that the voluntary licensing authority is recognised throughout the world as an excellent institution. It is a British institution and one founded on common sense and on a practical approach to how we should manage the new developments that are taking place in that area.

I look forward to hearing what my hon. and learned Friend the Minister for Health will say about the voluntary licensing authority. I hope that he feels that its work is as excellent as my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister has said that it is. It is funded largely from private resources. I hope that my hon. and learned Friend will say a little more about how the Government can help its work. I am sure that we are all in favour of the licensing authority being made a statutory licensing authority so that if it needs to have more teeth than it has been given so far, it can have them. As I have said, its work has been excellent and I hope that the Government will reinforce it by announcing some help with funding.

The voluntary licensing authority has laid down a limit of 14 days for work on embryos. That limit is beyond any period for which an embryo has been kept alive, as far as I am aware. I believe that eight or nine days is the maximum period for which an embryo or pre-embryo can be kept alive in a test tube, so 14 days is beyond what is practical anyway. By that stage an embryo would naturally have to be planted in its mother's womb to develop fully. Therefore, the 14-day limit is perfectly sensible and practical for research work.

The other criteria involved limitations on the use of any other species for gestation and on cloning. Although cloning is used in the animal world, I am sure that we would all agree without the slightest hesitation that that criterion should be strictly enforced. If we had a statutory authority, it would have the legal right to do that. Only those people who believe that our scientists and doctors are malevolent in some way would imagine that such things could occur at all.

The issues that we are discussing are being debated also in America, Australia and Europe. I should like to draw hon. Members' attention to *Science* magazine of 25 November in which an article is headed:

"Europe Split on Embryo Research".

A statement beneath that heading runs:

"We cannot have a situation in which the same research might lead to a Nobel Prize in some member states of the European Economic Community, and to prison in others."

I very much regret that people should feel that scientists should be sent to prison for conducting research that is within the limitations laid down by the voluntary licensing authority. I am sure that when the time comes for this House to consider legislation on such matters, hon. Members will want to support a statutory licensing authority as the way forward because by laying down limitations, a statutory licensing authority could allow research to continue in a way that would be beneficial not only to the people of this country, but throughout the world on the basis that we lead the world in that sphere.

Mr. Cash *rose*——

Mr. Thurnham: No, I have already given way once to my hon. Friend. I am sure that he will have his own opportunity to speak later.

I hope that the restrictions that may be brought in for some European member states, such as Germany, will not be enforced throughout the whole Community because that would be a mistake. I do not think that anybody in this country wants to take lessons in moral ethics from Germany. There is no doubt that some of the German proposals are reactions to the dreadful state of affairs there during the last war when 20 medical officers were sentenced for experiments carried out in concentration camps.

I am sure that we could approach this matter with a commonsense attitude. I hope that we shall not have any restrictive European legislation imposed on us. It is tempting to imagine that there might be restrictions in other European countries, but none here, which would give us a competitive advantage. However, I do not advocate such a policy because it would be risky. I would rather see developments throughout the whole of Europe, rather than just in one part of it.

The voluntary licensing authority has licensed 38 research projects, many of which were mentioned at the Royal Society meeting this Monday. I understand that at Hammersmith hospital 400 embryo experiments have taken place and that the hospital hopes to have a preventive system shortly for couples who are suffering from the disorder known as Lesch Nyhan-syndrome, which is a most grievous affliction. Anybody at risk of having children with that disorder would need every

[Mr. Thurnham]

possible help and encouragement. I do not understand the attitude of hon. Members who want to stop research which could help couples who suffer from such a dreadful plight.

There have also been arguments about the use of foetal tissue in the treatment of Parkinson's disease. I remind those who condemn doctors for doing that work that they do so only after their hospital ethical committee has given careful consideration to whether that should take place, bearing in mind the particular circumstances of the patient and those prepared to make the donation.

Miss Ann Widdecombe (Maidstone): Does my hon. Friend accept that the surgeons and doctors involved in the experiments can and do sit on the ethical committee? Does he agree that Parliament should consider whether we need to revise that, so that no man can be judge in his own case?

Mr. Thurnham: I tabled a question on that a while ago, and the Government have said that they are reviewing the way that ethical committees work. That is only sensible and right. I would not for a minute advocate that ethical committees should consist solely of people who do not know what they are talking about. They must consist of people engaged in the work as well as lay members of the community who can offer wise, informed judgments. It is absurd to imagine that ethical committees could consist of people who did not know about the work.

Parliament should not be arrogant and prohibit research. When the time comes to consider legislation I hope that it will agree to appoint a statutory licensing authority and that, meantime, the work of the voluntary licensing authority can be well supported. Hon. Members who have spoken should stop and think what more they can do to care for the born—who are with us. The considerations of those working in this area—the scientists and philosophers who put forward the arguments—are guided by a concern for the born, not by highly principled, remote, aloof consideration of what may or may not happen to the unborn. Let us face up to what is happening to the born. That is the hallmark of a civilised society.

11.56 am

Mr. Doug Henderson (Newcastle upon Tyne): I did not originally intend to speak in this debate, but I was concerned to see that the House was again to consider the question of abortion and in vitro fertilisation in the same debate. Since I have been a Member of the House I have been convinced that it does better when it considers specific rather than general matters. This morning the debate has been general.

I wish to address my comments to research on human pre-embryos. The wording of the motion is emotive and talks of

"concern about experiments on unborn children."

I could take issue with the hon. Member for Slough (Mr. Watts) on that wording, but I shall desist and stick to some of the more substantial issues.

I am not sure that this debate is necessary at this time. On 4 February we had a useful debate and it would have been best for each side to reflect on the arguments about in vitro fertilisation for a while. I know that the Government are reflecting on these issues. More reflection and perhaps less debate might have been a better way forward at this time. As we are forced into considering the matter once again, we have a chance to express our views on the nature of any legislation.

I am in no doubt that the main issue about in vitro fertilisation is whether research can continue and whether the research work of devoted scientists, working with minimum facilities, using their talents and endeavouring to help those people referred to by the hon. Member for Bolton, North-East (Mr. Thurnham) should be allowed to continue.

I was not clear what position the hon. Member for Slough (Mr. Watts) took on research. I note that he has left the Chamber, but I will give way to him if he comes back and will make his position clear. I know that some hon. Members on both sides of the House believe that research should cease. They must test their consciences against the denial of treatment. They must consider what would happen if treatment was denied to couples who face a high risk of passing on genetic diseases to their offspring or what would happen if treatment was denied to couples who want children but have a family history of genetic disease. Those people face the anguish and morality of bringing a child into the world who may have a high risk of disability and they may fret over their right to bring that child into the home. Couples so afflicted must consider whether they can look after a disabled child in future and endure the physical, social and psychological effects that that may bring. If we deny treatment, we deny those people a better chance in life.

I will not dwell too long on that aspect because the hon. Member for Caernarfon (Mr. Wigley) put the case clearly and eloquently in the debate in February for research to continue. He wanted to help people afflicted by diseases such as those mentioned today by the hon. Member for Bolton, North-East.

Treatment may also be denied to people who are in despair because they want children, but discover that they are unable to conceive. If we deny those people treatment, we will deny them any hope of relieving their anguish, soul searching, sense of inadequacy and mental pain. I hope that those who would outlaw research will weigh the feelings of those people against their own ideological beliefs. I hope that the people who would deny treatment are aware of the scale of childlessness in this country. They should know how many of their constituents suffer that anguish, soul searching, and sense of inadequacy. They should know how many of their constituents will seek help from local medical practitioners and hospitals.

The White Paper published in 1987 made it clear that one in six people have some form of infertility problem. It also showed that one in 10 couples need major hospital help to relieve infertility. That means that there are 6 million couples of child-bearing age and 1·25 million are childless.

Medical science has advanced significantly and it can bring relief and hope and, in many cases thankfully, joy. By 1987, more than 2,000 babies had been born in this country through in vitro fertilisation treatment. That is quite a substantial proportion of the number who have been born in that way throughout the world—about 30 per cent. or 40 per cent.—and reflects great credit on our own medical science.

However, the success rate is still low. The Voluntary Licensing Authority made it clear in its statistical analysis in 1986 that of the 4,687 couples who had received a treatment cycle, out of a total number of treatment cycles

of more than 7,000, over 1,000 had failed before the stage of egg collection, another 2,200 had failed at the point of entry transfer and only 754 pregnancies had resulted. Of those, 605 live births occurred. That is a success rate of less than one in 10 of those who received in vitro fertilisation treatment.

I am not clear what position the hon. Member for Slough is adopting. Is he against IVF in any circumstances? He and others who share his view will not choose to support either of the options in the White Paper. I concede that their position has some internal logic, although I do not agree with it and they must weigh their logic against the logic of others. But I do not accept that there is any internal logic in the view that was outlined in a debate in February by the right hon. Member for Castle Point (Sir B. Braine). I am not picking him out for special comment, but he and others said that they accepted option one in the White Paper, which was to agree on implantation when it occurred immediately and in relation to a woman, but that they did not accept any embryo research.

I repeat the point that I made then, that there is no internal logic in that argument. If one accepts that some IVF treatment can take place, one is effectively endorsing scientific developments in the past that involved research on embryos. When hospital authorities first mixed sperm and eggs, it did not result in a baby. Ten years of research took place before any major developments occurred and they required historic research. If one says that it is acceptable for a form of IVF treatment to take place to have an immediate and intended impact on fertility, one must say, to be consistent, that within the rules, regulations and agreed framework, one accepts that there should be further research to try to improve on success rates. Those who argue for the centre position have no logic on their side. Those who are fundamentalists and who are opposed to any idea of IVF treatment are being logical, but those who adopt the centre position should agree that some research is essential.

Mr. Cash: That is one of the most intelligent arguments that I have heard from those who take the opposite view to mine. However, I want to ask the hon Gentleman a question. If he looks at the statutory framework proposed by the new White Paper—we have had several previously on the subject—does he not agree that, even within the areas of constraint, where there is an absolute ban connected with a criminal offence, the constraint is merely on the basis of a temporary ban pending further research? Is that not, even to the hon. Gentleman, incongruous and highly dangerous?

Mr. Henderson: I understand the hon. Gentleman's point, but I fear that, if the centre option is chosen, so many restrictions will be imposed on research in future that it will prevent any meaningful discoveries from taking place, and therefore make a breakthrough unlikely.

If we are to continue to have in vitro fertilisation, we need further research, if for no other reason than that it is crucial to try to save medical facilities. Much medical time and many facilities are tied up in treatments that the medical authorities themselves recognise have only a one in 10 chance of succeeding. Because they believe that they can help some people, however, they feel compelled to give the maximum opportunity to those who visit them. I have observed the work done at King's College hospital in south London and I am impressed by the facilities there and at some other hospitals.

Research is crucial to identify the factors in pre-embryos that can help to explain why there is still such a low rate of fertilisation, and to discover how possible causes of damage to the pre-embryo can be evaluated during in vitro culture. The third, equally important, aim is to reduce the risk of multiple pregnancies. We all know that there is such a risk in IVF and associated treatments. While most families will very much welcome the birth of a young child, they would prefer not to undergo a high risk of multiple pregnancy.

We need research to investigate pre-implantation diagnostic techniques on human embryos which can reduce the risk of children being born with genetic diseases and help to reduce terminations by allowing diagnosis and treatment before a pregnancy is established. Research is needed to show that these techniques are safe, to determine that the pre-embryo is not irreparably damaged by the removal of small cells for diagnosis, to examine how many cells can be removed in that process and to determine the optimal stage of development for the removal of the cells.

Research is required further to investigate treatment for male infertility. At the moment, much of the treatment for male infertility has to involve the active participation of a woman. It would be much better if an in vitro system could be used to remove not only the women's direct involvement but the anguish and pain that go with it.

I do not expect all hon. Members to agree with me that there is scope for research to investigate new forms of contraception and that that is important. People at the forefront of medical development say that blocking agents can be tested in vitro very successfully, and that would be an efficient use of medical research and resources.

I could have referred to the need for better facilities all round, and to the need to reduce regional inequalities in facilities and improve public sector provision. I could have dealt with the licensing authority and said that I support the 14-day limit. We need to consider all those matters, but I am conscious of time. I passionately believe that when we consider introducing legislation we should address ourselves as dispassionately as possible to the real issues.

I accept the need for a legislative framework. It is somewhat incongruous that the Government, who argue in favour of having voluntary arrangements in many areas, should argue that there is a need for statutory arrangements in this case. I agree with them. I hope that the guiding principle behind that statutory framework will be the liberty of the 1·25 million childless people in this country who seek help.

12.14 pm

Mr. Andrew MacKay (Berkshire, East): I hope that the hon. Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, North (Mr. Henderson) will not complain if I do not pursue his arguments on embryo research. I agreed with every single word that he said in an outstanding speech that will need careful reading in *Hansard* on Monday.

I shall concentrate on abortion, which was the other issue mentioned in the motion so ably moved by my hon. Friend and neighbour the Member for Slough (Mr. Watts). I defend my hon. Friend from an allegation made by the hon. Member for Bradford, South (Mr. Cryer), who suggested that after the fall of the Abortion (Amendment)

[Mr. Andrew MacKay]

Bill last Session, my hon. Friend said that Parliament had been brought into disrepute and that the wrong tactics had been used. I share two local newspapers with my hon. Friend and I know that he has always behaved correctly. He has made none of the slurs or insinuations that we have heard from the hon. Member for Liverpool, Mossley Hill (Mr. Alton) and his friends in the anti-abortion lobby. My hon. Friend is the acceptable face of some pretty unacceptable people.

I was pleased that my hon. Friend came first in the ballot and that he chose this subject for discussion, and I am delighted that I was able to catch your eye, Mr. Deputy Speaker, so that I can say a few words.

The hon. Member for Mossley Hill is not in his place now, but I am sure that he will return in due course. It was disingenuous of him to suggest that because there was a substantial majority for the Second Reading of his Bill, it had overwhelming support in the House. The hon. Gentleman has been in the House for several years and was for some time the Chief Whip of the Liberal party and the alliance. Sadly, he is not the Chief Whip of the Social and Liberal Democrats because he does not support the new leadership of that party. The hon. Gentleman should be aware that a vote on Second Reading is a vote on principle. Many of my hon. Friends and many Opposition Members voted for the Second Reading of the Bill because they believed that the issue should be taken a stage further into Committee. They believed mistakenly—I warned them of it during the Second Reading debate—that they could persuade the hon. Member for Mossley Hill to amend his time limit from 18 weeks to 22 or 24 weeks. He gave them some woolly undertakings. They were deliberately woolly, because the hon. Gentleman is not normally a woolly speaker. Somewhat naively, they accepted those promises and he was able to slide out of them in Committee.

I am confident that had there been a vote on 24 weeks, as set out in an amendment that I tabled on Report, it would have been passed overwhelmingly. The House should recall that my early-day motion attracted many signatures and widespread support throughout the House, which shows that 24 weeks, with medical exceptions, would have been a reasonable compromise that would have been passed and widely supported.

If that be the case, Mr. Deputy Speaker, you may ask why the hon. Member for Mossley Hill did not agree to my amendment and why we do not have on the statute book a law that abortions may not take place after 24 weeks except in exceptional medical circumstances. The answer is that those who sponsored his Bill, and the hon. Gentleman himself, are anti-abortion. They do not want limits of 24 weeks or even 18 weeks. They want abortion to be made illegal. There are a few extremely honest people on their side, such as my hon. Friend the Member for Maidstone (Miss Widdecombe), who is good enough to admit that she believes that abortion should be made illegal, and I respect her views. My hon. Friend is fortunate to have been drawn fairly high up the ballot, as I have been. I am slightly more fortunate than her as I was drawn fourth and she seventh. No doubt, she will be introducing a Bill in this session of Parliament, which, I am told will be similar to the Bill that was introduced by the hon. Member for Mossley Hill.

Miss Widdecombe *indicated assent.*

Mr. MacKay: I am glad to see that my hon. Friend is confirming my last sentence. My hon. Friend will be wishing not to have that particular Bill passed, but will be wishing to make abortion illegal. That is why there is no compromise with people who have no desire——

Mr. Watts *rose——*

Miss Widdecombe *rose——*

Mr. MacKay: I shall give way to my hon. Friend the Member for Maidstone after I have given way to my hon. Friend the Member for Slough, but I shall just finish this point.

There is no possible compromise with people who want to make abortion illegal rather than bring the time limit down a little to take into account the advances in medical science since the original legislation was passed in 1967.

Mr. Watts: My hon. Friend asserts that a majority of the House would have been in favour of a 24-week limit. I believe that there would have been a majority for 18 weeks or something much closer to it than 24 weeks. Does my hon. Friend agree that it would be far better if it were unnecessary for either of us to make assertions on these matters, but that the House, instead, should have a chance to bring this debate to a conclusion? If my hon. Friend is right, he will be happy. If I am right, I shall be happy. Either way, the House will have reached a conclusion and the issue will be put to bed.

Mr. MacKay: I am grateful for my hon. Friend's intervention, because there is a part of my hon. Friend's motion which specifically refers to how he would like the House to move to forward on legislation on abortion reform. As I shall cover this in some detail a little later, if my hon. Friend will bear with me, I shall answer him fully.

Does my hon. Friend the Member for Maidstone wish to intervene?

Miss Widdecombe: No.

Mr. MacKay: If my hon. Friend is not entirely happy with anything that I have said, I shall be willing, as always, to give way.

The question was raised about extra time being given to the Bill promoted by the hon. Member for Mossley Hill in the last Session. I believe that my right hon. Friend the Leader of the House was right not to have given extra time to that Bill or to any other private Member's Bill. In recent times, no Conservative Government have given extra time to any private Member's Bill. What happened in 1967 is entirely a matter for the Labour party and the then Labour Government. I believe that giving extra time to private Member's Bills puts any Government in a difficult position and, especially, this Government. If the Government give extra time to one private Member's Bill, why should they not give it to another?

I am hoping to introduce a Sunday sports Bill next Wednesday, and if extra time had been given to the Abortion (Amendment) Bill, I would be very peeved if extra time was not given to my Bill. I believe that the Government are right and that they must stick to their guns. They must be completely consistent and say that it is not practical, possible or right to give extra time to private Member's Bills.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: Would my hon. Friend be in favour of private Member's Bills being subjected, if

possible, to timetable motions? At present, it is not possible for a private Member to seek leave of the House for a timetable motion. We are not asking for more time in future, but if we had a timetable motion perhaps we could actually get to the vote.

Mr. MacKay: That is a matter for the Procedures Committee. I believe that if I proceed down that road, Mr. Deputy Speaker, you will be calling me back to order. It would also be grossly unfair to other hon. Members who are waiting to speak.

It is important that we look at this motion carefully. Mention has been made of growing public concern. The oldest political trick in the world is to throw up some straw and then blow that straw away. My hon. Friend the Member for Hexham (Mr. Amos)—who was in his place and will try to catch your eye in due course, Mr. Deputy Speaker—did this very successfully, but, in my view very irresponsibly, at the Committee stage of the Abortion (Amendment) Bill. He made some wild allegations about people who run private clinics. I then asked him on the Floor of the House to substantiate those allegations. I said that if those allegations were true, those people were breaking the law. I asked him to give me their names and addresses, and I said that I would write to the Director of Public Prosecutions. I believe that, if someone is breaking the law, they should be prosecuted or at least evidence should be put before the DPP. My hon. Friend refused to do as I asked.

Some public concern is caused by those in the anti-abortion campaign who make allegations that they cannot in any way substantiate. Another interesting example of that occurred on the Floor of the House during Home Office questions yesterday. It also occurred today during the speeches by the Father of the House, my right hon. Friend the Member for Castle Point (Sir B. Braine) and by the hon. Member for Mossley Hill.

You will no doubt have noted, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that Home Office questions yesterday were hijacked by a number of anti-abortionist Members—*[Interruption.]*

Miss Widdecombe: We made some useful statements.

Mr. MacKay: I do not disagree with that. However, I do not believe that my hon. Friends gained much support in the House by ruining Home Office questions.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: What nonsense. The questions were in order.

Mr. MacKay: Of course they were in order, otherwise they would not have appeared on the Order Paper.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: They inconvenienced my hon. Friends.

Mr. MacKay: I was far from embarrassed by those questions.

Let us consider the case of the abortion carried out at Carlisle City general hospital. It is another example of straws being thrown in the air. Consider the response of the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Home Deaprtment, my hon. Friend the Member for Grantham (Mr. Hogg), who spoke on behalf of the Home Secretary when he said:

"In reaching that conclusion"—

whether to have an inquest into the Carlisle case, the Home Secretary—

"had a number of considerations in mind—that this was a bona fide and lawful abortion; the reasons for carrying it out were compelling; the foetus was incapable of surviving; and it was desirable to spare the mother further distress."

Miss Widdecombe: Oh!

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: Come on.

Mr. MacKay: It is all very well for my hon. Friends the Members for Pembroke (Mr. Bennett) and for Maidstone to mock, but I believe that we have one of the finest Home Secretaries that this House has ever seen. With no disrespect to my two hon. Friends, if I had to choose which person was right, my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary—who has had all the facts made available to him, who is an outstanding Home Secretary and a man of great integrity—would be my choice. I believe it ill behoves my colleagues to question his judgment. It is, of course, their right to do so.

I have a high regard for my right hon. Friend and for the Parliamentary Under-Secretary who is an eminent lawyer from a family of eminent lawyers. I suspect that they are slightly better qualified than my hon. Friends in such legal matters and better able to decide whether the matter is right or wrong.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett *rose*——

Mr. MacKay: I will not continue to give way because other hon. Members wish to speak.

Let us consider what happened yesterday. When we finished discussing the first question about the Carlisle case, we then had a question about cruelty to children. That is an important issue and it is one that should concern the House. My hon. Friend the Member for Wyre Forest (Mr. Coombs) asked the Home Secretary:

"if he proposes to take any action to increase the penalties available to the courts for the offences of cruelty to children. —[*Official Report*, 15 December 1988; Vol. 143, c. 1074-75.]

I assumed that all my hon. Friends who had been jumping up trying to catch Mr. Speaker's eye would stand up again because cruelty to children is an equally important issue. The only one of my colleagues who stood up, however, was my hon. Friend the Member for Spelthorne (Mr. Wilshire). He is not an anti-abortionist, but all the anti-abortionists took no interest in the debate on the second question. That is extremely revealing. It should reveal to people outside this House the priorities of those who are desperately keen to intervene about the spurious Carlisle case, but who have no possible interest in the protection of children and child abuse.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: What absolute nonsense.

Miss Widdecombe *rose*——

Mr. Cash *rose*——

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: My hon. Friend should not make such allegations.

Mr. MacKay: I shall give way to my hon. Friend the Member for Stafford (Mr. Cash).

Mr. Cash: My hon. Friend has made a comparison with the protection of children. Does my hon. Friend accept that the Protection of Children Act 1978, which received unanimous support in the House when introduced by my hon. Friend the Member for Bexleyheath (Mr. Townsend), was given time by the then Government? Does he accept that he is putting forward an extraordinary argument? On

[Mr. Cash]

the one hand he does not want a Bill to amend the abortion legislation to be given any extra time, but he was prepared to give extra time to a Bill for the protection of children. Is it not an extraordinary paradox that we are attempting to protect unborn children—who are children—yet my hon. Friend is not prepared to give protection to children who need it at the time when they are most vulnerable?

Mr. MacKay: My hon. Friend was not listening to my speech; he will have to read *Hansard*. At no time have I said that Government time should be given to any private Member's Bill—I made that abundantly clear. I do not believe in giving time to private Members' Bills. I merely made the correct observation that during Home Office questions yesterday a large number of my anti-abortionist hon. Friends sought to catch Mr. Speaker's eye—some of them unsuccessfully—on question. No. 1. But they did not try to catch his eye on question No. 2, which most of us would have thought concerned a more serious issue—child abuse.

Miss Widdecombe: As I was not in Question Time yesterday, my hon. Friend cannot be accusing me. But I should have behaved in exactly the same way. Surely, my hon. Friend knows that there was another question about the Carlisle baby case further down the Order Paper and my hon. Friends had come in specifically for that, in the way that hon. Members with specific interests do. Does he not accept that that was reasonable?

Mr. MacKay: The only thing I accept is that my hon. Friend was not in her place yesterday afternoon——

Miss Widdecombe: For perfectly good reasons.

Mr. MacKay: Of course. I did not intend to imply that my hon. Friend was not carrying out her duties. We are all aware that she has the finest voting record in the House, one of which we are all immensely proud. I only wish that I could compete with her in some small way. Sadly, I cannot: I am a relatively dilatory Member compared with her. I was not suggesting that my hon. Friend had been dilatory yesterday; if she thought that I meant that, I apologise unreservedly for the offence that I may have caused her.

I must move on and not be diverted by these interesting interventions. I want to question another part of the motion which mentions growing public concern and says that opinion is changing. The social attitudes survey, an independent and highly distinguished study which all hon. Members believe to be important, made it quite clear that more and more people in this country think that women should have the right to choose an abortion, and that if an abortion takes place it should be done earlier rather than later, and that the law should be changed.

I offer one or two positive proposals in this context. First, it is a disgrace to this country that so many late abortions take place. The anti-abortionists will agree with that. At this point, however, I would diverge from them in giving my reason: it is that in many cases it is very difficult for the most innocent of girls to obtain abortions earlier. I think that there should be abortion on request for the first 12 weeks, as happens in many countries in Europe. That would be a great help and it would reduce late abortions.

Secondly, only one general practitioner, not two, should refer the case of a woman who requests an abortion. That would be immensely helpful. Thirdly, we need better sex education in our schools. Some do an excellent job; others are dilatory in the extreme. Fourthly, we need a far more comprehensive family planning service. Every health authority should give that high priority. The number of abortions, which we all want to reduce, would be greatly reduced if there were better family planning facilities and a better understanding of contraception. I hope that that is not a contentious view and that it will be shared by my hon. Friends in the pro-abortion camp——

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: The anti-abortion camp.

Mr. MacKay: I thank my hon. Friend for his intervention because I should have said the anti-abortion camp. I am happy to correct that.

We must look in the way that my right hon. Friend the Member for Castle Point looked at the new French drug RU486. I shall not go into the details of the arguments about that drug except to say that it raises many interesting questions and presents difficulties to both sides in the argument. I see much merit in a drug that can be taken by a woman and which means that she does not necessarily have to go to a clinic or hospital to have an abortion. I readily agree with my right hon. Friend the Member for Castle Point that we must make sure that any side effects of the drug have been properly researched. We must take the subject further on another day.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: I wrote to the laboratories about my worries on the drug RU486. My concern is that all drugs, once they are produced, are liable to end up on the black market. There is no way to prevent the theft of drugs or their replication for the black market. That means that abortion drugs will become available and that people will be able to procure abortions without any of the controls that exist even in the 1967 Act.

Mr. MacKay: My hon. Friend raises an interesting point on which I do not have a view. He illustrates my point that with this drug we are coming to a new era in the abortion debate and extra factors will have to be examined. I willingly concede that and look forward to further debate.

I shall now turn to the last part of the motion—the part that concerns me. It asks the House to persuade the Government to consider introducing a Bill,

"with alternative sets of clauses to reform the Abortion Act 1967 in order to allow the House, on a free vote, to reach a decision on this important matter."

About the only thing that I agree with in that section of the motion is that we must always have a free vote on these issues.

It has been suggested by my hon. Friend the Member for Slough (Mr. Watts) that he is merely following a precedent set by the Department of Health in saying that when embryo legislation comes before the House it will be the formula that will be used then. Perhaps the Minister who is winding up will say something about that because it seems that we are getting into all sorts of difficulties and uncharted waters.

Let us say that we can vote on 26, 24, 22 and 18 weeks and, I suspect, on a shorter time than some of my hon. Friends in the anti-abortion camp would like. If there is a majority on one of those periods, the matter is simple and that one will be agreed. However, if there is a majority for all of them, which is quite possible, do we choose the one

that has the biggest majority? We have never had anything other than straight yes or no votes on Bills and amendments. I shall be corrected by the Minister if I am wrong about that. We have never had a slate on which we can vote for many things that contradict one another, We seem to be in a minefield and perhaps my hon. Friend the Member for Slough will address these matters when he is winding up. I think that that part of his motion is ill-founded.

Some hon. Members have accused hon. Members who were against the Bill presented by the hon. Member for Mossley Hill of being pro-abortion. Speaking for myself —I do not wish to speak for any of my hon. Friends—I most certainly am not pro-abortion and resent being told that I am. I shall tell the House my precise position. I am in favour of women having the freedom to choose. I am also in favour of the potential father having some say in the matter, although the final say must always be with the woman, the potential mother. The House is not helped by busybody politicians, Governments and civil servants telling individuals what they should or should not do—whether it be to trade on Sunday, to go racing and gamble on Sunday or to have an abortion. I believe in freedom of choice. This is a frightfully difficult decision for any woman to make. It is a horrendous and emotional decision and it is not made one whit easier by interference from politicians, the great majority of whom are genetically incapable of having a child anyway.

If legislation were passed which at best further restricted abortion, or at worst, as my hon. Friend the Member for Slough would like, made abortion in almost all circumstances illegal, that would have a great effect. It would not hurt my affluent, articulate middle-class constituents one iota. They are people who know their way around the world. They can go to private clinics abroad rather than break the law here. By and large, if such people have an abortion, they have it early, unless a handicap is found later in pregnancy. There would be no trouble for them.

However, such legislation would be the worst class legislation imaginable—*[Interruption.]* I am glad to see that my hon. Friend the Member for Pembroke finds this funny. The people who would be hurt the most would be the innocent, the inarticulate and relatively uneducated, and often those who are potential single parents, who have nobody to turn to and nobody to look after them. They are the ones who very often are late in realising that they are pregnant.

Mr. David Amess (Basildon): That is patronising.

Mr. MacKay: It also happens to be true. If my hon. Friend wishes to intervene, I should be happy to allow him, because this is an important point. He obviously does not wish to do so.

Mr. Thurnham: There is a report today in the *Daily Mail* saying that there are cases of 10-year-old children being pregnant. How can hon. Members expect a 10-year-old to know whether she is pregnant?

Mr. MacKay: I have not seen that article. It sounds horrendous. I do not wish to pursue that argument because it will lengthen my speech and restrict others who wish to speak.

Let us return for the moment—this is a vitally important point—to those who would be most affected by such legislation. They are those who are relatively uneducated, innocent and naive and who have nobody to help them. They are more than likely not to be aware that they are pregnant until quite late in the day. They are the most fearful of being pregnant, and will be scared to tell anybody—their parents, or the father, even. They will not know where to go and will tend to have a late abortion or, if abortion were made illegal, be driven to the back street abortionist.

In Question Time yesterday, the hon. Member for Bassetlaw (Mr. Ashton) made a valid point which summed it all up. He said, and this was readily conceded by my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State for the Home Department, that a large number of women died at the hands of backstreet abortionists before 1967. Do we really wish to go back to a dark age when working-class girls died with knitting needles in their hands? Do we want to go back to an age of backstreet abortionists making substantial profits and providing little health care? I most certainly do not, and I know that the great majority of people do not want to go back to that, but that is what will happen if legislation such as is mentioned in the motion reaches the statute book.

Another group of people who would suffer are those who might have severely handicapped children. During debates on the abortion (Amendment) Bill, many charities and individuals came to tell me of their personal experience of severely disabled children. They were extremely worried about what they would do if the time limit were reduced to 24 weeks without medical exceptions, and certainly if it were reduced to 18 weeks. One could not help but be moved by their arguments. If abortion were made difficult or illegal, such people would suffer the most.

People who are least able to look after themselves and people who are most vulnerable and at risk, would be most hurt by this ill-considered motion and by ill-considered legislation which I suspect that my hon. Friend the Member for Maidstone will attempt to introduce in the House next week.

12.46 pm

Mrs Maria Fyfe (Glasgow, Maryhill): I congratulate the hon. Member for Berkshire, East (Mr. MacKay) on his constructive speech. I agree with much of what he said about choice. If we had a decent rate of child benefit, the restoration of statutory maternity benefit rates, adequate housing and an end to poverty wages, many more women could make the choice to have the baby rather than an abortion.

The right hon. Member for Castle Point (Sir B. Braine) spoke of the many letters that he has received from women who regret having had an abortion. I am sure that he is telling the truth, but has he ever had a letter from a relative of a woman who has died as a result of having had a back-street abortion? Has he ever spoken to somebody who lost a wife, sister or friend before the 1967 Act? He certainly has never nursed a dying woman who may be young and has lost the life that awaited her or who may already have a family which she has left motherless. That is what happened before the Abortion Act 1967.

I offer those who support the motion some real life cases. They are not particularly dramatic, but they are of people who would be affected by the legislation which some hon. Members favour. Mrs A., aged 40 and with two children, suspected in November 1987 that she could be

[Mrs Maria Fyfe]

pregnant. She went to her doctor who told her not to worry as she was starting the change of life. She returned to the surgery in December. Her GP was on holiday, so she saw another doctor who told her that there was no need to worry. In January, she returned yet again when her own doctor prescribed hormone tablets. On 8 February, she went back again with her husband. They insisted on a pregnancy test and, 10 days later, she was told that the test was positive. The doctor was apologetic and signed the form authorising an abortion. She was finally seen at the local hospital on 3 March. The consultant refused abortion on the ground that she was too late, but he added his signature to the green form and referred her to the British Pregnancy Advisory Service.

Miss B., aged 28 ended a long-term relationship during which she had successfully used oral contraception for a number of years. She stopped taking the pill in November 1987. In late November, she felt unwell and went to her doctor. She had a negative pregnancy test and was told that it was quite usual to feel sick after stopping the pill. It certainly is. At the end of December, she returned to the doctor saying that she was sure that she was pregnant. A second pregnancy test was negative, and this time she was told not to fuss and that it was quite normal to have no periods after stopping the pill. She returned yet again in February, still having had no period and with a funny feeling in her stomach. The doctor said that it was indigestion caused by the stress of separation from her long-term partner, and prescribed antacids. In March, back at the surgery, she saw a different doctor. Examination revealed that she was 22 to 23 weeks pregnant.

Mrs. C., a 28-year old mother of two who started feeling unwell in January and went to her GP, had a positive pregnancy test result at the beginning of February. She thought carefully about her position, because her husband had recently left her for another women and divorce proceedings had been started. She returned to her GP on 19 February, only to be told that no more funds were available for abortions locally until April. The doctor gave her the telephone number of BPAS and told her that she would have to pay for the operation. She eventually approached them at the end of March, having spent the intervening period trying to save or borrow money. At that time she was 15 weeks pregnant.

Mrs. D. had one child and had miscarried several months previously. After the miscarriage she was fitted with a contraceptive coil. At the end of October she felt that she could be pregnant again and went to her doctor, who sent a test to the local hospital. Two weeks later the GP's receptionist telephoned with a positive result. She tried for an immediate appointment but was told that her doctor was on holiday and that it would be best to await his return. She finally saw him and asked to have the coil removed as she feared that it would do harm. He said that he could not do that but would make a hospital appointment for its removal.

The earliest appointment was in January, when a scan was done and the consultant told Mrs. D that it would be seven weeks before he could offer an appointment to remove the coil. Two weeks later she returned to the hospital because she had a discharge and intermittent bleeding, and was in great discomfort as well as feeling ill. She was told that nothing could be done before the appointment. In great distress she telephoned the Samaritans, who sent her to BPAS, where she was found to be 17 weeks pregnant.

Miss E is a 20-year-old single parent bringing up two children under five. Her boyfriend had attacked her repeatedly, leaving her with serious head injuries on one occasion, and she had recently found the strength to end the relationship. She was taking the contraceptive pill but had irregular periods, and after one negative pregnancy test her GP assured her that she was not pregnant and that her symptoms were psychosomatic. Eventually a scan revealed a pregnancy of 18 to 20 weeks. After careful consideration she requested an abortion, feeling sure that she could not cope with either adoption or bringing up a third child alone.

Mrs. F has three young children. She and her husband used sheaths ad spermicide for contraception, having used the pill and the IUD in the past. These failed and she discovered that she was pregnant. She became very depressed, because her husband is out of work and the family lives in a two-bedroom flat on supplementary benefit. She went to hospital after eight weeks hoping for help. She had had all her babies at the hospital, and her contraceptive history and social circumstances were known there. But the hospital refused termination and suggested no alternative. Eventually BPAS gave her an abortion at 20 weeks because she felt completely unable to cope with a fourth child.

Miss G has two children under five. She, her partner and the children live on the 15th floor of a tower block on a total of £84 a fortnight. When she found that she was pregnant and requested a termination her doctor delayed her, hoping that she would change her mind. She remained adamant, and he eventually referred her to St. Bartholomew's hospital, but she was by then over the hospital's time limit for abortion and came to BPAS in desperation at almost 18 weeks.

That woman feels that late abortion is wicked, but she was certain that she could not support another child. She has a complicated gynaecological and obstetric history which includes two miscarriages and an ectopic pregnancy.

There are hundreds of such cases. I am picking out real-life examples that are not too dramatic. The last that I shall give involves a woman whom we shall call Mrs. H. She is 37 and married with eight children whose ages range from seven to 19. Her husband is an alcoholic, and she is sure that she could not cope with a ninth child. When she found that she was pregnant her doctor referred her for an NHS termination at Guy's hospital, but she was kept waiting for six weeks for an appointment before finally being refused an abortion. At that stage she felt distressed to the point of contemplating suicide.

Will hon. Members who are in favour of the motion, since they wish to criminalise abortions tell me what punishment or sentence is appropriate for each of those women? What sentence would they pass on those women or on the doctor who performs the abortion? They failed to answer such questions during our debate several months ago when we discussed the Abortion (Amendment) Bill and they are failing to answer them today. If abortion is a crime, what punishment would they inflict in those cases?

Hon. Members will not abolish abortion by such measures; they will drive women to the back streets, as the hon. Member for Berkshire, East has said so eloquently. They will be driving women back to the knitting needle,

the syringe, the slippery elm bark, the knife and to appalling methods that cause pain and create the risk of death. In many cases, they did cause death. Two years before the Abortion Act 1967, 98 women died in back-street abortions, but from 1982 to 1988 none died. Now if women such as I have described had made up their minds to have abortions because of their distressing circumstances, at least they could have the abortion in a clean and sterile hospital and have it performed by people who know what they are doing. Legislation will not end abortion. It will throw women into even more distressing circumstances when they are already upset and send them back to back-street abortionists. I wish that some hon. Members would face up to that fact.

12.55 pm

Miss Emma Nicholson (Torridge and Devon, West): I have not spoken on this subject before, but I feel that I need to do so because of the constituency concern that arose from the Abortion (Amendment) Bill that was introduced by the hon. Member for Liverpool, Mossley Hill (Mr. Alton). I had a huge postbag, as we all did, as a result of it. A great batch of people who wrote the standard postcards were totally against abortion. Many people stated that they were for abortion, with reservations. They may have been concerned about the deficiencies in the National Health Service, for example. A mother who wrote to me had had to have an abortion at 16 weeks because of the deficiencies of the National Health Service in her area. She lives in a rural area, as do many of my constituents. There is but one general practitioner and she could not therefore obtain the second signature so that she could have, in her terms, a necessary abortion before 12 weeks, which she would have preferred. She had to travel to another town where there was a full waiting list. The general practitioners were not able to see her for some time as she was not their patient. Hence, she was drawn towards what she considered a late abortion at 16 weeks.

Disabled people contacted me. I can recall one case in particular of a disabled man whose mother had had German measles while he was in the womb. He is significantly disabled and has a difficult life, with a weak heart, rheumatic fever and deafness and blindness. He wrote to me saying that if his mother had had German measles earlier in the pregnancy—she was about six months pregnant at the time she contracted the disease—he would have been grotesquely deformed. He believed that the Abortion Act 1967 should remain in being.

People wrote to me who were unreservedly for abortion. Interestingly, they were mainly young mothers, mostly at the bottom of the income scale, who were having great difficulty with their small families without the greater resources that some people have for their families. Those women might not have had abortions, but they felt strongly that they had the right to determine how many children they had and that if somehow their control over their fertility failed, they should be allowed that final choice.

Like all hon. Members, I received many thousands of letters because, of course, this is a huge subject. The motion relates to human fertility. The beginning and ending of life is the most important thing of all, which is why I take so seriously those who are against abortion. The hon. Member for Mossley Hill is totally against abortion. Although his Bill referred to 18 weeks, he said to me in the Lobby that his aim was to outlaw abortion entirely. He believed most sincerely that abortion would disappear by such means. Strong feelings emerged among the groups whom he mobilised to support his Bill. Feelings ran so high in one of the church groups which I met to discuss this matter that all Members of Parliament who had not supported the hon. Gentleman were deemed non-Christian. When we live in a Christian society and culture, it is sad that this Bill should have so split Christian people that one side could hurl what to them is the deepest abuse of all against the other.

Nevertheless, that is a strongly held view which derives from the belief that the life of the child comes before that of the mother. The coming life is more important than the life that already exists. For many years that view led to the Roman Catholic Church believing strongly that contraception was improper because it denied the right to conceive.

In my work with Save The Children Fund I remember visiting Colombia and being approached by a woman who seemed in her 70s. She was toothless, had grey hair, was wrinkled, small and unhappy. It turned out that she was 36 and had had 16 children. Perhaps it was because of such women that the Catholic bishops there have defied the Pope and now promote birth control. The question we must ask is: is any life worth living at any cost? I cannot accept that it is, but it is a proper and honourable position to take if one is wholly against abortion.

I cannot let this argument pass without again questioning the tactics of the hon. Member for Mossley Hill in conducting his campaign. This morning he did not apologise to me for misusing my name as he did, and I am sorry about that. He merely accepted that I had not done what he accused me of doing. I suggest to those who support the motion and who are against abortion that the ends do not justify the means and that to slur other people's genuine, honest beliefs and parliamentary work is an unjustifiable means to any end.

There are those who believe unreservedly that abortion should be allowed. A great deal of noise is made about abortion on demand. I intend to make my comments on that as unemotional as possible because otherwise even more confusion is caused. No abortion takes place without a woman choosing to have it. It is her choice. The question is whether society allows her to exercise that choice. Any and every abortion is on demand, because it is on the demand of the woman who believes, for many different reasons that she cannot cope with the pregnancy. I wish that hon. Members would stop saying that the 1967 Act led to abortion on demand. All abortion has always been on demand.

Under the Infant Life (Preservation) Act 1929 the rich bought abortions, but the poor could not. The wealthy were within the law because the 1929 Act only required a couple of psychiatrists or doctors to sign a piece of paper. The rich could find those signatures by signing a cheque in Harley street, but the poor could not.

The Abortion Act 1967 brought the poor within the law and offered non-life threatening abortions to women who could not afford any other kind. Perhaps we should be a little more careful with the use of the words "on demand". The 1967 Act made it possible for poorer women to exercise choice. The question is whether that choice is right and whether it should be exercised.

[Miss Emma Nicholson]

The people who support the Abortion Act 1967 unreservedly include the Child Poverty Action Group and the National Council for One Parent Families. Those organisations above all others deal with families in trouble. I remind the House again that we should not misuse words. Similarly, we must not overlook changes in the law which have benefited society. We must not talk about illegitimate children. There is no such thing as illegitimate children these days, nor should there ever have been. Why should a child suffer because its parents were not married?

We should not ignore family lifestyles that do not adhere to our ideas of what families should be. I was enormously lucky. I was brought up in a family of the classic kind identified by the hon. Member for Mossley Hill as the only proper way to bring up children. I had three sisters, a father and a mother. When we had a family party the other day, I had to stop my invitations after I had asked 93 close cousins, although I could have invited another 120.

It is improper to ignore family lifestyles that do not fit the classic pattern. That classic pattern has all but disappeared. There are very few households these days where the single head of household works, the mother does not and the children are at home. Only 5 per cent. of families fit that pattern. It is morally wrong of us to deny the word "family" to mothers bringing up children whose pattern of life falls outside our concept of perfection.

The hon. Member for Mossley Hill asked me to agree that children were better brought up if they are born to parents within wedlock. Sometimes that is the best way to bring up children, sometimes it is not. Sadly we often read in the newspapers of child abuse cases. We may read of cases where a father has committed incest with a child under the age of 10. I read that 3,700 children under the age of 10 had abortions last year. I doubt very much whether those children became pregnant other than through rape within the family. Although I have not committed the figures to memory, I believe that it was announced this morning that nearly 3,700 children had abortions in the past year in this country.

Fathers and stepfathers are often involved in child abuse. While we must bear in mind that the stepfather may be married legally to the mother, sometimes children have been abused, beaten up and even killed. All sorts of unspeakable things are done to children. In some circumstances children are better brought up in a different lifestyle from that which we consider to be——

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Harold Walker): I am reluctant to interrupt the hon. Lady in mid flow. However, she should address her remarks to the Chair.

Miss Nicholson: I apolcgise, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I was speaking to my hon. Friend the Member for Slough (Mr. Watts), who moved the motion.

I bitterly regret the fact that we have a small number of women Members in this House. Women bear children. They also rear them. It is a great pity that on this of all subjects we do not have more women Members. Women have a special problem because they cannot, as men can, create a child and then disappear.

I shall now deal with the people who wrote to me who were for abortion, with reservations. They may share my view that it is the lesser of two evils. Whether abortion is legal or not, it will always continue. Nature herself aborts many pregnancies. One in five pregnancies ends in miscarriage and a far greater number—30 to 50 per cent. —end too early to be reported or even recorded. More than 50 per cent. of pre-embryos abort or fail to implant. Mother nature is unbelievably profligate with potential human lives. Many people, therefore, believe that abortion, with reservations, is the lesser of two evils when a mother feels that she cannot cope with the coming addition to her family.

If we can accept the principle that the needs of the living take priority over potential lives and over the chance of a reasonable life, we should wonder whether we should allow abortion. We may think about social needs, rape —for which the average sentence is now six years—incest, to which I referred just now, and acute poverty in which hunger and squalor prevail, particularly in the developing countries. I use the phrase "developing countries" rather than the old-fashioned phrase "Third world" which the Father of the house, my right hon. Friend the Member for Castle Point (Sir B. Braine) used, because those countries are part of our world. It is proper that we should encourage women in developing countries to have access to medication such as depo provera, which allows them to control their fertility with far less trouble than the methods used in this country. We should also consider the medical needs. Will the life of the mother come first?

I was interested to see that the wife of the hon. Member for Mossley Hill, in an interview at the time of her marriage, said that if her life were threatened when she was pregnant, she would think seriously about an abortion. That was a brave and honourable remark. We should also consider the pain-free life of the coming child. Is it right that we should allow children to come to full term when we know that they will have a lifetime of acute pain and misery because modern science is able to keep them alive? There is even a reasonable chance of life for a child who is born without a brain. A parent in my constituency who came to see me has such a child, who is being reared at home. I believe that in all such cases, the mother's views should be paramount, given all the facts.

Perhaps because of the work that so many hon. Members, including myself, have carried out with disabled people, I strongly support the proposal in the Warnock report that scientific investigation is carried out before the embryo reaches 14 days because that gives us the first real chance to break the chain of human suffering, which probably none of us in the House has experienced.

Doctors and scientists are often unfairly blackened when we talk about scientific experimentation. I shall speak about immunisation techniques. I was close to a group of scientists in the Netherlands, the Institute of Public Health, and their triumph when they found a new form of creating the polio vaccine, which reduced the need for experimentation on animals from 40,000 to 4,000 monkeys a year, had to be seen to be believed. Can we not allow scientists and doctors the keen knowledge that the possibility of human life is in their hands when they are carrying out experiments and allow them to continue under proper licence?

I shall now describe my own thoughts on abortion generally, and on the motion in particular. I put forward an amendment, which was not accepted because it was outside the narrow scope of the Bill promoted by the hon. Member for Mossley Hill. The amendment sought to

make abortion easier in the first trimester, in which 84 per cent. of all abortions now take place, by reducing from two to one the number of doctors' signatures needed. That would meet circumstances in which poverty, or the inadequacy of current or future motherhood, mean that abortion is perhaps the best way forward in the interests of those already alive.

I would make abortion more difficult to obtain thereafter, and provide for it only in cases of medical need, rape and acute disability. If we cannot reach that position, which is in line with that of the House of Lords Committee and of our partners in the European Community, we should retain the 1967 Act and honour and respect the mother and her doctor, who should be making these most difficult decisions themselves.

1.16 pm

Miss Ann Widdecombe (Maidstone): I am grateful to my hon. Friend the Member for Slough (Mr. Watts) for introducing the debate. I am especially grateful for this opportunity to speak because, as the House will doubtless know, I propose to introduce a private Member's Bill to allow us once again to consider the control of late abortions as originally proposed by the hon. Member for Liverpool, Mossley Hill (Mr. Alton), who is not in his place but who explained earlier that he would have to leave.

I should like to explain why—contrary to the views advanced by my hon. Friends the Members for Berkshire, East (Mr. MacKay) and for Bolton, North-East (Mr. Thurnham)—we should not go for a compromise of 24 weeks but instead should reconsider the original Alton Bill, as it came to be known. Whatever our views on abortion, and however sincerely and deeply held are the differing opinions in the House, there is a growing consensus that the Abortion Act 1967 is not working properly and that revision is urgently needed. If any hon. Member had given the descriptions of late abortions that the hon. Member for Mossley Hill gave when the right hon. Member for Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale (Mr. Steel) introduced his Bill, the cry would not have been, "Same old stuff". In those days, such descriptions would have been unbelievable; they would have been considered to be scaremongering and distortion of what the future might bring.

Mr. Steel: First, I did not say, "Same old stuff," which my hon. Friend the Member for Liverpool, Mossley Hill (Mr. Alton) thought I said. I said, "Same old speech" because my hon. Friend was citing the same figures as he cited during our debates in the last Session.

Before I introduced my Bill, I went, at the invitation of the Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists and accompanied by a medical person who was then a Member of this House, to see an abortion operation and I have subsequently seen one in a private clinic. I am in no doubt about the horrors of the operation itself but I do not think that exaggerated and graphic descriptions help the debate. So far as I know, none of the opponents of the Act has seen such an operation. They rely on the television, photographs and the rest. Of course it is a very unpleasant process.

Miss Widdecombe: I am most grateful to the right hon. Gentleman for agreeing that it is a most unpleasant process. It is because it is so unpleasant and because it is performed so late and on fully sentient babies, that the facts are repeated time and time again by the hon. Member for Mossley Hill and others who want the public to be fully aware of what goes on.

The majorities against the 1967 Act have grown ever since that Act has been questioned and debated in the House. The last Bill got further than any previous attempt at reform. That is because the vast majority of hon. Members believe that that Act is no longer effective. My hon. Friend the Member for Berkshire, East and others have said that it is deceitful that people like me, who do not believe in abortion, should bring forward measures to control late abortions. That is like saying that it is not right for a teetotaller to join forces with a moderate drinker to curb alcohol abuse. We do not deny that we are against abortion, but there is common ground with people who do not fully share our views. We are trying to find that common ground and to control the abuses of the 1967 Act.

As always, today we have heard the slogan—"a woman's right to choose". I have decided that the Bill that I introduce will be in exactly the form that the Bill of the hon. Member for Mossley Hill left the House. We recognise the limitation of a woman's right to choose. If a woman gives birth to a handicapped child, no matter what terrible distress may be caused to her and the rest of her family, and no matter what suffering may face that child, we would never say that she had a right to choose whether the child continued to live. There is a point at which we recognise that the child's rights are paramount.

If we go back two months into the pregnancy and if, after the 28th week, a woman discovered that she had a severely handicapped child, no matter what distress it would cause to the woman, she does not have the right to choose. At that point, we recognise the baby as a child and as having full civil rights, the most basic of which is the right to life.

If we go back a few weeks more, we enter a grey area. The Infant Life (Preservation) Act 1929 says that it is illegal to destroy a child that is capable of being born alive. At that point, we start to argue about what is capable of being born alive. We know that it is usually possible to preserve the life of a child born at 24 weeks. If the child is put in an incubator and is given the right intensive care, it will live. Very few abortions are carried out after 24 weeks because the child has a right to live.

The question asked by the hon. Member for Mossley Hill—it is a question on which the House should decide—is whether we have the line right or whether it should be lower. One factor that influenced me in considering a limit of 20 or 22 weeks was the Carlisle baby case. I understand that my hon. Friend the Member for Hexham (Mr. Amos) wishes to mention that case in some detail as it happened in his regional health authority. The Carlisle baby was not 28 weeks, 24 weeks or 22 weeks—it was 21 weeks and it was born alive. It was not just capable of being born alive—it was alive. We are told that the child lay gasping on a kidney dish for three hours before dying. That means that the child lived. The local coroner was sufficiently convinced of that to recommend an inquest, and the Department was sufficiently convinced of it to believe that the child should be registered.

We have been told that we are raising an emotive issue. We are indeed, and I make no apology for it. That child was not held in her mother's arms for those three hours. She was not put into an incubator while medical science tried to save here. She was not even decently tucked up in

[Miss Widdecombe]

a warm cot for the few hours of her little life. She was left on a kidney dish, and her mother did not even know that she was alive. That is emotive, and a society which allows it is a brutalised one. That is why I sincerely believe that the House must have an opportunity to vote on limits of 18 or 20 weeks as well as limits of 22 or 24 weeks.

In a similar vein, although I do not intend to cover it in my Bill, the mover of this motion has introduced embryology. I believe that we are worried not so much about whether the experiments should take place—although that is a major cause of worry—but how far things will run away from us, how far medical research will escalate and whether the medical profession can be trusted to contain its enthusiasm if we do not obtain early controls. We are worried because of what happened with the Abortion Act 1967. Only a handful of people opposed that Act because they believed that it would be used with great discrimination. They did not believe that nearly 3 million unborn children would be destroyed. They did not believe that there would be abortions right up to and beyond 24 weeks. People did not seriously believe that that would happen, but it has and we therefore need time to amend what is a very unsatisfactory Act.

Mr. Cash *rose*——

Miss Widdecombe: No, I shall not give way. That is not because I do not respect my hon. Friend, but I know that my hon. Friend the Member for Hexham (Mr. Amos) wishes to speak about the Carlisle baby.

I believe that we did keep faith with the House when we went into Committee last time, because the Second Reading debate showed that the vast majority of the objections coming from those opposing us were centred on the handicapped baby issue. When we went into Committee, we had a choice. We could take that on board and, in the teeth of our own views—we might not like the amendment that we passed—seek to meet those objections and tell the House that we had met those objections and exempted all severe handicaps, or we could put on some upper limit and take within it all those that were not handicapped. We tried to take into account what was said on Second Reading. I accept that the Second Reading vote was one of principle, but we kept faith with those who were worried. That is why we received the majorities that we did through the Report stage and why I believe that—if we can come back again to the House we shall not need 24 weeks—I am convinced that we shall get a majority for 20 or 22 weeks. If anybody asks me why we should be allowed to vote on those lower limits, I say to them: "Suppose that the Carlisle baby had been your granddaughter or your daughter" That was a baby, not a foetus.

We have a completely dual standard. We have two children of exactly the same age. One is put in an incubator, loved, and all the resources of the Health Service are used to try to save it. The other is wantonly destroyed and dismembered in the mother's womb. We cannot say that one is a baby and the other is a foetus—they are both exactly the same. It is either a baby that we are destroying in the womb or it is the foetus that we have in the incubator.

I have been grateful for the opportunity to put my views.

1.27 pm

Mr. Alan Amos (Hexham): I am glad that we have another opportunity to look at the Carlisle baby case, because it is outrageous and appalling. I want to describe the case and put it on the record, because it took place in the Northern regional health authority area in which my constituency is situated, and many of my constituents use Carlisle city general hospital. In so doing, I want to show the House that the existing lax law on abortion needs reform and that even the meagre protection that the existing law is supposed to provide is a sham. As the hon. Member for Caernarfon (Mr. Wigley) said earlier, he had heard many familiar arguments. We shall continue to hear these familiar arguments until the House resolves the matter by voting on it and until we get answers to all the questions that have been asked unsuccessfully.

I hope that at the end of the debate we shall get an answer as to why the Home Office decided not to hold an inquest into this matter, although the coroner said that there should be one. What criteria were used? I asked the Home Office the question yesterday, and I received a long and detailed answer. I was told:

> "The conclusion was reached after careful consideration of all the information provided by the Coroner."

The criteria used remain a secret and it is only because I am so respectful and trustful of the Establishment on this issue that I did not take that answer to be an insult or a cover-up.

Who is protecting whom? The *Daily Express* this morning said that 3,763 youngsters, some of them 10 and 11, have received abortions. Who is carrying out those abortions? I have already named nine of those doctors, but I will be interested to know who else has carried out such operations. Doubtless we shall get no answers. The information will be unavailable as it is confidential or not held in the required form.

The facts about the Carlisle baby are becoming well known and I am delighted about that. The baby was born at 21 weeks, she was making "gasping movements" and had a pulse rate of 80 beats a minute. That child was alive. The nurses, hardened to the outrage of abortion, then decided to do something about it. The first of many questions that I wish to pose to my hon. and learned Friend is why the registrar refused to go to the ward. Why did he refuse to attend that case, leaving it to an inexperienced houseman? I gather that, shortly after this incident, the registrar moved to Newcastle—lucky Newcastle.

Eventually the baby was placed in a metal dish and put in a side room. Half an hour later the doctor was again called because the baby was alive. One member of staff baptised the girl who lived for three hours in her sorry state. The poor little thing eventually died and was put in an incinerator.

Thus ended the tragically sad and short life of a little girl who had been cruelly neglected. She died in the most dubious and wickedly suspicious circumstances. The third special report of the Select Committee on the Abortion (Amendment) Bill said that no abortions should be carried out after the 20th week of pregnancy

> "except in places specifically approved by Secretaries of State where there is appropriate equipment including resuscitation equipment, and staff trained in its use".

That recommendation was accepted by the Secretary of State. So, why was a 21 week-old baby aborted in a department where resuscitation equipment was not to hand?

The nurses were extremely distressed and they contacted Father Peter Houghton—incidentally he is the hospital chaplain at a different hospital. The East Cumbria health authority sacked Father Peter Houghton, not because he had done anything wrong, but because he knew the truth and had had the audacity to tell the world.

Clearly, that abortion contravened the Infant Life (Preservation) Act 1929 that defines the crime of child destruction as

"the killing of a baby capable of being born alive".

The Carlisle baby was not capable of being born alive; it was alive.

On what grounds did the DPP fail to bring a case? Why was the child not registered as a live birth? That omission is another clear breach of the law on the registration of births and deaths.

Unfortunately, this rotten saga gets even worse because the mother was not informed that her baby had lived until six months later. She was told then only because the press had printed the story. Why were the details of the birth deliberately withheld from the mother? That question will be asked again and again until an answer is given. I gather that the mother is taking legal action, but I am unsure of the outcome.

What about the grounds for that abortion? The mother was told that there was a 50:50 chance that the child would inherit the father's skin disease. That disease is not life-threatening and only a small number of people with the syndrome are diagnosed as sufferers because the symptoms are usually extremely mild. The mother, however, under the clear impression that the child would be severely deformed, decided to have an abortion.

According to the Abortion Act termination can be carried out if there is substantial risk that the child could be seriously handicapped. The abortion was carried out under the terms of that Act. However, no substantial risk was involved. Why was no charge brought against the consultant for carrying out an abortion that was in breach of section 1(1)(b) of the Abortion Act?

Finally, earlier this year the Home Secretary was asked, in view of the baby's having been born alive and having survived for three hours, whether there could be an inquest into its death. That has been refused time and again. On what grounds did the Home Secretary decide that there should be no inquest? The abortion contravened the Infant Life (Preservation) Act and section 1(1)(b) of the Abortion Act and was contrary to all the requirements of the Department of Health that resuscitation equipment should be available. The birth and death were not registered. This is a matter of such major public concern that the whole case should be investigated. Answers barely two lines long are not satisfactory. What were the criteria for refusal?

These arguments will not go away. We shall hold these debates time and again. Questions will be asked until we receive answers. I plead with everyone responsible to stop this cover-up and this inbuilt bias which allows abortions on demand. I know of no case of a person who wanted an abortion being refused one. A few doctors carry them out for profit. This is a scandal, and until the House resolves the matter we shall keep returning to it until we have a resolution.

1.36 pm

Mr. Nicholas Bennett (Pembroke): I am delighted to have an opportunity for the first time to debate abortion on the Floor of the House. I served on the Standing Committee on the Abortion (Amendment) Bill, but was unfortunate in not catching Mr. Speaker's eye in the debates at Second Reading, on Report and at Third Reading.

I am concerned about the muddled thinking of the proponents of abortion who oppose this motion. My hon. Friend the Member for Berkshire, East (Mr. MacKay), who has disappeared since he made his speech, talked much about freedom of choice, a subject on which my hon. Friend the Member for Maidstone (Miss Widdecombe) also touched. Of course, we believe in freedom of choice, but that choice is limited by its effects on other people. No choice is completely unrestrained; one must examine its implications for other people. With abortion, we are talking about the effects on the unborn child and the rest of the family. None of those who support abortion mentioned that in their speeches today.

I notice that my hon. Friend the Member for Berkshire, East did not mention children, except to make a muddled and unworthy attack on those of us who oppose abortion, by suggesting that we were not concerned about protecting children who have been born. We are equally concerned about them; but we are also concerned about the rights of the unborn child.

I am also worried about abortion's implications in society for those who have been born. It is no accident —the hon. Member for Liverpool, Mossley Hill (Mr. Alton) touched on this—that child abuse has increased since 1967, because the abortion mentality says that it is all right to abort unborn children. This consumerist attitude to children carries over into attitudes towards the children who have been lucky enough to be born.

I also feel strongly about the misrepresentation of the attitude of those of us who supported the Alton Bill, which runs as follows: we could have had the Bill if we had gone for 24 weeks. That is nonsense. If we had gone for 24 weeks, we should not have saved the lives of the unborn, and the scandal of late abortions would have continued. To suggest that inflexibility or obstructiveness on the part of the hon. Member for Mossley Hill and of those who supported him prevented us from getting the Bill passed is arrant nonsense. We would not have achieved the Bill's objective, which was to reduce the number of late abortions.

Mr. Kenneth Hind (Lancashire, West) *rose*——

Mr. Bennett: I would love to give way, but my hon. Friend the Member for Basildon (Mr. Amess) is waiting to speak and there is an agreement, for which I am grateful, between Front Bench spokesmen on both sides to restrict the time of their speeches.

The hon. Member for Caernarfon (Mr. Wigley) talked of the fundamentalist approach. I take such an approach and have never made a secret of it. I happen to believe that abortion is morally wrong. I stand by that, but I recognise that I live in a pluralist society. Not everybody agrees with this approach. The majority of hon. Members do not agree with that point of view, but that does not mean that I am not entitled to start from the moral basis of being opposed to abortion and then seeking to find the point at which we can carry the House on the question of abortion. That is

[Mr. Bennett]

what the hon. Member for Mossley Hill sought to do and what my hon. Friend the Member for Maidstone will seek to do. We shall seek to find the point at which a majority of hon. Members will support reform of the abortion law.

We should be concerned about where our society is going. As my hon. Friend the Member for Maidstone says, the process of abortion brutalises society. It also brutalises and dehumanises the people who are forced to take part in the operation. It takes away from the staff of the hospitals their human compassion because day in, day out nurses and doctors take part in abortions. I shall describe to the House part of a late abortion operation. I have no doubt that hon. Members who oppose our stand will say that this is emotive.

Let us have on the record what we are talking about in a late abortion, the sort of abortions that my hon. Friend the Member for Mossley Hill wishes to restrict. The dilation and evacuation method is as follows. By this method the cervix is dilated and the baby removed piece by piece. No anaesthetic of any kind is administered to the baby. We know that children of that age are capable of feeling pain and are hurt in this process. At this stage of pregnancy, the cervix is described as "green," unready for the dilation that will come naturally at birth. The doctor has to dilate the cervix up to 22 mm while inserting the instrument that is used to dismember the baby. This dismemberment is necessary because the baby has a fully calcified skeleton, is about a foot in length and cannot be removed in one piece. After the abortion a nurse will reassemble the baby's body to make sure that no bits have been left behind in the womb that might cause infection.

That is what goes on in our National Health Service hospitals day after day, week in and week out in late abortions. Nurses, some of them 22 or 23 years of age, are asked to reassemble bits of carefully formed babies on the operating table to make sure that no bits are left inside the mother. I shall quote from an eye-witness account of dilation and evacuation done at 22 weeks in a London hospital.

"First came an arm, perfectly formed, a tiny baby's hand, fingers curled. A limb was extracted, then two limbs lay in the bowl. The intestines, brain tissue, liver and lungs came away. Last of all, the most difficult part was the brain. The skin was torn and there was not much more than a skull."

That is done every day in our name in British hospitals. Hon. Members who support abortion think that we should not discuss that and put it on the record. The crux of the debate is about what we are asking our nurses to do. If that does not brutalise the people who have to take part in these operations day in day out I do not know what does.

I should like to draw attention to a couple of other unfortunate facts about which hon. Members who support abortion have been quiet. We have not heard much about multiple abortions. In April, I asked my right hon. Friend the then Minister for Health, now the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster, about abortions. He told me that 23,838 residents of the United Kingdom had had a previous abortion. The number of non-residents who had had a previous abortion was 3,042. A further 3,228 had had two previous abortions; 548 were on their fourth abortion; 131 were on their fifth abortion and 23 people who went for an abortion had already had five previous abortions.

During the debate on the Bill that led to the Abortion Act 1967 some hon. Members told us that abortion would not be used as a means of contraception. Abortion is used time and again by the same women and if that is not contraception I do not know what is.

I should now like to deal with late abortions. We know that no fewer than 92 per cent. are carried out on perfectly healthy children, but time and again we hear nonsense about how late abortions are necessary to save the life of the mother, because the baby is the result of rape or because the child will be handicapped. I am concerned about the victims of rape and incest, but the statistics show that fewer than 100 of more than 170,000 abortions carried out in the early 1970s, when the figures were last published, were of foetuses that were the result of rape or incest. We should be concerned about what is done in our name and about ensuring that this law, which has manifestly failed to operate properly, is repealed.

1.45 pm

Mr. David Amess (Basildon): It is difficult to follow the excellent speech made by my hon. Friend the Member for Pembroke (Mr. Bennett), but I shall do my best. I pay tribute to my hon. Friend the Member for Slough (Mr. Watts), and I congratulate him on the motion, which I wholeheartedly support. Unlike me, he cannot be accused of being involved in a papist plot. This is not a party political matter. I suspect that many people in my constituency support me on wider issues while not sharing my view on this one, but I am not prepared to compromise myself on this fundamental issue.

I shall first examine why hon. Members reach the House. I am an avid reader of *The House Magazine*, and I particularly enjoy the parliamentary profile. It is interesting to learn what it was that encouraged hon. Members to go into politics and become Members of Parliament. Some say they did so because they enjoy being involved in the legislative process. Some are more blunt, and say that they enjoy the concept of power. Some say that it is because they enjoy helping people. At the end of the day, it is about people that we are talking, whether we debate social legislation, education or whatever. As hon. Members, we are all involved in a process that recognises life, and we are all trying to work together to improve our constituents' quality of life. Each and every one of us is saying that life itself is the fundamental.

I was delighted with the frank response that my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State for the Home Department gave me yesterday when I asked a question about the Infant Life (Preservation) Act yesterday. I shall not read it out, but he more or less said that the Government thought that the limit should be 24 weeks, although he also said that it would be best to achieve that through a private Member's Bill. Since the Abortion Act 1967, some 2·7 million abortions have been performed. A number of hon. Members have spoken about the small number of women Members of Parliament. We now have 41, which is many more than there were in 1967. In the debates on the 1967 Act arguments about that legislation being taken successfully through a House with fewer women Members than we now have were not raised.

I do not believe in the equality of men and women. I am not a supporter of women's rights. If I were pressed, I would probably say that I believe that women are superior to men. They now outlive us by 10 years, and they take

stress and anxiety far better than we do. I have seen my wife deliver three children, and anyone who can go through that experience must be superior to men. I hope that we shall not raise the red herring of the number of women Members in the House when in future, we discuss legislation on this subject. I understand the arguments advanced in favour of abortion, such as the right of women to choose, which my hon. Friend the Member for Berkshire, East (Mr. MacKay) mentioned, disability, rape, social problems and backstreet abortions.

My view is that life begins at conception. I am sure that the hon. Member for Barking (Ms. Richardson) would say that that is a fundamental and pure view and that by voting, for instance, in favour of the Bill that the hon. Member for Liverpool, Mossley Hill (Mr. Alton) advanced in the previous Session I am compromising my principles. The hon. Gentleman was right when he said that politics is the art of the possible. When I arrived in the House, I did not believe that I could change the world. I am happy to work within the system and chip away. That is why I am happy to support the motion and legislation on similar lines. I know that hon. Members who take the opposite view think that this is a conspiracy and that if we get away with 26, 24, 20 or 18 weeks we shall not let the matter rest there. Our opponents feel that at the end of the day we do not want abortion.

I should be content if that which my hon. Friend the Member for Maidstone (Miss Widdecombe) told us earlier were legislated for. It is a nonsense that in special care baby units 24-week-old babies are kept alive on ventilators —my wife is raising money to provide an extra piece of equipment for the special care unit in Basildon hospital —when in the same hospital we allow the abortion of babies of the same age.

I entirely understand the terrible physical and mental ordeal of women who undergo abortions. I have met a number of such women at my surgery and I am unhappy with the level of counselling that some of them have received. There is no follow-up to the traumatic experience. In the previous Parliament I concentrated on the subject of late abortions. My right hon. Friend the Member for Brentford and Isleworth (Sir B. Hayhoe) answered an Adjournment debate on that subject. He said that guidelines would be given to clinics. That was two years ago and no progress has been made.

Mr. Hind: Does my hon. Friend agree that the strength of feeling on these Benches about late abortions and research on embryos is such that neither we nor the public outside who feel as we do can allow the issue to rest until there is some much needed reform. Such reform would have to allay the worries of the public and meet the needs of medical science.

Mr. Amess: I entirely agree with my hon. Friend. I hope that none of my hon. Friends will take offence when I say that Members of Parliament are not modest people. We are all vain, and we display that vanity in different ways. The idea that we are dragged to this place because we attend meetings at which everyone insists that a particular individual should stand as a Member of Parliament is nonsense. I ask the House to show some humility and courage, and not to deny others what we certainly would not deny ourselves. Let us join together and protect the unborn child.

1.54 pm

Ms. Jo Richardson (Barking): We have had an interesting and combative debate, and I have listened to almost every speech with the greatest interest.

Let me first say to the hon. Member for Slough (Mr. Watts) that, although he was fortunate to come first in the ballot, I regret his decision to merge the two distinct issues of pre-embryo research and the Abortion Act 1967 in a single motion. Most of the speeches today have concentrated on either one or the other issue, which shows that they are separate in some people's minds.

Let me also say how sorry I am that yet again the inflammatory language of "abuses" and "killings" has been resorted to both in the motion and in speeches. I hoped that at least one lesson had been learnt from the debate forced on the House earlier this year, that unsubstantiated claims of abuse of the Abortion Act either by the medical profession or by women in need of safe legal abortion add nothing constructive to the debate or, indeed, to the esteem in which the House would like to be held.

I shall deal with the question of reform of the Abortion Act a little later. As I have said, I am sorry that the motion did not cover the issue of pre-embryo research on its own. Many hon. Members, including myself, were shocked and disappointed that the Government did not give time for this important matter when they introduced the Queen's Speech. Although hon. Members' reasons for wanting a decision and legislation differ, and although our views on the outcome are opposed to those of the hon. Member for Slough, I think that we all agree that a decision on the whole question of Warnock and the White Paper is essential to the health, wellbeing and integrity of all concerned—those with sub-fertility problems, those who face the actual or potential threat of hereditary congenital defects, scientists, doctors and all informed and concerned opinion.

As the Royal Society has said, since the birth of the world's first test-tube baby Louise Brown over 10 years ago about 10,000 babies have been born successfully, thanks to the techniques of in vitro fertilisation. Thousands of otherwise childless couples have been able to start a family. The procedure of IVF, which has benefited large numbers of infertile couples, was developed only after many years of research on animal and human embryos. Until there was reasonable certainty about its safety and efficacy, IVF could not ethically have been offered as a treatment to an infertile couple, and even now the chance of any one treatment cycle resulting in a child is only 10 to 15 per cent. Further research is therefore essential.

It is of course true that the fundamental principles of human IVF were established with the use of animal models, but different animal species—including the human —differ from each other in biochemical and developmental details. That means that, however much enormously useful information can be provided by animal models, there will ultimately be a point in the research when the human system must be directly examined. That is why it is necessary that we ensure that there is an opportunity for the research to continue.

We know that it is hard fully to estimate the scale of the problem of infertility. However, it is widely reported and generally accepted that it affects one in six couples in this country, three quarters of whom may benefit from IVF

[Ms. Jo Richardson]

and associated techniques. At present those working in the area know that the relatively low success rate of IVF means that people embarking on the treatment are taking a gamble, with the odds stacked against them. The possibility of improving that rests on continued research, using the human pre-embryo so that ultimately every woman treated will have a realistic chance of becoming pregnant.

In the past year I have been fortunate in having been invited to discuss the problems that infertile couples face with two different groups in two different fertility clinics in London—one in Hammersmith and one at St. Bartholomew's hospital. Such people are looking anxiously to Parliament to legislate positively to ensure that the problems and tragedies that they face in their lives can be solved by continued research.

We all know that the development of such techniques is at an early stage, especially in terms of genetic disease. Scientists, clinicians and doctors need the opportunity of research up to 14 days—I entirely accept that limit—to ensure that their diagnostic techniques can continue to progress to the benefit of all. We have all read and heard this week—it has been referred to this morning—about Professor Robert Winston and his pioneering unit at Hammersmith hospital and the work that it is preparing to carry out in the next few days. I heard him speak on the radio this morning and it was thrilling. We must ensure that what was stated in the White Paper, and what the Government propose to do about Warnock, are brought into the House in the form of a Bill. I entirely agree with the hon. Member for Slough that the Government should have brought forward a Bill. I have no disagreement with that part of his motion. However, I suspect that when the time comes, we shall vote in different Lobbies about the options in relation to research.

I have my eye on the time and shall deal now with the subject of abortion. In many ways, that issue has occupied a disproportionate amount of time in the debate. I wish to put the Abortion Act 1967 into context. I remind hon. Members that that Act marked a milestone in women's history. There had been years of struggle and campaigning throughout the country before the legislation giving safe, legal National Health Service abortion rights was finally enacted. That Act freed British women from the dangers of illegal back-street abortions and self-induced abortions which, for some, had caused severe illness, subsequent infertility and even death. Between 1952 and 1953—only two years—110 deaths were recorded from abortion, compared with only six between 1983 and 1985. Surely that shows the progress that has been made in terms of women's deaths. It is a substantial and significant decrease and a direct result of the fact that abortion is legislated for and carried out safely and legally.

In answer to a point made by the right hon. Member for Castle Point (Sir B. Braine)—I know that he has had to leave—there is no such thing under the Abortion Act as abortion on demand. We do not have abortion on demand in this country. British women have no right in law either to contraception or to abortion. The Act merely makes abortion legal within specified limits, which are entirely at the discretion of doctors. Women are dependent on two doctors agreeing that there are legal grounds for abortion before it can be performed.

Some hon. Members may agree with me that a way of ensuring safe, early abortions would be to have some sort of self-referral up to 12 or 14 weeks. Alas, we are not yet at that stage in the House, but still defending the 1967 Act. The law does not require health authorities to provide an abortion service. As a result, the level of provision varies considerably between districts. In some areas 90 per cent. of abortions are carried out on the National Health Service and in others the figure is shamefully less than 10 per cent.

That is why the private sector has had to have a role. The private abortion sector developed after the 1967 Act to meet the needs which could not be met by the NHS. I keep abreast of events and I know that private clinics would be only too glad if the NHS had the resources and was allowed to take over the facilities that the clinics have to provide. So please let us not go round accusing the private sector, as hon. Members do so intemperately, of making millions out of women's misery.

The control of fertility is fundamental to women achieving real equality and choice in their lives. The hon. Member for Basildon (Mr. Amess) spoke not of equality but of the superiority of women. If women cannot decide freely whether and when to have a child, they are constrained in all the other important decisions of their lives. They cannot decide about personal relationships, the type of job that they want or the size of their families. They cannot decide on participation in a whole range of social and political activities. In many ways, that is why there are so few women in the House. Because women do not have that control over their lives they cannot say, "For this period of my life I shall do that and for that period I shall do such and such." I beg hon. Members to believe that until we accord women dignity and respect, and until we say to them, "You can make the decision—one hopes in conjunction with your partner or husband—about what you will do with your life and the size of your family", women can never achieve genuine equality.

Some have continued to say that the majority of abortions are carried out for what they call social reasons. Others have gone further and renamed the social reasons "trivial reasons". I do not regard the reasons of the majority of women having an abortion as trivial. They think carefully about it. Some are mothers, and both their families' and their own futures are involved. They have to make difficult, complicated and sometimes unpleasant decisions, so let us not look at them with disrespect but accord them some dignity in their decisionmaking. Let us not trivialise this difficult subject. Women do not want an abortion if they can avoid it, but there are many reasons why it may be necessary. Slip-ups occur and difficulties are created which are not always of their own making. For Conservative Members who support the totality of the motion, which I do not, to suggest that women are trivial is to demean women's dignity. I do not believe that they are trivial, so I hope that the motion will fall. Once again, we have aired the argument about abortion—linked, unfortunately, with the issue of research. I hope that the research question will at some stage be resolved. For the time being, we should leave the Abortion Act 1967 as it is.

2.10 pm

The Minister of State, Department of Health (Mr. David Mellor): This has been a most absorbing debate. I am glad that we were able to hold it, thanks to the good fortune of

my hon. Friend the Member for Slough (Mr. Watts) in winning the opportunity to bring this motion forward. As a relative newcomer to this issue, my learning curve has been raised by several notches thanks to the detail with which the issue has been considered today. I congratulate those who have taken part in the debate on the way in which it has been conducted.

The conduct of the debate reflected a deep awareness on both sides of the argument. The right hon. Member for Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale (Mr. Steel) who sponsored the Abortion Act 1967 participated in the debate as did his hon. Friend the Member for Liverpool, Mossley Hill (Mr. Alton). I am glad that cordial relations have been resumed and that they are now sitting together on the same Bench. The hon. Member for Mossley Hill made a valiant attempt to change the 1967 Act last Session. We also heard contributions today from several of my hon. Friends. I know that some hon. Members have formidable family experiences of matters that are central to this issue. One of my colleagues had the enormously distressing experience of seeing two children die of a severe degenerative condition. Another of my colleagues has adopted a severely handicapped child. Therefore, it is with some diffidence that I seek to respond to the debate. Time is limited and I want to give my hon. Friend the Member for Slough an opportunity to reply. If I miss any points, I trust that I shall be reminded of them and brought to account later.

Life has a funny way of treating us. I first became a friend of my hon. Friend the Member for Slough when I assisted him in selling banana lollies to the unsuspecting population of Hayes as a holiday job. Little did we think then that we would find ourselves here 21 years later debating such important topics. Certainly our customers could have had no such inkling. I shall deal first with some of the points that arose about the Warnock report and the Government's intentions on legislation. I will then consider abortion.

A number of hon. Members raised the important matter of new legislation. We stand completely by the stated intention of legislation during this Parliament. We intend to do so and we have taken some comfort from the fact that, following the publication of the White Paper in November 1987, the debate last February and some of the points raised today, there is a basis on which to proceed. There is a clear recognition on both sides of the question of the need for a framework within which such research and development as is permitted can be taken forward. There is also recognition that the House will have to nerve itself to make a central decision. Leaving on one side the work to deal with the problems of infertility, the House must decide whether further research should be permitted on an embryo up to the age of 14 days. We stand by our proposal that, when the Bill is presented in due course, alternative clauses should be presented, which would permit the House to make its decision on what should be within the law and what should be within the scope of the statutory licensing authority.

My hon. Friend the Member for Berkshire, East (Mr. MacKay), whose courage and vigour on these issues I admire—I say that sincerely—has challenged whether that is a sensible course to adopt. My reply is that there is no other principled basis on which we could proceed. At heart, it is for hon. Members to decide on the basis of individual conscience at what point the work of embryos should not be permitted. The Government are not abdicating responsibility in offering the House, as we propose to do, a clear choice. A framework will be established, which the Government and the House believe is important and necessary, because it will have the effect of bringing under regulation matters that cannot merely be left to develop haphazardly and which are already being examined carefully through the work of the Voluntary Licensing Authority. That has been commended by my hon. Friend the Member for Bolton, North-East (Mr. Thurnham) and others and I shall deal briefly with its work in a moment.

Mr. Wigley: I am grateful to the Minister for his earlier remarks. Can the Minister tell the House whether, as we all accept the validity of having a free vote on an issue that crosses party lines and see why such a vote might be facilitated by having alternative clauses presented by the Government, his Department will give its opinion on the best way forward, as it has responsibility for these matters?

Mr. Mellor: As I understand it—and I am sure that hon. Members whose experience is greater than mine will correct me if I am wrong—my predecessors have never hesitated to give their personal opinion on the question of research. I must say that I am impressed by the quality of some of the research that is being carried out and, plainly, it would be part of the Department's duty to give such assistance as it could on the factual basis of that research and its aims, rather in the way that Home Secretaries have to set out some of the factual background to the decision on capital punishment, although the decision is left to individual choice. The Home Secretary makes his views clear as well. That is part and parcel of being a Minister because a Minister does not lose the right to his or her individual conscience on such issues.

I want to deal briefly with the Voluntary Licensing Authority. It has functioned well and I thank those who serve on it for demonstrating the highest standards of public service and integrity. It has shown clearly, in a practical way, that the statutory licensing authority, with which we intend to replace it in time, could work well and make difficult decisions. Although the Medical Research Council and others have been able to support the work of the Voluntary Licensing Authority from public funds, the authority has recently made an application for further financial help. I am glad to be able to announce today that the Government have agreed to contribute to the authority's costs in the next financial year a sum in the region of £45,000, to assist it in carrying out its important work.

My hon. Friend the Member for Bolton, North-East not only raised the question of the benefits of research but sought re-confirmation of the fact that no genetic engineering would be permitted. I am happy to be able to confirm that. Whatever else may or may not be agreed to, that will not be.

Mr. Skinner: Currie's gone. The Government have had an abortion.

Mr. Mellor: I hope that the hon. Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner) can contain himself. The debate has been serious. I am anxious to treat it seriously and to give answers to some of those who have spoken. I hope that the hon. Gentleman does not propose to disrupt this debate to make a cheap and facile point. I, myself, shall speak for no more than a further five minutes to make way for others.

[Mr. Mellor]

Let me deal with the question of abortion. All of us know how difficult it has proved in recent years for the House to agree whether the 1967 Act needs changing. I am afraid that I cannot say anything today that is different from what has been said by my predecessors and others on a number of occasions. We continue to regard abortion as a matter for private Member's business, and to believe that it would not be appropriate for the Government in any way to seek to take over the responsibility.

We also stand by the decision that we have always reached in these difficult matters that no private Members' legislation should be given Government time. The House will fully understand our difficulty. Where does one draw the line? While abortion for example, is a very important topic, there are many other important topics.

I recognise the difficulties of introducing private Member's legislation when there is a significant body of opinion against it, but I nevertheless feel that we would depart from that view at our peril.

My hon. Friend the member for Slough drew an analogy between the proposals post-Warnock and the abortion proposals. In effect, he asked, "Why should not a range of choices be offered within the framework of a Government Bill?" That argument was advanced skilfully by my hon. Friend and by others but, with respect, I believe that the two matters are different in kind. In the case of abortion a well-established procedure has been accepted in the house for several decades. With the follow-up to Warnock, on the other hand, we are dealing with the way in which the frontiers of science have been pushed back to permit a range of potential experiments that we would not have dreamt possible a few years ago. Such matters have at their heart questions of conscience, but they are also matters on which the Government should be expected to move forward. They are different in kind from the abortion issue, on which tradition is entirely different.

Mr. Steel: Will the Minister keep an open mind on a question that I raised earlier? The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Home Department appeared yesterday to have made a new statement of policy on the Infant Life (Preservation) Act. That Act is not private Members legislation; it is a Government statute. I believe that further thought should be given to the possibility of amending that Act, which would have a consequent effect on the Abortion Act.

Mr. Mellor: I heard the right hon. Gentleman's suggestion and I remember the position from my time at the Home Office. The Infant Life (Preservation) Act merely establishes a time limit before which it is suggested a foetus would not be viable and after which the burden of proof switches to those who would say that it is not viable. Clearly, the line drawn in the Act, which is 28 weeks, is not the right one, and 24 weeks is now right. It is clear that the Government accept that, although my hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Home Department has said that he would prefer that to be remedied by private Member's legislation. I am sure that I should pass the matter to him for further consideration.

I was moved—anyone would have been moved—by the eloquent speeches of my hon. Friend the Member for Hexham (Mr. Amos) and others about the Carlisle baby. No one can hear about the case without feeling some distress. I am afraid that the questions that my hon. Friend raised are within the ambit of my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary and fall to be considered by the Director of Public Prosecutions and others. Especially now that the mother concerned has threatened legal action against the health authority I can say no more about the matter than that I know that the health authority concerned conducted a full inquiry. I am sure that lessons were there to be learnt, not least as to why no resuscitation equipment was available. It is a condition of the Secretary of State's licensing of private abortion centres that resuscitation facilities must be available for abortions after 20 weeks. I understand the anxiety about the Carlisle case, but I can say no more about it for the reasons that I have given.

The debate has established a good deal more common ground on the Warnock report than some may have imagined. It has exposed some difficulties that lie in the way of the House reaching a conclusion on abortion, but it has been a helpful and stimulating debate and I am grateful to my hon. Friend for having raised the matter in the way that he did.

2.25 pm

Mr. Watts: With the leave of the House, Mr. Speaker, in the limited time that is available to me I am sure that right hon. and hon. Members will understand if I do not pick up many of the points that have emerged during the debate. I have succeeded in at least one of my objectives —to provide an opportunity for a wide-ranging debate on these important issues.

The hon. Member for Barking (Ms. Richardson) was slightly critical that my motion dealt with both embryology and abortion. I had two reasons for framing the motion as I did. First, I wished to provide an opportunity for hon. Members to debate the entire range of pro-life issues and it would have been invidious to choose between one or the other. Secondly, in my mind they are connected issues as both involve our attitude to unborn human life.

The reply of my hon. and learned Friend the Minister was rather like the curate's egg. I welcome his renewed commitment to the legislation on embryo research and urge him to introduce it as early as possible, but I was disappointed that my proposal for a way in which the House could reach a conclusion on abortion reform did not find favour with him. He failed to take adequate account of the fact that the Abortion Act 1967 would not have reached the statute book had it not been given extra time by the Government of the day. As that is the legislation which many of us wish to amend, it would be an act of fair play to ensure the time necessary to reach a conclusion.

As I said in my opening remarks, I accept the Government's argument against providing extra time for a private Member's Bill—it was wrong to do it in 1967 and it would be wrong to do it now—but the standing of the House is called into question when we allow our procedures to prevent us from arriving at a decision on an important matter which causes anxiety to many hon. Members and their constituents. I hope that the Minister's remarks do not represent a slamming of the door and a drawing of the bolts, but that he and his ministerial colleagues will be open to further persuasion that this is one way by which reforms could be achieved. He has not

said no for all time. I believe that if a way is not found —there may be ways other than those that I have proposed —in every Session we shall spend a great deal of private Members' time debating abortion and Bills seeking to amend the legislation.

It being half-past Two o'clock, the debate stood adjourned.

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Ordered,

That, at the sitting on Tuesday 20th December—

(1) Notwithstanding the provisions of paragraph (1)(b) of Standing Order No. 14 (Exempted business), Mr. Speaker shall put any Questions necessary to dispose of proceedings on the Motions in the name of Mr. Secretary Moore relating to Social Security not later than Seven o'clock;

(2) If proceedings on the Motion in the name of Mr. John Wakeham relating to Scottish Affairs have not been previously disposed of, Mr. Speaker shall at Ten o'clock put any Questions necessary to dispose of them and of any Amendments to that Motion which may have been selected by him and which may then be moved; and proceedings in pursuance of this paragraph, though opposed, may be decided after the expiration of the time for opposed business. —*[Mr. Garel-Jones.]*

Egg Industry

2.30 pm

The Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (Mr. John MacGregor): I wish to make a statement about the egg situation.

When earlier today my hon. Friend the Minister of State, Department of Health indicated that details of any scheme to help the egg industry would not be given until I made a statement to the House on Monday, he was correct. I felt that it was right, in view of the widespread speculation about a scheme, that it was in the interests of the hard-pressed industry itself to signal the Government's intention to introduce such a scheme now. I apologise to the House for any misunderstanding that may have arisen and now wish to make the position clear.

The Department of Health drew the Government's attention this summer to a new and growing problem from salmonella enteritidis phage type 4 linked to eggs, and in August the chief medical officer issued advice to the public on the risks of infection from consumption of raw eggs, or home-made dishes containing raw eggs, and later advised vulnerable people to cook eggs until they were solid. As a result of the Department of Health's information my Ministry acted immediately with the industry to tackle the problem at every point in the production chain. This has led, among other initiatives, to the publication of codes of practice to apply to commercial and breeding flocks.

However, during the past two weeks a great deal of uncertainty has arisen over the implications of the problem for consumers, and that has caused a sharp decline in egg sales. The Government have, therefore, taken steps, through a series of newspaper advertisements starting today, to reiterate the advice of the chief medical officer and to ensure that the facts are clear to everyone.

In view of the adverse impact that this uncertainty has had on the market, the Government have also decided, as a wholly exceptional measure, to introduce short-term measures which will enable eggs to be moved so as to help support the market at a critical period. We are entering into immediate discussions with the industry with a view to implementation within a few days. I am also in touch with the European Commission in respect of any Community aspects of those arrangements.

Early this morning I requested permission to make a statement about the scheme on Monday. Obviously consultations must take place with the industry, but I should like to make it quite clear that there will be no announcement of the Government's decisions on the details of the scheme before that statement, to which I hope you will agree, Mr. Speaker, on Monday.

Dr. David Clark (South Shields): I am glad that the Minister has finally succumbed to our pressure to tell the House about his proposals to help the beleaguered egg and poultry industry. We are pleased, at long last, that the Government have admitted the seriousness of the matter, which has been brought to this level largely by the indiscreet and irresponsible statements of the then Under-Secretary of State for Health. Her statements have devastated the industry. The House knows, the industry knows, and the pubic know, and no matter how great the compensation that the Minister can offer the poultry industry, we must admit that those indiscretions have

[Dr. David Clark]

ruined the lives—and hon. Gentlemen know that I am right—and livelihoods of many hundreds of egg and poultry producers. It is ironic that we—the general public and the taxpayers—must foot the bill. We are paying just as dearly as the poultry producers for the Under-Secretary's gaffe.

I agree with the Minister that the first objective must now be to try to restore public confidence in the industry. I hope that the first step was taken just half an hour ago when the Under-Secretary resigned her position. The problem could have been eased two weeks ago if the Prime Minister had done her duty and sacked the hon. Lady.

The Government have no alternative but to compensate those egg producers whose businesses have suffered as a result of ministerial incompetence. Furthermore, how much compensation does the Minister intend to make available to those workers employed in the industry who will be made redundant as a result of the recent fiasco?

Today, the Minister has referred only to removing excess eggs from the market. We are talking about roughly 15 million eggs a day. The present situation cannot continue for long, and the House knows that removing excess eggs is not the long-term solution to the problem. Given the position into which the Government have got us, the only answer is to try to reduce the supply of eggs. Tragically, that means culling a fair proportion of the British poultry flock.

What are the Minister's plans for paying compensation to those breeders who will be forced to gas their chickens, many of them healthy, to reduce the stock? Has the Minister any idea how much that will cost? Will it cost £10 million, or £40 million, as suggested by the National Farmers Union?

I appreciate that the Minister has had to come to the House in some haste. Will he assure us, however, that when he finalises the details of the scheme—I urge him to do so as quickly as possible as he and I know that poultry producers are going bankrupt right now—he will come to the House to allow us to debate them in full at the earliest opportunity?

Mr. MacGregor: My concern throughout has, of course, been for the consumers and the industry. That is why all the steps that I have taken have been directed to that end. That is why I made a number of comments about the safety of eggs and why I have always clearly stated the chief medical officer's advice. That is why, earlier this week, we decided to go ahead with the advertising campaign that will be conducted this weekend. That is also why I am now considering the scheme.

This scheme is not the first step. We have taken a number of steps ever since the summer to deal with the new and growing problem identified as one particular type of salmonella. We have acted consistently throughout and since the summer.

We now face an abnormal market——

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): Markets cannot be abnormal.

Mr. MacGregor: As usual, the hon. Gentleman understands nothing about markets.

In normal circumstances the scheme would have taken many weeks, if not months, to formulate given the abnormal state of the egg market. There is no question, but that, at present, the egg market is most unusual. Because of that, it is taking me a little time to produce the scheme. It is wrong to call it a scheme of compensation; it is a measure to deal with the market situation.

The hon. Member for South Shields (Dr. Clark) will understand that there are many practical difficulties about such a scheme. I am sure that he will understand why I do not wish to comment on the details of it until I make my statement on Monday. Whether we have a debate is obviously a matter for discussion through the usual channels.

I assure the hon. Gentleman that, if you, Mr. Speaker, agree, I shall make a statement on Monday.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton (Macclesfield): I congratulate my right hon. Friend on his extremely constructive, timely and positive statement.

I believe that I am right in saying that this House is an understanding place and that it is understanding of Members who, from time to time, make mistakes. The tragedy of this case is that the Under-Secretary of State did not apologise for her error. If she had, the House would have forgiven her. Are not the Government liable, because this mistake was made by one of Her Majesty's Ministers? Therefore, my right hon. Friend's proposal is indeed compensation for the many egg and poultry producers who have sustained a massive loss as a result of what has happened.

Does my right hon. Friend accept that many egg and poultry producers have sustained a major loss, not least those in my constituency, in that of my hon. Friend the Member for Congleton (Mrs. Winterton) and in those of many others? Will he therefore make a statement early next week which will give these valuable sections of agriculture the compensation that they deserve?

Mr. MacGregor: I have already twice made it clear that I shall be making a statement on Monday. Today, I am not announcing any arrangements for the scheme. I have said roughly what it is intended to do and that I do not see it as compensation. I am not making a detailed announcement now, but the announcement I have made implies no acceptance of legal liability on the part of the Government.

Now it is important to consider the interests of the consumer and of the industry. That is what we should be thinking about, and that is why I am focusing entirely on ensuring that the full facts are put before the public so that they can see that the risk to normal, healthy people from consuming eggs is small. I hope that they will go on consuming eggs as avidly as they always have done and as I always do. That is the best outcome for the industry, and it is why we put the full facts before the public today.

It is also important to recognise that we face a new problem. That is why we have given in full the chief medical officer's advice, particularly to vulnerable groups. I hope that my hon. Friend will agree that it is because I recognise the industry's position that I am working flat out to produce a scheme that I intend to announce on Monday.

Mr. David Steel (Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale): The Minister appeared to suggest a moment ago that the Under-Secretary of State for Health had been a casual victim of market forces. Surely things are a little more complicated than that. I agree with the hon. Member for

Macclesfield (Mr. Winterton), some of us will never understand why an instant retraction and apology that the whole House would have understood was not made.

The advertisement this morning states that we eat 200 million eggs a week and that there have been 49 outbreaks of salmonella this year. That represents one outbreak a week on a consumption of 200 million eggs a week. Is not the restoration of a sense of proportion in this more important than shovelling taxpayers' money at the problem? Will the right hon. Gentleman do his best to restore that sense of proportion? Will he pass on a comment made by one of the egg producers in my constituency, which was that he and some of his colleagues in the industry suspect that salmonella may originate from the illegal washing of eggs? Does the Ministry have any information about that?

Mr. MacGregor: The right hon. Gentleman completely misunderstood my reference to an abnormal market; he got it wrong.

I entirely agree with the right hon. Gentleman's main point. It is important to keep a sense of perspective, or, if necessary, to restore one. That is what I have been endeavouring to do throughout.

As for the figures in the advertisement, I want to underline one other point. It is important to understand the statement that the 49 cases are an underestimate. Let us be quite clear what this means. There are and always have been unreported cases of food poisoning from salmonella, usually because its effects are mild. By definition, we do not have these unreported figures. However, in the context of the consumption of 30 million eggs a day, the number of infected cases must be very small indeed. I entirely agree with the right hon. Gentleman that we need to get that message across and that we need to restore this sense of perspective.

As to the right hon. Gentleman's final point, not only the new type of salmonella, but also salmonella in general is often caused by people not observing the normal rules of food hygiene in the home and elsewhere. That is why in the advertisement we have focused sharply on food hygiene in the home. Long before the present concern arose we were considering new booklets about food hygiene in the home which we shall produce early next year. Those are the crucial points. We must keep a proper sense of perspective.

Mr. David Curry (Skipton and Ripon): In his reply to my hon. Friend the Member for Macclesfield (Mr. Winterton), my right hon. Friend said that the Government do not accept legal responsibility for what has happened. May we be quite precise about this? Is it quite clear that the Government are acting in response to the economic crisis in the industry with a voluntary political initiative? Is it clear that this does not imply a legal liability?

Mr. MacGregor: I am grateful to my hon. Friend. He is quite right.

Mr. Dafydd Wigley (Caernarfon): I, too, have an egg producer in my constituency who has had to slaughter a third of his chickens. He is in danger of having to slaughter another third this weekend and losing jobs. Will the Minister give a lead to such producers by telling them that they should take no irrevocable action until the Government have come forward with details? Can he give an assurance that, in contrast to the Chernobyl compensation, which many farmers in my constituency failed to get, there will not be an artificial time cut-off that will debar some producers from any scheme that the Minister may be studying?

Mr. MacGregor: This is quite different from the Chernobyl case, and I am not contemplating a compensation measure. I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for what he said in the first part of his question. He has drawn attention to the precise reason why I signalled the Government's intentions earlier today. I did that because I wanted to give a reassurance before the weekend. I hope that after consultations with the industry full details will be available to the House on Monday.

Sir Peter Emery (Honiton): Will my right hon. Friend accept our gratitude to him for coming to the House to make this limited statement before the weekend? We could not expect all the details to be obtained now, but it is most important to egg producers that my right hon. Friend has indicated the action that the Government are taking.

We have never had a direct contradiction of the statement by my hon. Friend the Member for Derbyshire, South (Mrs. Currie) that most egg production is affected by salmonella enteritidis. Everybody knows that to be wrong, but it has never been said from the Dispatch Box that it is wrong. May we have that made quite clear, because it will help to give some reassurance to people who eat eggs. Production has been cut, and distribution in Devon has been cut by between 40 and 50 per cent. during the past 10 days. The Government must take that element of disaster in the industry into account when they are working out the compensation. May I have an assurance that they will?

Mr. MacGregor: In the light of what my hon. Friend said at the end of his question, I must make clear yet again that this is not a compensation scheme. I was not here earlier in the day when these matters were being discussed because I was working and am still working flat out on the details of the scheme. I know that that is what the industry, consumers and the House would wish me to do. As I have already said, I hope to be able to give all the details on Monday. These are complex matters and some of the elements have never been considered before. That means that it is inevitably taking a little time.

On my hon. Friend's second point, I repeat that the important thing is to keep putting the facts before the public. One of the difficulties in the past few days is that one sentence or other has been taken alone and often used out of context. That is why it is important to put the totality of the case to consumers and that is why we have issued advertisements. I have made clear on many occasions, and I think it has been picked up, that it is not the case that most eggs are infected.

Mr. Nigel Spearing (Newham, South): The Minister spoke about consultation with the EEC. Could he tell the House whether the steps that he has taken since the summer to deal with some or many of the salmonella problems were taken under EEC legislation or under legislation of the United Kingdom? Secondly, bearing in mind that the treaties relating to the agricultural policy refer to "stabilisation of markets", is the expenditure that he expects to announce on Monday covered by the treaty of Rome or by United Kingdom legislation? If it is United

[Mr. Nigel Spearing]

Kingdom legislation, will he have to get the permission of the Commission or the Council for this step, or can he do it entirely on his own prerogative?

Mr. MacGregor: The steps that we have been taking since the summer have been pretty well entirely concentrated on ensuring that the industry takes proper health measures and that the difficulties associated with this new and growing problem arising from this one strain of salmonella are being fully attended to in order to minimise them. These steps—codes of practice for the poultry and egg industry, looking at the feed and so on—are steps that we have been taking within our own control in the United Kingdom.

As to the measures that I am now considering, the point is that certain types of schemes have to be cleared with the Commission—for example, to ensure that they are not unfair state aids. Hon. Members often express concern about what they fear might be unfair state aids in other countries, so it is entirely reasonable for the Commission to be involved when such schemes are being considered. That is one reason why I am in touch with the Commission.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett (Pembroke): My right hon. Friend will be aware that I have tabled a series of questions for answer today on the detailed issues that concern the egg industry, and I am happy to wait until Monday for those details. However, would my right hon. Friend respond to a suggestion made by egg producers in my constituency about the possibility of random sampling of eggs from each producer to see whether they are affected, and the issue of a certificate if they are not, which could be displayed at the point of sale? Many of us feel that my hon. Friend the Member for Derbyshire, South (Mrs. Currie) has done the honourable thing. She was a well respected Member of the Government, and we hope that she will be back to serve the Government in some other capacity.

Mr. MacGregor: I am willing to look at anything that would be helpful either to consumers or to the industry, because they have identical interests in these matters. One of the difficulties about random sampling is that it cannot give any assurance about the rest of the eggs. We could not give cast-iron guarantees.

Mr. Ron Leighton (Newham, North-East): Bearing in mind that the Government do not have any money—it is all taxpayers' money—how much taxpayers' money will this debacle cost? There is the cost of advertising and of removing the eggs from the market, and we do not know about compensation. Will the Minister give us an estimate? Will this not be the most expensive publicity-seeking ministerial announcement in all history? Should there not be a Governmnt health warning on most of the ministerial statements we hear in the House? Many ministerial statements harm my constituents who live on benefit, especially child benefit. No notice is taken——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I hope that the House will keep to the subject of the statement. The subject is eggs, we must not go beyond that.

Mr. MacGregor: I have already made it clear that I shall be making the announcement about the details of the scheme on Monday.

Mr. Robin Maxwell-Hyslop (Tiverton): Why is my right hon. Friend reticent about producing compensation and calling it such when the Chernobyl disaster was not due to the recklessness of a United Kingdom Minister and this is? Will the funding of the scheme to be announced on Monday come from the Department whose Minister caused the disaster or from my right hon. Friend's Department, which did not?

Will my right hon. Friend confirm that the comment that he made about raw eggs in cooking refers to dishes that are not cooked after the raw eggs are put into them and not to dishes that are cooked after the raw eggs are put into them? My right hon. Friend spoke of dishes in which raw eggs are used, when in much cooking raw eggs are used but the dish is subsequently cooked, and many local authorities are giving wrong advice on the basis of that ambiguity.

Mr. MacGregor: I appreciate my hon. Friend's concern on this issue, but I hope that he will agree that it would be wise for me to wait until I can make a full statement to the House before I go into any details, or I shall be pressed to give other details. As to my hon. Friend's second point, I cannot do better than repeat the advertisement in today's newspapers:

"everyone should avoid eating raw eggs or uncooked foods made from them".

Mr. Brian Sedgemore (Hackney, South and Shoreditch): Will the Minister join me in expressing sorrow at the plight of the former junior health Minister whose political career so far has been quixotic, exotic, ebullient and exciting? Bearing in mind the fact that, as a result of the statement today, many more people will eat eggs and put themselves at risk from salmonella poisoning, does the Minister plan to bring forward a compensation scheme for customers who are poisoned as a result of eating eggs?

Mr. MacGregor: I hope that as a result of reading the advertisements this morning everyone will return to their normal practice of eating eggs. That would be the best thing that could happen. People should also consider the advice of the Chief Medical Officer. He has consistently given that advice for some time and I am anxious that everyone should be aware of it. It is not in the egg industry's interests that people should not take that advice and contract food poisoning. I hope that the hon. Gentleman will do exactly as he said and will encourage people to eat as many eggs as possible, taking account of that advice.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. This is an interim statement. I shall allow questions to run for a further 10 minutes, and then we must move on. Any hon. Members who are not called will have some priority on Monday.

Mr. Patrick Cormack (Staffordshire, South): Is my right hon. Friend aware that there will be gratitude that once again he has shown such detailed knowledge of and care for the industry? Will he ensure that the aim of the package is proper restitution of the rightful expectations of those who have been deprived in the past fortnight by the outbreak of hysteria? Will he also stress that it has been an outbreak of hysteria and that there is no need for ordinary people to worry about ordinary diets?

Mr. MacGregor: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for his opening remarks. For details of the scheme, he will have to await my statement on Monday. He is absolutely right in saying that people should return to their normal practice and take full notice of our advertisements in the newspapers this morning.

Mr. Kevin Barron (Rother Valley): Is there an upper limit to this monetary intervention in the market, and how is the Ministry likely to pay it?

Mr. MacGregor: The hon. Gentleman must wait for my statement on Monday.

Mr. Den Dover (Chorley): Does my right hon. Friend accept that many hon. Members and people in the egg industry are disappointed with today's advertisements? Should not the Ministry be more positive? May we expect that by Monday some thought will have been given to further advertisements that will be proactive rather than reactive?

Mr. MacGregor: It is important for any Government statement or advertisement of this sort to stick to the facts and be clear about them. The facts that we outlined, for example, at the beginning of the advertisement are clear:

"Eggs are a valuable and nutritious part of a balanced diet. We in Britain eat, on average, 30 million eggs a day—200 million a week. The number of reported cases of food poisoning from salmonella linked to eggs is very small by comparison with the huge numbers of eggs that are consumed."

That is absolutely clear. It is also necessary to repeat the advice given by the chief medical officer, particularly to vulnerable groups, as a result of the new strain of salmonella.

Mr. Donald Anderson (Swansea, East): The Minister has denied legal liability. Can he point to any cause of the abnormal market in eggs other than the reckless statement of his agent, the former junior Minister?

Mr. MacGregor: Many people have made many statements in the past two weeks. The issue has hit the headlines. It is important for it to settle back into the normal run of events and for people to look—but not from the perspective of sensational headlines—at our advertisements which repeat clearly what we have said for a considerable time.

Mr. Tony Baldry (Banbury): It is essential to return egg supply and demand to a better balance. Should not any scheme that seeks to do that have the support of the whole House? We can help to improve the demand part of the equation by reassuring our constituents that there is no danger from eating eggs. They need only to read today's newspaper advertisements to see that the risks are minuscule. Re-establishing a sense of proportion and perspective would be the fairest way of helping egg and poultry producers.

Mr. MacGregor: I entirely agree with my hon. Friend. One important aspect of supply and demand is to get demand to its normal levels.

Mr. Allen McKay (Barnsley, West and Penistone): While the Minister is working flat out on the scheme that is to be announced on Monday—whether it is called compensation or restabilising the industry is immaterial at this stage—will he take into consideration the fact that hundreds of people have been laid off work? If the industry is to be restabilised, let us talk about restabilising them as well.

Can the Minister assure the House that in any future report on the egg industry he will consider whether there is any need to increase the inspectorate, and any need for a report on how hens are kept and the type of feed that they are given? Will he also consider whether the problem of imported food is being increased?

Mr. MacGregor: In answer to the first question, may I say that I have stressed throughout that my concern is with both consumers and the industry, which I want to see in a healthy state. When I refer to the industry, of course I mean all those working in it.

In answer to the second question, some of the matters to which the hon. Gentleman referred, such as feed, and imported feed, are issues that we have been following up in our initiatives since the Department of Health warned us about the problem in the summer. We are taking a number of steps in those directions.

Mr. Bill Walker (Tayside, North): Does my right hon. Friend agree that few areas of human activity are without risk, and that that is particularly true of what we eat? It is important to get the risk into perspective. What has hit the market is a belief that that risk is greater than it is. My right hon. Friend's statement today, and the statement that he is to make on Monday, deal with that very effectively. Certainly egg producers from Scotland to whom I spoke this morning were pleased to know that the Government are moving, and are moving so quickly.

Mr. MacGregor: I agree entirely with my hon. Friend. I think that much of what is happening is being taken out of perspective. My efforts have largely been designed to get it back into perspective and out of the headlines so that people behave in their normal sensible way.

I also entirely agree that in looking at risk in perspective it is necessary to look at other aspects as well as eggs. There are potential difficulties with many other types of food and drink. There are potential risks in practically everything that we do as human beings. What we are doing in this instance is minimising the risk.

Mr. Harry Cohen (Leyton): Although the comments of the Under-Secretary of State for Health appear to have been wrong and damaging, it could be argued that she was only doing her job and drawing attention to the health risk. Is it not the Ministry of Agriculture that has been dilatory in not tackling the problem of contaminated birds and feed long before now, given that the trend of increasing infection was already well known?

Just as when an overcrowded train crashes there are more injuries and fatalities, overcrowded factory farm conditions create an increased spread of infection. Should not the Government consider phasing out factory farming conditions, or some of the worst aspects of them?

Mr. MacGregor: The hon. Gentleman is quite wrong. We have been taking active steps in the Ministry to deal with the problem. In certain salmonella strains new problems are growing in the United States and many other European countries. I have been abroad a good deal in the past two weeks, and I have been discussing the issue with the Ministers of Agriculture in the United States and most of the member states of the European Community. We are all doing what we can to deal with the problem.

[Mr. MacGregor]

The hon. Gentleman is also wrong in what he said in his attack on what he described as factory farming. There is no evidence that free-range eggs are affected any differently from battery hen eggs. We must deal with the problem in both, as indeed we are doing.

Mr. John Greenway (Ryedale): I am sure that the many egg producers in my constituency will welcome my right hon. Friend's statement, and we look forward to his more detailed statement on Monday. Does he not agree, however, that it is most important to maintain a viable egg-producing industry, and that the scheme that he announces on Monday should take all the affected eggs off the market? The worst possible tragedy on top of the tragedy that we have already suffered, would occur if, when the market picks up, we were not able to supply it from our domestic production.

Mr. MacGregor: I agree entirely with my hon. Friend. What we should all be doing—I do not refer just to the statement that I shall make on Monday—is ensuring the proper and full viability of the industry.

Mr. Tony Banks (Newham, North-West): The Government have given the poultry industry the Christmas dish that it most wanted—the head of the Under-Secretary of State for Health on a plate, suitably garnished with a hard-boiled egg stuffed in her mouth. In view of the fact that a writ has been taken out by one of the largest egg producers against the Under-Secretary of State, will the taxpayer have to pay for that aspect of what the hon. Lady said? Will the taxpayer have to compensate further for the Under-Secretary of State's utterances?

Mr. MacGregor: I can make absolutely no comment on that. Obviously, those are not matters for me.

Mr. Kenneth Hind (Lancashire, West): Those of us who represent egg producers are extremely grateful for the speed with which my right hon. Friend has acted and with which he has listened to our representations. Will he confirm that last week the Agricultural Development and Advisory Service carried out a trawl of egg producers throughout the country, taking thousands of samples, and discovered no salmonella in the eggs?

Mr. MacGregor: I shall have to check the exact results, but certainly in many flocks no salmonella has been identified in checks. However, undertaking inspections of all flocks is a difficult job and not something that we could do.

Mr. Skinner: Will the Minister confirm that for a fortnight the Government have not followed the tradition of collective responsibilty? Two separate Departments of State have been saying different things on this subject. It is only as a result of being dragged to the House today that the Minister has been able to clear up the matter—that is, along with the resignation of the junior Minister.

Will the Minister bear in mind the fact that there is no way in which he can get eggs off the market without rigging the market? If there is to be rigging of the market, we should have it in other respects also. Will the Minister tell his hon. Friends that we have a many stocks of surplus coal and I should like to get rid of those——

Mr. Speaker: Order. Will the hon. Gentleman please stick to the statement?

Mr. Skinner: I am just drawing a decent analogy and comparison about the way in which the Government operate. They talk about taxpayers' money being sacrosanct. The Prime Minister is always lecturing us about using taxpayers' money. The shipyard workers in Sunderland would like some of that taxpayers' money——

Mr. Speaker: Order. Please stick to the statement.

Mr. Skinner: Finally, I remind the Minister that a few days ago the Secretary of State——

Mr. Speaker: Order. This is the time for questions. The hon. Gentleman should not remind the Minister.

Mr. Skinner: I ask the Minister to remember, because he may not remember—but we remember—that the Secretary of State for Health repeated at the Dispatch Box what the junior Minister had said. If it is right that the junior Minister has to get the sack, in collective responsibility the Secretary of State should follow suit because he said from the Dispatch Box that the hon. Lady was correct. The Secretary of State and the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food cannot both be right.

Mr. MacGregor: My right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Health and I have been working closely together on this issue since August. As for the hon. Gentleman's comparison with the coal industry, I advise him that the poultry and egg industry has been operating profitably on its own for a long period. If it had sustained the kind of losses under which the coal industry operated during the hon. Gentleman's party's period in government, there would not be a poultry industry today.

Mr. Ivor Stanbrook (Orpington): Is it not highly probable that the basic cause of this trouble is a disease that has been brought about by confining poultry in unnatural conditions? If that is so, should not the industry concerned primarily bear the cost of remedying the problem rather than calling on the taxpayer to bail it out?

Mr. MacGregor: Since the answer to the first part of my hon. Friend's question is no, the second part does not arise.

Mr. Robert G. Hughes (Harrow, West): Does my right hon. Friend agree that the decrease in egg sales started before my hon. Friend the Member for Derbyshire, South (Mrs. Currie) said anything on the subject? Does he accept that, now that she has honourably and bravely resigned from her post, the egg producers have a major role to play in re-establishing the confidence of the British public in feeding methods? Is not that the most important matter now?

Mr. MacGregor: I agree with my hon. Friend that the most important thing is to re-establish the confidence of the consumer. The egg industry has the greatest interest in that and is working closely with us to achieve it. One of the most important elements in re-establishing confidence is to get rid of many of the false impressions. That is precisely the purpose of many of the advertisements that we have introduced today.

Sports Council

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr Garel-Jones.]*

3.10 pm

Mr. Toby Jessel (Twickenham): We have just been discussing an important item of diet. To keep well and fit people need not only good food, but exercise. That is where sport and the Sports Council come in. Britain in the 1980s has seen a great revival in health and strength. Without doubt physical fitness has a continuing part to play. In that, we owe much to the Government's encouragement of the work of the Sports Council.

The Sports Council exists under a royal charter which sets out its object as being to

"foster the knowledge and practice of sport and physical recreation among the public at large and the provision of facilities therefor."

Led by its distinguished chairman, John Smith, it does excellent work for Britain and should be most warmly praised.

Sport in Britain has a tremendous ally in the person of my hon. Friend the Minister for Sport. It is well known and understood that under the royal charter and the Act the Sports Council is autonomous. Consequently, my hon. Friend the Minister is always scrupulously careful not to tell the Sports Council what to spend its money on, or even to look as if he is doing so. He has said so both publicly and privately. Perhaps at this point we should consider an analogy with Bagehot's doctrine on constitutional monarchy:

"The sovereign has, under a constitutional monarchy such as ours, three rights—the right to be consulted, the right to encourage, the right to warn."

I do not believe that the Sports Council would say that its Minister was always to encourage but never to warn.

The Sports Council is funded publicly through the Minister, who is in the Department of the Environment. The Minister is answerable to Parliament and Parliament to the public. Thus in practice there is in one sense an element of accountability because to uphold its funding the Sports Council needs friends in Parliament and among the public. It follows that the Sports Council needs to make it easy for the Minister for Sport to come to Parliament and ask us to vote for generous funding for its work. That means that it is wise for it not only to do good for sport, as it does, but to ensure that it acts as a good neighbour. That is recognised in its policy document. "Sport In The Community. . .The Next Ten Years," which states:

"the Sports Council has a duty . . . the clear message of all research and experience in the last decade is that facility provision alone is inadequate: an understanding of users' requirements and the needs of the local community (including non-users) . . . are all needed . . .the Sports Council will . . . continue to advise on the aesthetics, efficiency and cost-effectiveness of sports building design."

Thus it is the Sports council's policy to take into account the interests of the local community of non-users. Clearly, when any facility is provided, the non-users comprise the immediate local community bunched around it whereas the users, by the nature of things, are most scattered. No one with the interests of sport at heart should ever put the Sports Council, perhaps unwittingly, into the position of backing a scheme which is deeply unpopular and damaging to the local environment of non-users. If the Sports Council ever finds itself drawn into that, it would be wise to pause, hold back and think twice about financial participation, even if, earlier, it gave support on the basis of what then would have been incomplete information.

All of that applies to the Teddington floodlight scheme in my constituency. That scheme is so deeply unpopular that at two public meetings the public voted against it, first in the middle of August by 132 to 17 and then early in September by more than 400 to 12. The latter was a majority of about 30 to one against.

On 2 November I questioned my hon. Friend the Minister and asked:

"will he discuss the damage to the good will of the Sports Council because of its part funding of a horrible scheme to erect eight floodlight towers, 52 ft high and emitting 66,000 W in the heart of a residential area of Teddington? . . . Will my hon. Friend invite the chairman of the Sports Council to consider instead an improved playing field for Teddington school, but without any floodlights?"—[*Official Report*, 2 November 1988; Vol. 140, c. 1014-5.]

The school needs an improved playing field surface, but it does not need the floodlights. The Sports Council needs the floodlights, but there is no need for the Sports Council to insist on a scheme in that location. The floodlights could go somewhere more suitable and the borough council, perhaps with some sponsorship, could fund the provision of turf for the school but without the floodlights.

The dazzle from the floodlights would be powerful, brilliant and overwhelming. As with car headlights, it is not just the wattage that matters, although that is high at 66,000 W with the floodlights. The glare surrounded by blackness exhausts and tires people's eyes and sometimes causes headaches. I cannot see how families with young children can expect to get them to sleep at 8 pm or 9 pm without a total blackout system.

The floodlights would be provided for a hockey pitch which requires twice as much light as soccer because the ball is smaller and moves faster. I hope that no one will suggest that some marginal reduction in the wattage would make much difference. People are also concerned about noise at matches and practice sessions, about traffic and parking problems, and about the stark ugliness of eight tall pylons in a green area of special character along the banks of the river Thames.

The proposal does not affect only my constituency. It will also affect the constituency of Kingston upon Thames which is represented by my right hon. Friend the Financial Secretary to the Treasury. There are several blocks of flats on the Kingston side of the river which have been purchased on leases. The people living in those flats mostly do not have gardens and they bought the flats because they wanted a view of the river Thames. They do not want to look out on ugly pylons by day and on brilliant floodlights by night.

The cost of the scheme would be £380,000. It has been suggested that the Sports Council would produce £100,000 of that; £50,000 was to have come from Shell's club, the Lensbury club, but the club has withdrawn out of respect for local opinion. I ask my hon. Friend the Minister to draw the Sports Council's attention to the club's action, which might be seen as an example for the Sports Council. A further £50,000 was to have come from local sports clubs and £180,000 from Richmond upon Thames borough council, which is both the education and the planning authority. Acting as the planning authority,

[Mr. Toby Jessel]

Richmond upon Thames has flouted local public opinion by granting planning permission in defiance of huge majorities at the two local public meetings.

My constituents accept the need for the school to have an improved turf, but not the floodlights. A group of local councillors and others have been carried away by enthusiasm for the scheme and have taken a cavalier attitude to the needs and interests of people living around. All along, consultation has been inadequate, which may give rise to law suits if the scheme is persisted with. I stress, in particular, to my hon. Friend that Richmond upon Thames borough council has been less than candid in telling the Sports Council that it is being asked to put money into a scheme that is deeply detested locally. The Sports Council has been deceived on that point. In view of that, it is not enough to make the obvious point that the Sports Council has no planning locus, because that might imply that the Sports Council needs to take no interest whatever in the profoundly hostile local reaction. That is contrary to the Sports Council's own policy about sport in the community, which I quoted earlier, and it ignores the need for public goodwill and the reputation that the Sports Council wants to have as a good neighbour.

Some months ago, the Sports Council could have argued plausibly that it was not aware of the scheme's deep unpopularity. That is not the case now that this has been drawn to the Sports Council's attention. I cannot believe that the Sports Council, which is made up of decent and honourable people, would want to ride roughshod over other people's quiet enjoyment of their houses and flats. I ask my hon. Friend to draw the Sports Council's attention to every one of these points and to invite the chairman of the Sports council to comment fully on every point. I hope that wisdom will prevail and that the Sports Council will find a suitable site elsewhere to meet the growing need and demand for hockey pitches and turn away from the collision course on which it has embarked.

3.22 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Environment (Mr. Colin Moynihan): I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Twickenham (Mr. Jessel) on securing this debate and on speaking so eloquently and knowledgeably on the subject of the improvements to the pitch at Teddington school. I was, of course, aware of the scheme before this debate and have received detailed representations from my hon. Friend on the subject.

The subject of today's debate is accountability and funding of the Sports Council and I hope that my hon. Friend will allow me to concentrate on that for a few minutes before responding to the particular points that he has made about the pitch at Teddington.

First, I was delighted to announce last month an increase of £2.265 million in the council's grant, which will have a real impact on the funding of the Regional Council for Sport and Recreation as well. Since 1979-80, central Government's grant to the Sports Council has increased from £15.5 million to more than £39 million in the present financial year—a substantial increase in real terms. In addition to this sum, local authorities are now estimated to be spending about £800 million a year on sport and recreation. Private sponsorship of sport this year will approach £180 million. So total spending on sport is around £1 billion and there is much to show for it. Participation has increased from 17 million people in 1977 to an estimated record this year of 23 million people.

There are now over 1,000 swimming pools compared with 440 in 1970, 1,117 sports halls compared with 770 only seven years ago and 99 artificial sports pitches, compared with 30 in 1982. We can all be proud of these new facilities and developments.

The House will be aware that I have made significant changes to the membership of the Sports Council. When I took over as Minister for Sport 18 months ago, I was concerned that the Sports Council had become too large to make important decisions in an effective manner. I was myself a member of the council between 1983 and 1985 and, even then, when the council was below its final peak of 32, we would spend many long hours discussing subjects that bore little or no relevance to our two main objectives of increasing participation in sport and developing excellence.

That is why I raised the possibility of restructuring the council in my open letter of a year ago to John Smith, the chairman. Many of the replies that I received to that letter agreed that the Council was too large. So I decided to reduce it substantially by not reappointing those whose terms of office expired in the summer and and by asking others to resign.

The new council, with 14 members, provides a new streamlined and efficient approach, which reflects the changes and challenges developing in sport today and provides a framework to meet the opportunities for sport in the 1990's. I decided to appoint, first and foremost, sports men and women—Sebastian Coe, Richard Fox, and Maggie Hohmann. How right Adrian Moorhouse was to comment in *The Times* end column on Wednesday of this week that he

"would also like to see a way for the international swimmers themselves to have some input to the committees".

He went on:

"In Seoul we had a team with the oldest average age ever, and swimmers are now mature enough to deserve some say in how the early years of swimming's professional era should be managed.".

So it is right that Maggie Hohmann and Mary Peters—an impressive sports woman herself not so long ago—will have the opportunity to take a special interest in women in sport. Tim Marshall, a wheelchair athlete and a member of my review group on sport for the disabled will take a close interest in the council's role in that area.

It is important that governing bodies take note of this changing emphasis in representation at national level and provide positions at all levels of their committee structures for coaches and active or recently retired sports men and women who have both the ability and time available to have a vote and representation throughout their sports. Governing bodies still have strong representation through Ron Emes in canoeing, Charles Palmer in judo, John Smith, the chairman, who is a member of the Football League management committee, Peter Yarranton, the vice-president of the Rugby Union, and Norman Jacobs, one of the new members, who is a steward of the British boxing board of control. I also felt that it was vital to recognise the growing role that the private sector is playing in all aspects of sport. That is why I am delighted that David Simon, the Managing Director of BP has agreed to join the Council. He will bring the expertise needed to maximise the many private sector opportunities.

I am delighted that the Council is setting up three new groups which will act as consultative bodies to the Council. First, there will be a Committee of sports men and women in which Sebastian Coe, Richard Fox and Maggie Hohmann will play a key role. Secondly, a group of top business men will complement David Simon's role. They will be: John Quinton of Barclay's bank, Michael Parker of Saatchi and Saatchi, John Brackenbury of Brent Walker, Neil Shaw of Tate and Lyle, Michael Lowy of the British Sports and Allied Industries Federation. Thirdly, the chairmen of the regional council for Sport and Recreation will have direct access to me, unlike the other two groups. The council will also have formal consultations with the British Olympic Association and will, of course, continue to consult the Central Council of Physical Recreation.

I know that the Sports Council is fully committed to ensuring that the new arrangements will work, and will serve the interests of sports men and women.

I referred earlier to the increase in participation in sport and recreation. I can well understand that the resulting increase in these of facilities can sometimes result in conflict between participant and local residents—as my hon. Friend the member for Twickenham illustrated today.

I am aware of the background to the case. I know of my hon. Friend's opposition to the proposed development of the pitch at Teddington and of the opposition of those who attended the public meeting to which he referred. I have discussed the subject with him on several occasions. He has worked as assiduously as ever on behalf of his constituents and has also been in touch with my hon. and learned Friend the Minister for Water and Planning.

As my hon. Friend explained, the application submitted by Richmond education authority was for permission to lay an astroturf hockey pitch on part of the school playing fields and to erect eight sets of floodlights on pylons around the pitch. My hon. Friend sought to persuade Ministers to call in the planning application before the council deemed itself permission.

My hon. Friend has claimed three grounds in support of his case for a call-in. I assure him that Ministers considered each of these most carefully, and it may be helpful to the House if I take a few minutes to explain our response to each of them.

First, Richmond had a self-interest in deeming itself planning permission. Councils deem themselves planning permission quite frequently, but they are required to refer the application to the Secretary of State only where the development conflicts with the development plan. There is no suggestion that that is the case with this scheme.

Secondly, my hon. Friend pointed out that the area has been designated one of special character. The local plan recognises that special character and Ministers have no reason to believe that the planning committee did not take this into account in its deliberations.

Thirdly, my hon. Friend has suggested that the Royal London borough of Kingston was not adequately consulted. I understand that it was in fact consulted on 12 July. What happened after that is between the two borough councils.

In the circumstances, Ministers concluded that the planning issues raised were of no more than local significance and did not justify the Secretary of State's intervention.

I understand that Richmond council deemed itself planning permission on 8 September after a full debate. That means that Ministers are no longer able to call in the application. I am told, however, that the council has imposed conditions relating to the permission of screening for the site and to the hours of use of the floodlights and the sports pitch.

Mr. Jessel: Is my hon. Friend aware that at two public meetings to which I referred, where there were enormous votes by the public against this scheme, Richmond council sent two planning officers as observers who failed to report the result of those votes to the local planning committee? Is it not totally wrong for the Sports Council to be expected, as it needs good will, to rely on that planning decision as interpreting the wishes of local people in view of the Sports Council's policy for non-users as set out in "Sport in the Community—The Next Ten Years"? Will my hon. Friend now address himself to the points that I raised in the debate?

Mr. Moynihan: I was unaware of the presence of those officials and the extent to which they debriefed their council. The Sports Council should be fully aware of as many points as are available when making its decisions on grant aid. Of course, the Sports Council should have that additional information before it when it makes a final decision, and I shall ensure that the information is brought to its attention.

Just before my hon. Friend intervened, I was talking about floodlights. As he knows, floodlights may be used only until 10 pm on weekdays, 8 pm on Saturdays and 6 pm on Sundays. The school will use the hockey pitch by day and the local hockey clubs will use it in the evenings and at weekends.

As my hon. Friend said, the total cost of the scheme is £380,000. The Sports Council has said that it will give a grant of £100,000 towards the total cost. On 2 November, the hon. Member asked me in the House whether I would raise with the chairman of the Sports Council the issue of its part-funding of the scheme. He asked me about it again today. In my answer I explained that I had no locus to intervene on planning grounds, and this remains the case. I nevertheless did undertake to ensure that the chairman of the Sports Council received details of my hon. Friend's representations to the House. This I did in a letter which I sent to the chairman, John Smith, last month. In his reply, the chairman has drawn attention to the fact that the need for an intensive use pitch in the Teddington area is recognised in the regional recreation stategy and in the London playing fields strategy. The chairman supports the advice given by his officers and by the Regional Council for Sport and Recreation that such a pitch is needed and that, to ensure intensive use, floodlighting is an essential part of the scheme.

I understand that last Wednesday my hon. Friend spoke to John Smith on the intensity of the floodlighting and that Mr. Smith has asked his officers to examine ways in which the provision of lighting could be kept to the minimum level compatible with an efficient intensive use facility. My hon. Friend will of course appreciate that the council has a responsibility to ensure that the floodlighting does the job for which it is provided.

It is on these grounds that the Sports Council has approved grant in aid for the project. Like me, the

[Mr. Moynihan]

chairman of the council can make no comment on the merits of the planning decision, which must be entirely the responsibility of the local authority.

Having made my hon. Friend's representations known to the Sports Council, and aware of the relationship between the Minister and the Sports Council as laid down in the Royal Charter and approved by the House, I regret that there is nothing further that I can do. However, I will, of course, ensure that the Sports Council members are provided with a copy of the comments that my hon. Friend has made in the House today, which adequately reflect the strongly-felt opinions of my hon. Friend and a number of his constituents. I will ensure, too, that every view which has been drawn to this House's attention does not go just to the chairman by virtue of the presentation of a copy of today's *Hansard*, but will be personally sent by me to all members of the Sports Council.

Mr. Jessel: Will my hon. Friend ask the Sports Council especially to comment on its need for good will from Parliament and the public, and its need to act as good neighbours and not to involve itself in highly unpopular schemes which are damaging to its reputation, because they comprise an uncivilised act towards people living round about?

Mr. Moynihan: I have always had the highest respect for the good will of the Sports Council when coming to its decisions, and I shall ensure that that specific point is drawn to its attention.

Question put and agreed to.

Adjourned accordingly at twenty-four minutes to Four o'clock.

Written Answers to Questions

Monday 5 December 1988

TRANSPORT

M1-M6 (Commercial Traffic)

Mr. Heddle: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will publish his Department's projection of the increased volume of commercial traffic on the M1 and the M6 following the opening of the Channel tunnel in 1993.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The Department prepares forecasts of national traffic. Where specific trunk road improvements are being assessed, local traffic forecasts are prepared. Projections are not otherwise made for specific roads.

Drivers (Disqualification)

Mr. Beggs: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will take action to ensure that individuals convicted and disqualified from driving in any part of the United Kingdom will be denied the right to drive throughout the United Kingdom during their period of disqualification.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Northern Ireland (like the Channel Islands and the Isle of Man) has an entirely separate driver licensing system to that for Great Britain. British courts have no jurisdiction in Northern Ireland on driver licensing matters, and disqualifications imposed on the mainland are not valid there. There are at present no plans to change these arrangements.

Bus Drivers

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list any changes in the terms and conditions of employment of bus drivers employed by London Buses Limited, bearing on their health and the safety of bus passengers, since he assumed responsibility for London Regional Transport.

Mr. Portillo: Limits on public service vehicle drivers' hours of duty are prescribed by law to ensure safety. The requirements are standard for all bus operators. Other terms and conditions of employment are matters for the operators themselves.

Roads (Expenditure)

Mr. Prescott: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what was the level of both capital and current expenditure by *(a)* central Government and *(b)* local government on Britain's roads in each year since 1974-75.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Expenditure figures for local roads spending prior to 1978-79 are not readily available in cash. In order to give (as nearly as practical) a consistent series of data, the following table gives expenditure for 1974-75 to 1979-80 on a price base of November 1978 (source Cmnd 7841), and expenditure for 1987-88 (source, Transport Statistics Great Britain) adjusted for the change in GDP since the third quarter of 1978-79.

	(a) National Roads £ millions				*(b) Local roads £ millions (price base Autumn 1978)*			
	Current[1]		*Capital*[1]		*Current*[2]		*Capital*	
1974-75	86		620		689		566	
1975-76	101		640		664		557	
1976-77	106		547		617		522	
1977-78	101		398		610		346	
1978-79	115		392		661		318	
[1]1979-80	116	51	404	475	608	633	372	410
1980-81		49		469		617		407
1981-82		65		479		663		349
1982-83		52		543		657		394
1983-84		57		512		654		400
1984-85		61		516		643		385
1985-86		59		493		639		390
1986-87		67		494		681		406
1987-88		58		549		[3]682		[3]370

[1] Structural maintenance of national roads was reclassified as capital expenditure in 1983. Figures in the series 1979-80—1987-88 reflect this classification while figures in the series 1974-75—1979-80 do not.
[2] excludes local authority professional and technical support.
[3] approximate estimate based on quarterly data.

Traffic Congestion (London)

Mr. Bowis: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what discussions he has had with London borough councils about the causes and cures of recent widespread traffic jams in inner London; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The Department has regular contact with the police, London borough officers and the traffic signals control unit about traffic conditions. In the highly interdependent London network, congestion is often caused by incidents (breakdowns, accidents, roadworks) on local roads. Because traffic volumes are high, minor incidents can have a widespread knock-on effect.

Mr. Bowis: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what assessment he has made of the impact of the partial closure of Battersea bridge on the traffic flow in inner London.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: This is primarily a matter for the London borough of Wandsworth as the highway authority and for neighbouring authorities.

Crash Barriers

Sir Michael McNair-Wilson: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what plans he has for installing crash barriers on duel carriageway stretches of the A34 particularly at Gore hill in Berkshire.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: We have a major programme to install central reserve safety fencing along the dual carriageway lengths of the A34 between the M3 at Winchester and Oxford. Work is due to start early in the new year. It will take about two years to complete. Precise timing of the Gore hill section depends on overcoming certain technical difficulties.

Severn Bridge

Mr. Aspinwall: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he will invite tenders for the second Severn bridge.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The Department has sent a notice to the Official Journal of the European Communities for publication today asking groups of firms interested in bidding:

(i) for the design, construction financing and operation and

(ii) for the design and construction only

of a second Severn crossing to submit themselves for selection as tenderers. This initial selection process has been introduced at the request of the industry to cut down wasted effort in preparing a full tender. Applications to be considered for selection must be returned to the Department of Transport by mid-January. The groups selected to submit full tenders will be announced towards the end of February. Guidelines for these tenders will be published in the spring.

EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

Students (Statistics)

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will publish in the *Official Report* the age participation index and qualified participation index for each year since 1979 *(a)* for universities only, *(b)* for PSHE institutions only and *(c)* for all higher education institutions.

Mr. Jackson: The information required is as follows:

	Academic year beginning in								
	1979	*1980*	*1981*	*1982*	*1983*	*1984*	*1985*	*1986*	*[1]1987*
API									
Universities	7·4	7·5	7·2	6·8	6·6	6·8	6·9	7·0	7·3
PSHE	5·0	5·2	5·9	6·5	6·6	6·9	7·0	7·0	7·3
All higher education	12·4	12·6	13·1	13·4	13·2	13·7	13·9	14·0	14·6
QPI									
Universities	50·4	50·3	47·7	44·4	40·7	41·3	41·8	43·2	44·9
PSHE	33·6	34·8	39·5	42·4	40·9	41·5	42·0	42·9	44·5
All higher education	84·0	85·0	87·1	86·8	81·5	82·8	83·9	86·1	89·4

Note:
[1] Provisional figures.

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will publish in the *Official Report* the young mature entry index and the older mature participation index from 1979 to the most recent date for which the figures are available *(a)* for all higher education institutions, *(b)* for universities only and *(c)* for P.S.H.E. only.

Mr. Jackson: The information required is as follows:

	Academic year beginning in								
	1979	*1980*	*1981*	*1982*	*1983*	*1984*	*1985*	*1986*	*1987[1]*
Young Mature Entry Index									
All higher education	8·8	7·6	7·5	7·2	6·9	7·2	7·8	7·4	7·5
Universities	2·7	2·4	2·0	1·7	1·5	1·6	1·7	1·7	1·7
P.S.H.E.	6·1	5·2	5·5	5·5	5·3	5·6	6·1	5·8	5·8
Older Mature Participation Index									
All higher education	0·218	0·219	0·245	0·246	0·261	0·261	0·272	0·281	0·295
Universities	0·054	0·051	0·052	0·046	0·048	0·051	0·053	0·056	0·057
P.S.H.E.	0·165	0·168	0·193	0·199	0·213	0·208	0·219	0·226	0·238

[1] Provisional figures.

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science how many advanced level secondary school pupils from *(a)* local education authority maintained secondary schools and *(b)* private sector maintained secondary schools, applied for a place at Oxford university and at Cambridge university in each year since 1979; and how many, from each sector, each university finally accepted.

Mr. Jackson: The information requested is shown in the following table.

Cambridge	*Maintained*	*[3]Direct grant*	*Independent*	*FE Institutions*	*Scottish and Irish*	*Other and OSEAS*	*Total*
1979							
Applications	2,410	697	1,385	110	211	416	5,229
Acceptances	906	363	733	24	99	114	2,239

Cambridge	Maintained	[3]Direct grant	Independent	FE Institutions	Scottish and Irish	Other and OSEAS	Total
1980							
Applications	2,403	688	1,375	122	214	405	5,207
Acceptances	947	387	732	29	99	128	2,322
1981							
Applications	2,251	654	1,341	105	147	443	4,939
Acceptances	774	372	668	25	48	134	2,021
1982							
Applications	3,774	..	2,910	217	280	621	7,802
Acceptances	1,154	..	1,328	47	99	164	2,792
1983							
Applications	3,678	..	2,806	221	309	714	7,728
Acceptances	1,223	..	1,332	55	123	166	2,899
1984							
Applications	3,358	..	3,031	174	337	836	7,736
Acceptances	1,117	..	1,456	48	120	244	2985
1985							
Applications	3,365	..	3,557	205	333	1,043	8,503
Acceptances	1,160	..	1,564	53	108	213	3,098
1986							
Applications	2,895	..	3,701	207	286	1,300	8,389
Acceptances	1,027	..	1,550	60	110	382	3,129
[1]*1986*							
Applications	3,506	..	3,495	..	..	1,337	8,338
Acceptances	1,230	..	1,410	..	..	380	3,020

[1] In earlier years FE institutions, Scottish and Irish schools were shown separately. For 1987 they are included under maintained or independent as appropriate.
[2] Information for 1988 is not readily available.
[3] Direct grant schools were abolished in 1980-81.

Oxford	Maintained	Direct grant[1]	Independent	Sixth form college	Other and OSEAS	Total
1979						
Applications	3,489	815	2,035	..	433	6,772
Acceptances	1,320	408	975	..	85	2,788
1980						
Applications	3,661	644	2,133	..	460	6,898
Acceptances	1,378	299	1,058	..	79	2,814
1981						
Applications	3,924	670	2,093	..	306	6,993
Acceptances	1,414	280	1,051	..	91	2,836
1982						
Applications	4,138	..	2,925	..	476	7,539
Acceptances	1,404	..	1,325	..	111	2,840
1983						
Applications	3,638	..	2,980	727	356	7,701
Acceptances	1,088	..	1,265	248	85	2,686
1984						
Applications	3,306	..	3,045	775	437	7,563
Acceptances	1,122	..	1,359	262	110	2,853
1985						
Applications	3,282	..	3,819	687	342	8,130
Acceptances	1,098	..	1,684	234	104	3,120

[1] Direct grant schools were abolished in 1980-81.

Oxford	State	Independent	Others	Total
[1]*1986*				
Applications	3,680	3,096	861	7,637
Acceptances	1,395	1,324	221	2,940

	State	*Oxford Independent*	*Others*	*Total*
1987				
Applications	3,278	3,065	847	7,190
Acceptances	1,399	1,415	256	3,070
1988				
Applications	3,979	3,743	990	8,712
Acceptances	1,448	1,535	243	3,226

[1] The classification used by Oxford changed in 1986.

Teachers

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will implement the International Labour Organisation rulings on the rights of employees to negotiate with their employers in relation to teachers; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Rumbold: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave him on 11 November at column *318*.

Education Reform

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what effect he expects that state schools that opt out and function independently will have on preparatory schools; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Butcher: Schools which become grant-maintained will remain within the maintained sector of education, and will increase the diversity of provision available to parents within that sector. There will be no direct effect on preparatory schools although ultimately we expect that increased diversity and competition will encourage all schools (including preparatory schools) to maintain and improve their standards and responsiveness to those they serve.

Mr. Fearn: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will make a statement on the effect of the Education Reform Act on school-theatre and museum and theatre visits.

Mr. Butcher: My right hon. Friend has no reason to believe that the level of school visits to theatres and museums need change markedly as a result of the provisions of the Education Reform Act. The Act clarifies earlier legislation in establishing that schools may not charge for any provision offered during school hours, with the exception of individual music tuition. Charges may be made for visits and activities provided outside school hours, unless these are required for a prescribed examination syllabus or for the national curriculum. Restrictions on charging do not prevent local authorities and schools from seeking voluntary contributions in support of particular activities and we expect that parents will continue to support activities which they regard as educationally worth while.

Student Loans

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will reconsider the limitations on mature students, particularly those nearing or at retiring age in respect of the Government's proposals in the White Paper on "Student Top-up Loans," where anyone commencing higher education at the age of 40 years or over will have to repay the loan up to and until the age of 60 years.

Mr. Jackson: The Government have invited comment on the repayment regime but we want students up to the age of 50 to have the benefit of loans. Under our proposals the annual repayments made by graduates approaching the age of 60 will be no more and no less than repayments made by younger graduates in the same economic circumstances. Any debt still outstanding at the age of 60 will be cancelled.

Veterinary Schools (Research)

Ms. Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science (1) what have been the sources of funding in veterinary schools over the last five years;

(2) what revenue from commercial sources has been derived from publicly funded research in veterinary schools over the last five years.

Mr. Jackson: Universities (of which veterinary schools are component parts) receive general funding in the form of block grant from the University Grants Committee and from various other sources. It is not possible to identify how elements of that income flow to individual faculties and schools. The available data on specific income (for research contracts and other services) in veterinary science are shown below. Information is not available on the revenue from commercial sources derived from publicly funded research.

£ thousands

	1984-85	*1985-86*	*1986-87*
A. Research Grants and Contracts			
Research Council Grant	1,066	1,049	1,154
Other Central Government	1,062	1,370	1,686
United Kingdom Public Corporations	71	17	24
Other United Kingdom Industry and Commerce	373	426	452
United Kingdom Charitable Bodies	922	1,074	1,838
Overseas[1]	85	202	265
Other Sources	107	87	271
Total Grants and Contracts	3,686	4,223	5,690
B. Income from other services rendered			
Total[1]	1,542	1,627	1,846
C. Total Specific income from veterinary science	5,228	5,850	7,836

[1] Includes income from commercial sources.

Ms. Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what are the research objectives of veterinary schools.

Mr. Jackson: Such objectives are for each university to determine.

Scientific Equipment

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what information is available to his Department regarding expert estimates of the annual percentage increase in real terms of costs of scientific equipment needed for priority areas of research identified by the Advisory Board for the Research Councils; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Jackson: My right hon. Friend receives advice each year from the Advisory Board for the Research Councils on the sums to be allocated to each of the research councils in support of priority areas of research. This includes provision for scientific equipment and takes account of cost movements and of changes in the nature and standard of equipment which is available.

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science when he expects to receive advice from the Advisory Board for the Research Councils arising from the board's commissioned survey of scientific equipment provision; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Jackson: I understand that the ABRC has not yet received the report of the survey it has commissioned on scientific equipment provision, and that it is unlikely that the board will offer my right hon. Friend advice on this matter before next spring.

Correspondence

Mr. Straw: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will place in the Library his letter and attachment of 28 November sent to the hon. Member for Blackburn in answer to his question of 19 October.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: Copies of my letter and attachment have been placed in the Library.

Grant-maintained Schools (Ballots)

Mr. Straw: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will list in the *Official Report* the names, areas and type of those schools in respect of which he received a notification by 30 November concerning a governors' resolution or parent petition for a ballot for a grant-maintained school, the schools being ones affected by a section 12 and 13 proposal undecided on 4 August; and what was the total number of schools so affected.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: Notification of a governors' resolution or parent petition for a ballot has been received in respect of the following 18 schools which were subject to published section 12 or 13 proposals published by but undecided on 4 August:

School	*LEA*	*Type*
Queensbury	Bedfordshire	13-18 County Mixed Comprehensive
Ravensbourne	Bromley	11-18 County Girls Comprehensive
Ramsden	Bromley	11-18 County Girls Comprehensive
Netherthorpe	Derbyshire	11-18 Voluntary Controlled Mixed Comprehensive
Chesterfield	Derbyshire	13-18 County Boys Comprehensive
Frances Bardsley	Havering	11-18 County Girls Comprehensive
Gaynes	Havering	11-18 County Mixed Comprehensive
Forest Lodge	Havering	11-18 County Mixed Comprehensive
Sir James Altham	Hertfordshire	11-18 County Mixed Comprehensive
Hadham Hall	Hertfordshire	11-18 County Mixed Secondary
London Nautical	ILEA	11-18 County Boys Comprehensive
Wilmington Grammar	Kent	11-18 County Boys Grammar
Wilmington Grammar	Kent	11-18 County Girls Grammar
South Park	Lincolnshire	11-18 County Mixed Comprehensive
Blessed Hugh More RC	Lincolnshire	11-16 Voluntary Aided Mixed Secondary
Queen Elizabeth's	Rochdale	14-18 Voluntary Controlled Mixed High
Audenshaw	Tameside	11-16 County Boys Comprehensive
Droylsden	Tameside	11-16 County Girls Comprehensive

Student Unions

Mr. Amess: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science (1) if he will place in the Library the correspondence between his Department and the National Union of Students concerning automatic membership of student unions; and if he will make a statement;

(2) what recent representations he has received from the National Union of Students regarding the automatic membership of student unions; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Jackson *[holding answer 2 December 1988]:* The NUS has made no recent representations. The last exchange of correspondence between the NUS and Ministers on this subject followed a meeting which I held with the NUS on 29 February. This exchange preceded the announcement of the survey and I do not think that it would now be appropriate to place it in the Library.

Mr. Amess: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will place in the Library a copy of each of the returned questionnaires for his review of student unions; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Jackson *[holding answer 2 December 1988]:* No.

Mr. Amess: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science (1) what was the total number of questionnaires for his Department's review of student unions *(a)* sent out and *(b)* returned, and what is the percentage of the latter to the former;

(2) how many questionnaires for his review of student unions were sent to *(a)* student unions, *(b)* institutions of higher and further education and *(c)* the National Union of Students; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Jackson *[holding answer 2 December 1988]:* Questionnaires were issued to 70 institutions in Great Britain. Each institution received four copies but it was for each to determine, against the definition of a student union used for the survey, how many separately completed questionnaires to return. Institutions were invited to involve their local union(s) in completing the questionnaire but no questionnaires were issued direct to local unions for return to the Department. A copy was sent to the NUS for information.

By 1 December a total of 86 returns had been received from 68 institutions. Returns from the remaining two institutions are expected within a few days.

Mr. Amess: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what is his policy towards treating the National Union of Students as a representative negotiating body; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Jackson *[holding answer of 2 December 1988]:* The Department consults as appropriate, but does not negotiate, with the National Union of Students.

Natural Environmental Research Council

Mr. Bermingham: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what he assesses will be the impact of funding cuts for the Natural Environmental Research Council on working on practical projects involving volunteers in the area of nature conservation: and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Jackson *[holding answer 2 December 1988]:* The staff reductions NERC has announced include one post concerning bat ecology, where work done in the past has involved volunteers. Otherwise, volunteers are involved only on projects commissioned by customers, and their future involvement will be dependent on customer support.

ENVIRONMENT

Civil Defence

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) what grants were authorised to be paid by his Department for capital works carried out under the Civil Defence (Water Supplies) Regulations 1949 in each of the financial years 1985-86 to 1987-88 inclusive; to which authorities they were paid; and for what purposes;

(2) what grants were authorised to be paid by his Department for capital works carried out under the Civil Defence (Sewerage) Regulations 1949 in each of the financial years 1985-86 to 1987-8, inclusive; to which authorities they were paid; and for what purposes.

Mr. Moynihan: Grant authorised by the Department since 1985-86 for capital works relating to water authority civil defence functions has been for structural and accommodation works for emergency control centres, as follows:

Water authority	*Financial year*	*Amount of grant (75 per cent. of cost)* £
Anglian	1985-86	3,794
	1986-87	102,750
	1987-88	19,156
Severn Trent	1987-88	173,905
Southern	1987-88	4,050
Wessex	1985-86	2,639
	1986-87	18,731
	1987-88	128,974
Yorkshire	1985-86	4,908
	1986-87	23,625
	1987-88	262,267
	TOTAL	744,799

Wildlife and Countryside Act

Mr. Hind: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement on his proposals to amend section 53 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 following the decision in the case of Rubinstein and another v. Secretary of State for the Environment.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: Our intention is to introduce legislation, when a suitable opportunity occurs, to return to the situation that was assumed to exist prior to the judgment in the Rubinstein case. This will enable surveying authorities, on the discovery of evidence, to make orders correcting mistakes in the recording of rights of way on the definitive map.

Water Quality (Nottingham)

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment on how many individual occasions the level of *(a)* nitrate *(b)* aluminium and *(c)* other substances in Nottingham water supplies has exceeded the levels in EEC drinking water directives.

Mr. Moynihan: I understand from the water authority that within the last 12 months there have been no individual occasions when aluminium has exceeded the limits laid down in the EC drinking water directive in the city of Nottingham drinking water supplies.

The nitrate standard has been marginally exceeded (at times of peak demand) from a source serving about 2,000 people in the city but this does not constitute a risk to health.

A single sample failed to meet the directive requirements relating to iron.

Toxic Waste

Mr. Devlin: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is the Government's policy on the import of foreign toxic waste into the United Kingdom for treatment.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: I refer my hon. Friend to the answer given to my hon. Friend the Member for Wyre (Mr. Mans) on 23 November at columns *4-5*.

Toxic Chemical Incinerators

Mr. Devlin: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many toxic chemical incinerators there are in the United Kingdom; and what are their locations.

Mr. Virginia Bottomley: There are three merchant incinerators in the United Kingdom which process toxic chemical wastes: at Ellesmere Port (Cheshire), Fawley (Hampshire) and Pontypool (Gwent). These are subject to the control of Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution. In addition, the inspectorate, together with Her Majesty's industrial pollution inspectorate (in Scotland) and the alkali and radiochemical inspectorate (in Northern Ireland) exercise control over 77 chemical incinerators which burn only waste generated on the site by a related industrial process.

Raptors (Illegal Sales)

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will seek to obtain information from the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds relating to the prices commanded by illegally sold British birds of prey.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: No. Although the Department's licensing and registration functions are useful inhibitions to the sale of illegally taken birds of prey, it has no direct responsibility for enforcing the law prohibiting their illegal taking, which is a matter for the police. I therefore have no reason to seek information about the prices at which birds of prey are sold.

Lowland Heath

Mr. Nicholas Baker: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he last met representatives of voluntary conservation bodies to discuss the draft flora, fauna and habitat directive; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: My noble Friend, the Minister for Housing, Environment and Countryside, met representatives of voluntary conservation bodies to discuss the draft directive on 18 November. I explained the current position on the directive in my answer to my hon. Friend, the Member for Bedfordshire, North (Sir T. Skeet) on 29 November, at column *200-20*.

Nuclear Waste (South Yorkshire)

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what investigations have been made in the county of South Yorkshire to see if the soil strata is suitable for low or high-level nuclear waste; and how many suitable sites have been discovered.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: UK Nirex Ltd. is responsible for the field work necessary to identify potential sites for a deep disposal facility for low and intermediate-level radioactive waste. No part of the United Kingdom is ruled out at this stage.

Heat-generating (high-level) radioactive waste is being stored at British Nuclear Fuels works at Sellafield for about 50 years until levels of radioactivity have declined sufficiently to facilitate disposal. No work is being undertaken to identify potential disposal sites for this type of waste.

PCB Levels

Mr. Murphy: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution proposes to publish the report arising from the investigation, undertaken two years ago, and carried out jointly by Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution and the university of East Anglia, into national background levels of PCBs and including an investigation into the area surrounding ReChem International (Pontypool).

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: During the period 1985 to 1987 the hazardous waste inspectorate, now part of Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution, conducted a national survey into background levels in soils of polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs), polychlorinated dibenzo-p-dioxins (PCDDs) and polychlorinated dibenzo-furans (PCDFs). A summary of that work was published this year in the third report of the hazardous waste inspectorate and the full technical report will be published in 1989.

A further study, which involves more detailed sampling around potential sources of PCBs, including the ReChem International incinerator at Pontypool, has begun. The full results of this study are expected in two years' time. In the interim, preliminary findings will shortly be communicated to local authorities concerned.

Housing Corporation

Mr. Soley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is his estimate of additional staffing requirements for the Housing Corporation for the financial year 1988-89.

Mr. Trippier: My Department is currently discussing with the Housing Corporation its additional staffing requirements for 1988-89 for new responsibilities under the Housing Act 1988. Final decisions have yet to be taken.

Lead Shot

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) what steps he is taking to encourage the development of non-toxic alternatives to lead shot;

(2) what is his Department's policy on the substitution of steel for lead shot in game shooting; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: We have asked the Nature Conservancy Council to assess any potential danger to wildlife from the residues from lead shot and to consult interested parties. In addition, the British Association for Shooting and Conservation (BASC) has set up a working group to co-ordinate research into all aspects of the use of lead shot. The Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food has undertaken research into the effect of residues from lead shot in animal feedstuffs. We are encouraged to see that both BASC and the Gun Trades Association are assessing the use of steel and other materials as possible substitutes for lead shot. Decisions on the continued use of lead shot will be made as and when the results of all these studies are available.

Football Club Membership Scheme

Mr. Lester: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what has been the response of the football authorities to his proposed national football membership scheme.

Mr. Moynihan: The football authorities contributed fully in the working party which I chaired on the national membership scheme and agreed the report which the working party produced. They have made clear that they are opposed to the principle of the scheme but I am very glad that both the new president of the Football League and the chief executive of the Football Association have recently repeated their willingness to co-operate with the Government in producing a workable scheme. I look forward to discussing the details of the scheme further with them.

Croxteth Hall

Mr Wareing: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement on the future of Croxteth hall and Country park, Liverpool.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: We are awaiting the Merseyside residuary body's proposals on detailed arrangements for ensuring the future of Croxteth hall and country park. We hope to make a statement shortly.

Truscon RD27 Houses

Mr. Wareing: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what recent representations he has received from Liverpool city council about the possible repurchase of Truscon RD27 houses situated in Storrington avenue, Liverpool; and what his response has been.

Mr. Trippier: Liverpool city council have applied for consent to repurchase three privately owned Truscon

RD27 type houses at Storrington avenue and the Department's officials recently wrote to the council about the repurchase terms. It is now for Liverpool city council to take the matter forward.

Planning Applications

Mr. Malins: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many planning applications were received by the London borough of Croydon in each of the last 10 years; how many were granted; how many appeals were made; how many appeals were allowed; and how many appeals were refused.

Mr. Chope: The information available in the Department is given in the tables.

London Borough of Croydon
Table 1—Applications under section 29 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1971

Year	Decided	Granted
1982-83	[1]1,400	[1]1,182
1983-84	2,101	1,812
1984-85	2,178	1,809
1985-86	2,163	1,746
1986-87	[1]1,775	[1]1,426
1987-88	2,456	1,997

[1] Three quarters of the year only.

Table 2—Planning appeals under sections 35 and 37 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1971

Year	Received	Allowed	Dismissed
1984-85	79	22	47
1985-86	117	38	47
1986-87	128	50	45
1987-88	136	54	67

Planning Controls

Mr. Wray: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment which are the current planning controls now protecting water authority lands from developers because of *(a)* their outstanding natural beauty, *(b)* their value to urban or rural communities as spaces of recreation or as environmental protection, and *(c)* their character as national parks.

Mr. Chope: The Town and Country Planning Acts and subsidiary legislation, and the Government's planning guidance, apply to water authority land as they do to land in other ownership. The Town and Country Planning General Development Order grants planning permission, subject to limitations, for development by water authorities for the purpose of their functions.

Planning Appeals

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what was the number of planning appeal decisions which were *(a)* allowed, *(b)* dismissed, *(c)* withdrawn and *(d)* undetermined in each of the English national parks, including the Broads authority in each of the last five years; and if he will express the numbers allowed and dismissed as a percentage of those determined.

Mr. Chope *[holding answer 2 December 1988]* The available information in respect of the English national parks is given below. Similar information in respect of the Broads authority area is not readily available and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

National Park Year	Decided	Allowed		Dismissed		Withdrawn
		Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage	
Peak District						
1984-85	23	6	26·1	17	73·9	3
1985-86	25	5	20·0	20	80·0	7
1986-87	38	9	23·7	29	76·3	6
1987-88	38	9	23·7	29	76·3	5
Exmoor						
1984-85	7	4	57·1	3	42·9	0
1985-86	6	4	66·7	2	33·3	0
1986-87	4	2	50·0	2	50·0	1
1987-88	4	0	—	4	100·0	1
Northumberland						
1984-85	2	0	—	2	100·0	0
1985-86	0	0	—	0	—	0
1986-87	0	0	—	0	—	0
1987-88	0	0	—	0	—	1
Dartmoor						
1984-85	32	6	18·8	26	81·2	2
1985-86	29	8	27·6	21	72·4	4
1986-87	22	9	40·9	13	59·1	3
1987-88	24	7	29·2	17	70·8	0
Lake District						
1984-85	17	6	35·3	11	64·7	1
1985-86	37	18	48·6	19	51·4	5
1986-87	37	16	43·2	21	56·8	1
1987-88	76	34	44·7	42	55·3	2
Yorkshire Dales						
1984-85	22	7	31·8	15	68·2	2
1985-86	21	6	28·6	15	71·4	1
1986-87	14	4	28·6	10	71·4	3

National Park Year	Decided	Allowed		Dismissed		Withdrawn
		Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage	
1987-88	15	4	26·7	11	73·3	0
North Yorkshire Moors						
1984-85	28	8	28·6	20	71·4	3
1985-86	23	3	13·0	20	87·0	1
1986-87	17	11	64·7	6	35·3	4
1987-88	31	12	38·7	19	61·3	0

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) what was the number of planning appeal decisions which were *(a)* allowed, *(b)* dismissed, *(c)* withdrawn and *(d)* undetermined in England in each of the last five years; and if he will express the numbers allowed and dismissed as a percentage of those determined;

(2) if he will give for each of the last five years for which figures are available, the number of planning appeal decisions which were allowed, dismissed, withdrawn and undetermined, respectively in England; and if he will express the numbers allowed and dismissed as a percentage of those determined;

(3) if he will give for each of the last five years for which figures are available, the number of planning appeal decisions which were allowed, dismissed, withdrawn and undetermined, respectively, in each of the English national parks, including the Broads authority; and if he will express the numbers allowed and dismissed as a percentage of those determined;

(4) if he will give for each of the last five years for which figures are available, the number of planning appeal decisions which were allowed, dismissed, withdrawn and undetermined, respectively on green belt land; and if he will express the numbers allowed and dismissed as a percentage of those determined.

Mr. Chope *[holding answer 2 December 1988]:* The available information is as follows:

Year	Decided	Allowed		Dismissed		Withdrawn	In hand on 31 March
	Number	Number	Per cent.	Number	Per cent.	Number	Number
1984-85	12,714	4,161	32·7	8,553	67·3	2,109	8,049
1985-86	14,130	5,581	39·5	8,549	60·5	2,143	9,615
1986-87	15,613	6,208	39·8	9,405	60·2	2,533	11,325
1987-88	18,474	6,955	37·6	11,519	62·4	3,173	12,160

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what was the number of planning appeal decisions which were *(a)* allowed, *(b)* dismissed, *(c)* withdrawn and *(d)* undetermined on green belt land in each of the last five years; and if he will express the numbers allowed and dismissed as a percentage of those determined.

Mr. Chope *[holding answer 2 December 1988]:* The information requested is not readily available and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Football Matches (Arrests)

Mr. John Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he has anything to add to his answer of 30 November, with regard to division 3 and 4 football matches at which no arrests were made in the 1987-88 season.

Mr. Moynihan: As opposed to individual club information for the season, information about the number of arrests at individual matches for the 1987-89 season is not held centrally. The total number of arrests at division 3 and 4 matches in the 1987-88 season was as follows:

	Total arrests
Division 3	866
Division 4	929

ATTORNEY-GENERAL

Councillors (Pecuniary Interests)

Mr. Campbell-Savours: To ask the Attorney-General if he will list all cases since 1 January 1978 in which successful action has been taken against councillors under section 94 of the Local Government Act 1972 for failure to declare a pecuniary interest in contracts in which local authorities, of which they are members, are engaged.

The Attorney-General: As far as it has been possible to ascertain, during the period mentioned no prosecutions have been brought under section 94 of the Local Government Act 1972,

Sir Harold Cassel

Ms. Harman: To ask the Attorney-General if the Lord Chancellor will be taking any action in respect of the comments of Judge Cassel at Knightsbridge Crown court on 29 November; and if he will make a statement.

The Attorney-General: His Honour Judge Sir Harold Cassel has retired on medical grounds.

The judge tendered his resignation on grounds of ill-health in a letter which he sent to the Lord Chancellor on the day before his controversial comments in a case of indecent assault dealt with by him at Knightsbridge Crown court. The Lord Chancellor received the letter on the day of the case. In the light of medical advice, the Lord Chancellor has decided to accept Judge Cassel's resignation.

In his capacity as head of the judiciary the Lord Chancellor issued a statement in the following terms:

"It would not be right for me to comment on the sentence passed by Judge Cassel in a recent case of indecent assault. But, having now seen a report of the case, I wish to put on record my personal disapproval of the remarks he made when passing sentence. It is regrettable that a judge should have expressed himself in a way that suggested that there are any circumstances that can excuse or condone indecent assault on children."

"Satanic Verses"

Mr. Thurnham: To ask the Attorney-General what representations he has received requesting prosecution of the publishers of the book, "Satanic Verses"; and if he will make a statement.

The Attorney-General: The Director of Public Prosecutions and I have received written representations concerning the contents of the book "Satanic Verses" from a number of individuals, from two hon. Members, and from two organisations writing on behalf of the Moslem community. The director is considering the matter.

CIVIL SERVICE

Barlow Clowes

Mr. Alfred Morris: To ask the Minister for the Civil Service if he will ensure that the Parliamentary Commissioner for Administration has available to him any additional staff necessary for the expeditious conclusion of his investigation into the Department of Trade and Industry's handling of the Barlow Clowes affair.

Mr. Luce: The Parliamentary Commissioner Act 1967 provides that the commissioner may appoint such officers "as he may determine with the approval of the Treasury as to numbers and conditions of service."
My understanding is that the commissioner has already appointed some additional staff with a view to ensuring the completion of his investigation as swiftly as its complexity permits and that he is continuing to keep his resource requirements under review.

WALES

Water Bill

15. **Mr. Ron Davies:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what environmental safeguards he proposes to make to the Water Bill in order to protect the public access, recreational and amenity value of the 100,000 acres of land owned by the Welsh water authority.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: The hon. Gentleman will by now have seen the Water Bill, which provides the environmental safeguards he refers to.

Nursing

16. **Mr. Michael:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what steps he proposes to take to improve confidence and morale among the nursing profession and ancillary workers in the National Health Services in Wales.

Mr. Grist: We continue to recognise the value to the NHS of all the staff who work within the service. I hope that the Government's commitment to the Health Service is a source of encouragement to the staff.

Employment Measures

17. **Sir Anthony Meyer:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales of he will make a statement on the effectiveness of the Government's employment measure in Wales; and how many were benefiting from them at the latest available date.

Mr. Peter Walker: At October 1988 there were 115,130 people benefiting from the Government's employment and training measures in Wales. In the last year unemployment has dropped by 23,000.

Child Poverty

18. **Mr. Martin Jones:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make funds available to the Child Poverty Action Group in Clwyd; and what further steps he proposes to take to protect children in *(a)* Clwyd and *(b)* the whole of Wales from the effects of poverty.

Mr. Grist: No. The Government are directing substantial additional resources towards families eligible for income support and family credit. Next year, a total of £70 million will be made available above a social security uprating based on price rises. This extra expenditure will be to the greater benefit of up to 3 million children in Great Britain and will help to protect children in Wales.

Road Planning

19. **Mr. Raffan:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what steps he proposes to take following the National Audit Office's report on road planning as it relates to his Department.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: The Public Accounts Committee is expected to take evidence on the report in January. In the meantime we are studying it carefully.

Public Bodies

20. **Mr. Rogers:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many appointments he has made to public bodies in Wales in 1987 and 1988; and what total costs are involved in each year in respect of *(a)* salaries, *(b)* expenses and *(c)* other costs.

Mr. Peter Walker: Since taking office in June of last year, I have made 300 appointments to public bodies in Wales. The numbers of such appointments for each non-departmental public body concerned, together with details of any salaries paid can be obtained from "Public Bodies", the 1988 version of which will be published on 7 December and a copy will be placed in the Library of the House. The other information requested is not readily available.

M4

21. **Mr. Gareth Wardell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will take steps to ensure that the M4 will be complete and continuous from England to Port Abraham by 1992.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: Work on the missing section of the M4 between Baglan and Lonlas is expected to start before the end of 1990, as indicated in "Roads in Wales".

Severn Crossing

22. **Mr. Stern:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he is yet able to estimate the effect on the Welsh economy of the projected second Severn crossing.

Mr. Peter Walker: The existing Severn bridge has been a notable success in contributing to economic growth in south Wales and I am convinced that a second crossing will help to accelerate the economic achievements of the area. Its construction will in due course also offer substantial employment opportunities.

Gwynedd Area Health Authority

23. **Mr. Wigley:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales when he last met Mrs. Noreen Edwards, chair of Gwynedd area health authority; and if he will make a statement on the financial problems facing that authority.

Mr. Peter Walker: I last met Mrs. Edwards on 30 November together with all other Welsh health authority chairmen. Gwynedd Health Authority—like all health authorities—is statutorily required to ensure that its financial position is in balance. It has submitted various service rationalisation proposals towards this end and these are currently under consideration.

Labour Statistics

24. **Mr. Roy Hughes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what are the latest unadjusted figures for unemployment in *(a)* Newport, *(b)* Gwent and *(c)* Wales; and if he will give the equivalent figures for 1979 on the most nearly comparable basis.

Mr. Peter Walker: On 13 October 1988 the number of unemployed claimants in the Newport district, Gwent, and Wales were 6,313, 18,978 and 117,683 respectively. Unadjusted figures for 1979 are not available on a basis that enables a valid comparison to be made.

Welsh Water Authority

25. **Dr. Thomas:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales when he next expects to meet the chairman of the Welsh water authority; and what matters will be discussed.

Mr. Peter Walker: I meet the chairman on a regular basis to discuss a range of matters.

Council House Sales

26. **Sir Raymond Gower:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many council tenants in Wales have bought their dwellings up to the last convenient date.

Mr. Grist: A total of 61,261 council houses and flats have been sold to tenants in Wales between October 1980 and September 1988 under both right-to-buy and voluntary terms.

Water Authorities (Land)

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what is the area of land owned by the Welsh water authority which has been designated as *(a)* sites of special scientific interest, *(b)* national parks and *(c)* areas of outstanding natural beauty.

Mr. Grist: The acreage of land owned by the Welsh water authority within national parks in Wales is as follows:

	Acres
Brecon Beacons	13,783
Pembroke	Nil
Snowdonia	5,399

Major landholdings in areas of outstanding natural beauty are as follows:

	Acres
Lleyn AONB	72
Anglesey AONB	151
Clwydian AONB	206

There is a total of 32 SSSIs on Welsh water authority landholdings of greater than one hectare (2·5 acres) and the total authority landholdings within such areas is about 51,000 acres.

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what is the area of land sold by the Welsh water authority as being land surplus to operational requirements for each calendar year since 1983.

Mr. Grist: The information is more readily available on a financial rather than a calendar year basis. The acreage of land disposed of by Welsh water since 1 April 1983 is as follows:

	Acres
1983-84	222
1984-85	240
1985-86	113
1986-87	492
1987-88	323
1988 to date	1,001
Total	2,391

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what is the area of land owned by the Welsh water authority which is currently registered under the provisions of the Local Government and Planning Act 1981 as being unused or underused.

Mr. Grist: This is a matter for the Welsh water authority. I have asked the chairman to write to the hon. Member.

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what is, in respect of each statutory water company, the area of land which has been designated as *(a)* sites of special scientific interest, *(b)* national parks and *(c)* areas of outstanding natural beauty.

Mr. Grist: These are matters for the statutory water companies. I have asked the chairman of Chester waterworks company and of the Wrexham and East Denbighshire water company to write to the hon. Member.

Higher Education

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales whether he has received any representations proposing the corporate status of the institutes of higher education in Wales; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: My right hon. Friend has neither received nor expects to receive any representations proposing corporate status for any of the institutions of higher education in Wales. This is a matter for discussion and agreement between the institutions and their maintaining local education authorities.

Employment Training

Mr. Rowlands: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what is his assessment of the budget for Wales for the introduction of employment training in 1988-89; how much has been spent to date; how many places have been allocated for Wales; how many places have been taken up; and of these places taken up, how many are considered to have been those relating to the residual community programme.

Mr. Peter Walker: I am satisfied that the financial allocation for Wales for the 1988-89 financial year is sufficient to meet the expenditure employment training will incur during the year. Employment training will offer some 50,000 unemployed adults an opportunity to find and keep work in Wales each year; and it is expected that during 1988-89 about 24,000 will be in training at any one time. In the first two months of the programme over £4 million was spent in Wales. At 30 November 1988 there were 5,996 in employment training in Wales, but it is not known how many of those who were taking part in the former community programme and were eligible to join employment training have done so.

Mr. Rowlands: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales whether he will list the training agents in Wales to whom contracts have been given for the employment training programme.

Mr. Peter Walker: The following organisations have been contracted by the Training Agency to operate as employment training agents in Wales:

Cardiff Chamber of Commerce and Industry Ltd
Careers Service Adult Guidance Agency (Mid Glamorgan County Council)
Clwyd Local Education Authority
Clwyd Training Agency
Dyfed County Council
Gwent County Council
Gwynedd County Council
Manpower Development Agency
Maud and Grove Management Associates Ltd
Powys County Council
Psychological Consultancy Services
South Glamorgan County Council
West Glamorgan County Council.

Mr. Rowlands: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales whether he will list the qualifications and experience of those training agents in receipt of a contract who are operating in Mid Glamorgan.

Mr. Peter Walker: Contracts were awarded to training agents in Wales who, in the judgment of the Training Agency, are best able to deliver the assessment, guidance and counselling to meet the quality standards necessary to assist their client groups.

Mr. Rowlands: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what proposals he has to inspect the performance and quality of work of those training agents in Mid Glamorgan in receipt of contracts under the employment training programme.

Mr. Peter Walker: It is vitally important that the people who organise and deliver employment training have the necessary skills and competence to do so. Training agents (and training managers) will need to meet stringent criteria as part of the process of obtaining approved training agent status—without which they will not be able to continue with employment training. Training Agency staff will regularly monitor training agents, while helping them develop the skills of their staff, as will the training standards advisory service.

Planning Appeals

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales (1) if he will give, for each of the last five years for which figures are available, the number of planning appeal decisions which were allowed, dismissed, withdrawn and undetermined, respectively, in each of the Welsh national parks, and if he will express the numbers allowed and dismissed as a percentage of those determined;

(2) if he will give, for each of the last five years for which figures are available, the number of planning appeal decisions which were allowed, dismissed, withdrawn and undetermined, respectively, in Wales; and if he will express the numbers allowed and dismissed as a percentage of those determined.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: This information is not available.

Owner-occupied Dwellings

Sir Raymond Gower: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many dwellings in Wales were owner-occupied at the end of 1960, 1970, 1980, and at the latest convenient date.

Mr. Grist: Information is not available in the form requested. Estimates of owner-occupied dwellings at the closest dates to those requested are:

	Dwellings
April 1961	374,000
April 1971	532,000
December 1980	637,000
December 1987	777,000

Dwelling stock estimates in census years are based upon information collected in the census of population for that year. In inter-censal years they are based on the previous census figures adjusted to take account of new house building and demolition.

Water Pollution

Mr. Gareth Wardell: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if the Welsh water authority has implemented the recommendation in paragraph 7.49 of the 11th report of the Royal Commission on environmental pollution by consulting the relevant industries in their area with a view to increasing the removal of metals from industrial discharges at source and reducing the metal content of sewage.

Mr. Grist: The Welsh water authority in exercising its responsibilities for the disposal of sewage sludge takes every opportunity to achieve, by consultation with dischargers, the application of best technology so as to reduce the levels of metal contaminants in sewage and sewage sludge.

Grant-related Expenditure (Clwyd)

Mr. Martyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales (1) what assumptions he used about the pupil-teacher ratio in his calculation of grant-related expenditure for the county of Clwyd;

(2) what assumption he made about the sum to be allocated for the local element of educational supplementary grant for in-service training in his calculation of grant-related expenditure for the county of Clwyd;

(3) what assumptions he made about the sum to be allocated for special needs provision in his calculation of grant-related expenditure for the county of Clwyd;

(4) what assumption he made about the sum to be allocated for nursery provision in his calculation of grant-related expenditure for the county of Clwyd.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: Grant-related expenditure calculations for local authorities in Wales do not form a basis for calculating notional allocations of GRE to any particular service. The GRE determined for each county council is constructed using indicators of need such as numbers of pupils (including those in special schools) rather than indicators of provision such as pupil/teacher ratios. The portion of costs associated with the local education authority training grants scheme not met by specific grant is accounted for in counties' GREs, using pupil numbers as an indicator of need. Nursery provision is part of the component of GRE relating to all children aged one and over but under five, and the indicator used is the population in this age group. All GRE formulae are agreed in consultation with the local authority associations. Full details of the indicators used or the current year are given in the Welsh rate support grant report 1988-89.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Ministerial Designation

Mr. Mudd: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if, on his Department's personalised stationery, he will cause to be printed that his hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Industry and Consumer Affairs is a Member of Parliament.

Mr. Forth: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for bringing this important matter to my attention.

Having thoroughly investigated the matter and established that the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Industry and Consumer Affairs is indeed a Member of Parliament, I have arranged for the Department's stationery to be altered appropriately.

Mr. Morton Graham

Mr. Bill Michie: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what action the Office of Fair Trading proposes to take in the case of Mr. Morton Graham, who has been named on the consumer credit licence issued by the Office of Fair Trading, in spite of a criminal conviction for conspiracy to defraud.

Mr. Maude: The day-to-day operation of the consumer credit licensing system is the responsibility of the Director General of Fair Trading and I shall ask him to write to the hon. Member.

FIMBRA (Suspensions)

Mr. Nicholas Winterton: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster (1) if he will make a statement outlining the information which must be given to members of FIMBRA if they are suspended by that body;

(2) what steps he has recently taken to ensure that cases of suspension dealt with by FIMBRA are treated efficiently, courteously and discreetly by that organisation;

(3) if he will make a statement outlining the requirements which are placed upon FIMBRA to provide suspended members with a full and fair hearing at which to put forward their case against suspension;

(4) if he has any plans to ensure that FIMBRA does not make public the knowledge that individual members have been suspended without providing to the affected member full details of the reasons for that suspension.

Mr. Maude: It is a criterion for recognition of a self-regulating organisation under the Financial Services Act 1986 that the organisation's rules and practices relating to the discipline that it exercises over its members must be fair and reasonable and include adequate provisions for appeals. The Securities and Investments Board is responsible for recognising self-regulating organisations and has recognised FIMBRA. I am not aware of any evidence that FIMBRA's rules and practices do not meet the relevant criterion.

National Engineering Laboratory

Mr. Ingram: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will list the consultants who were asked to quote for the study into the operation of the national engineering laboratory at East Kilbride.

Mr. Forth: The consultants who were asked to quote for the restructuring study into the national engineering laboratory at East Kilbride are as follows:

a. Touche Ross
b. PA Consulting Group

Mr. Ingram: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what is the cost of the contract announced on 29 November given to the consultants Touche Ross for their study into the national engineering laboratory at East Kilbride.

Mr. Forth: It is not customary to publish the cost of consultancy contracts. This information is commercially confidential.

World Trade

Mr. Macdonald: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what is his latest estimate of the United Kingdom's share of world trade.

Mr. Alan Clark: In the first six months of 1988 the United Kingdom share of the 12 main manufacturing countries' exports of manufactures was 8·2 per cent. It is estimated that our share of total world trade in manufactures in 1988 will be a little over 6 per cent. Our share of world invisible earnings has been rising steadily and our receipts are second only to the United States of America.

Growish Limited

Mr. Campbell-Savours: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what progress has been made on investigations into offences under the Companies Act 1985 in respect of Growish Ltd.

Mr. Maude: I am not aware of any Companies Act offences committed by Royel Investments Ltd, formerly Growish Ltd, but I shall consider any information the hon. Member may have about the matter.

Restrictive Practices (Industrial Action)

Mr. Alton: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will introduce legislation to amend the restrictive practices legislation to allow the self-employed and small firms to act together when pursuing industrial action.

Mr. Maude *[holding answer 1 December 1988]:* In its Green Paper on restrictive trade practices policy (CM331) the Government have proposed fundamental changes to restrictive trade practices legislation.

Under the proposals, agreements which have significantly anti-competitive effects would be prohibited but controls on agreements with no such effects would be relaxed. There would also be provision for restrictive agreements which meet certain criteria to be exempted from the prohibition. It is too early to say how the proposed new legislation will apply to co-operation arrangements between the self-employed and small firms; this will depend to an extent on the object or effect of the particular arrangements.

My Department is currently developing the proposals in the Green Paper in the light of comments received from interested bodies and the views of organisations representing the self-employed and small firms are being taken into account.

OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT

Aid

Miss Lestor: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the outcome of the latest OECD development assistance committee's review of the United Kingdom aid programme.

Mr. Chris Patten: This review took place on Thursday 1 December. I shall arrange for a copy of the press release to be placed in the Library of the House.

Tanzania (Aid)

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what aid projects are at present being discussed with the Government of Tanzania; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Chris Patten: We have just signed a new grant agreement with the Government of Tanzania for £16 million of balance of payments support to help with the implementation of agreed economic reforms. These funds will be used in the agriculture, transport, industry and health sectors.

I have also approved the offer of an £8 million grant as cofinancing for the World Bank's industrial rehabilitation and trade adjustment credit. This will be available as soon as the credit is signed, which I expect will be early next month. In addition to this assistance, my officials are continuing talks on identifying projects for the use of an £18 million project aid grant.

Sub-Saharan Africa

Mr. Franks: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when he next intends to make a visit to sub-Saharan Africa.

Mr. Chris Patten: I hope to visit sub-Saharan Africa early next year.

Buses (Sri Lanka)

Mr. Bill Walker: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he can yet give the date when the 40 London double deck buses will be sent to Sri Lanka as part of the United Kingdom aid programme.

Mr. Chris Patten: The buses are being shipped from Sheerness on 15 December, to arrive in Sri Lanka in early January.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Export Refund Computer System

Mr. Allen: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (1) what is the cost of the International Board for Agricultural Produce computer scheme to date; and if he will make a statement;

(2) whether the IBAP export refund scheme computer system is still working; and if he will make a statement;

(3) whether private contractors have been brought in to devise a replacement system for the IBAP export refund computer; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Donald Thompson: The costs incurred in developing and implementing the intervention board's external claims computer system from its inception in 1982 to date are estimated at just under £4 million. The bulk of the system covering most commodity sectors was delivered in July to September 1987. This then required substantial modification when new Customs and Community documentation came into effect on 1 January 1988. The system currently in use was delivered in March to July 1988. Before this became available substantial payment delays had built up, and recovering these has been handicapped by technical problems with the software in the system. Substantial progress has however been made. In the first nine months of this year the board processed some 540,000 transactions valued at £440 million. 70 per cent. of commodity sectors and of export refund claims by value are now being paid within two months of becoming payable, and the board is working to extend this to the remaining sectors as soon as possible.

In August 1988 the board brought in external consultants to assist with the recovery. They recommended that substantial enhancement of the current system was required in the short to medium term. Work to that end is now being undertaken by these consultants.

The consultants also recommended that this system should be succeeded by a new system able to respond flexibly and effectively to the intervention boards needs in

the longer term. The board has accepted this recommendation and is initiating a full business and systems analysis which will be undertaken by private sector consultants.

Mr. Allen: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food whether any redundancies have been caused by the workings of the export refund system in the current year.

Mr. Donald Thompson: I am not aware of any redundancies in exporting firms which can be attributed to the payment delays resulting from this year's changes in the intervention board's external claims computer system.

Salmonella

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what information he has about the relationship between salmonella poisoning in eggs and current conditions in battery farms with particular respect to the methods of disposal of dead fowls; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Donald Thompson: Modern intensive farming methods pose no more threat of introducing salmonella into eggs than do traditional farming methods. Dead fowls are disposed of in a manner which does not contribute to the problems of salmonella dissemination.

Departmental Dp Division

Mr. Allen: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many system professionals are employed in his Department's Dp division; and what is the turnover rate.

Mr. Donald Thompson: Currently there are 170 functional specialist computing staff at programmer level and above, employed in the Ministry's computer services division at Guildford, of whom some 135 are fully trained. Since the beginning of the current financial year 37 trained staff have left and 40 trainee programmers have joined the division. These are comparable figures to those of previous years.

Sewage Sludge

Mr. Gareth Wardell: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will publish in the *Official Report* the volume of sewage sludge deposited in each sea dump around the United Kingdom coast over each of the last five years.

Mr. Donald Thompson: The information requested is as follows:

'000 wet tonnes

Location	*1983*	*1984*	*1985*	*1986*	*1987*
Off the Tyne	364·4	480·5	456·8	498·9	485·0
Off the Tees	8·1	2·0	7·5	1·3	1·6
Spurn Head	91·2	78·3	89·0	114·9	95·1
Roughs Tower	138·3	85·4	127·1	112·2	132·4
Barrow Deep	4,150·0	4,200·0	4,240·4	4,543·3	3,637·6
South Falls	98·3	105·0	88·4	50·2	134·1
Nab Tower	202·2	231·8	291·8	288·6	243·0
Lyme Bay	47·7	44·0	49·5	45·4	48·3
Off Falmouth	63·7	(use of dumpsite discontinued)			
Off Plymouth	83·0	103·0	85·0	76·9	81·6
Bristol Channel	230·2	305·2	262·5	257·4	237·9
Liverpool Bay	1,299·2	1,282·9	1,499·0	1,541·4	1,626·0
Firth of Forth	219·9	230·2	209·6	172·9	248·5
Firth of Clyde	1,574·5	1,714·2	1,686·8	1,698·7	1,689·6
Off Belfast	289·8	299·1	314·4	275·9	309·5
Off Coleraine	10·5	11·0	11·6	9·5	—

Mr. Gareth Wardell: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if his Department has considered ways and means of assisting the further reduction of the heavy metals load in sewage sludge.

Mr. Donald Thompson: In recent years substantial reductions have been achieved in heavy metal concentrations, which are well within the trace limits permitted by the international dumping conventions. The levels of heavy metals in sewage sludge for sea disposal have been strictly controlled by the provisions of the Dumping at Sea Act 1974 and its successor legislation, part II of the Food and Environment Protection Act 1985. The Government are seeking further reductions in metal concentrations; water authorities are required to draw up action plans incorporating reviews of authorisations that they have granted for discharge to sewers of industrial effluent containing heavy mentals.

The Government also intends to improve the control of sewage sludge spread on agricultural land by introducing statutory regulations next year backed up by a code of practice, both designed to provide an appropriate level of environmental protection.

Agriculture White Paper

Mr. Boswell: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make a statement on the future of the annual review of the Agriculture White Paper.

Mr. MacGregor: My right hon. Friends the Secretaries of State for Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland and I have decided to extend and improve the information which has up to now been published in the White Paper on the annual review of agriculture. The new publication will be designed to give data on the state of the agricultural industry in the United Kingdom. It will contain enhanced information on commodities and on the general financial situation of the industry. The new document will be published annually and copies will be made available in the Library of the House.

It will, however, no longer be published as a White Paper. The origin of that practice is that, before our accession to the European Community, the annual review led to the determination of commodity price guarantees for the coming year, which we published as part of the White Paper. Since our accession, the emphasis has shifted towards the annual negotiation of agricultural prices in the European Community, and the annual review White Paper has effectively become a compendium of agricultural statistics. It is therefore appropriate to discontinue publication in the form of a White Paper.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Missing Persons

Mr. Janner: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many *(a)* men, *(b)* women, *(c)* boys under 18 years of age and *(d)* girls under 18 years of age

were reported as missing during each of the last five years for which records are available; and how many and what percentage in each category were subsequently traced.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The only readily available information relates to persons recorded by the Metropolitan police missing persons bureau. I understand from the commissioner that these records are incomplete in respect of persons who are reported missing to other police forces and persons who reappear within a short time of being reported missing. The information for the Metropolitan police district is given in the following table. Further details of missing persons are given in the commissioner's annual report.

Persons reported missing during the year and proportion of each yearly total who were traced by the end of that year.

Metropolitan Police District *Number of persons*

Year	*Under 18*		*18 and over*	
	Number reported missing	*Percentage traced end of year*	*Number reported missing*	*Percentage traced by end of year*
Males				
1983	1,340	93	682	92
1984	1,416	92	1,007	83
1985	1,283	96	1,009	87
1986	1,291	92	1,069	81
1987[1]	1,504	92	1,719	78
Females				
1983	1,534	90	642	89
1984	1,733	93	950	88
1985	1,699	94	931	88
1986	1,586	95	964	85
1987[1]	1,623	91	1,609	80

[1] New counting procedures were introduced from the beginning of 1987: hence the figures for previous years are not comparable.

Mr. Janner: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether he will ask chief officers of police in England and Wales to supply him with such information regarding missing persons and their subsequent tracing, alive or dead, as is conveniently available.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Responsibility for investigating reports of missing persons is an operational matter for individual chief officers of police. Records of missing persons are held locally, and may be circulated to other forces or to the missing persons bureau at New Scotland yard as chief officers consider necessary. There is no requirement upon chief officers to provide the Home Office with statistics relating to missing persons. Information could be collated only by means of a special exercise which would involve disproportionate expense.

Security Services

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what consideration he has given to the need for authorisations for the security services to access computer records and systems; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hurd: The conditions under which personal data may be disclosed for the purpose of safeguarding national security are provided in section 27 of the Data Protection Act 1984. It would be for the data user to respond to any request for access made in accordance with the Act.

Schizophrenia

Mr. Fearn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many inmates in Her Majesty's prisons are known, and diagnosed, to be schizophrenia sufferers.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: This information is not available centrally.

Mr. Mohammed Arshad Mehar

Mr. Teddy Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department why Mr. Mohammed Arshad Mehar, date of birth 1 March 1958 and Ref: C 484704, of 45C Park Street, Southend-on-Sea, Essex, a Pakistani national who applied in September 1987 for an extension of his visa, 888760, to enable him to continue with his work as a specialist chemical worker, had his passport returned by hand to his wife a few days ago without any visa extension or any indication of the Home Office decision on his application; if he will consider the application for the extension of stay in the United Kingdom; if he will complete this in order that Mr. Mehar can return to Pakistan for an urgent family matter and then return to the United Kingdom thereafter; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Renton: Mr. Mehar's passport was returned without further endorsement because he wished to travel urgently and it was not possible to complete his application. Inquiries in this case have not yet been completed but I shall write to the hon. Member as soon as a decision is reached.

NUS (March)

Mrs. Clwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis's estimate of the number of Socialist Workers party members present in the breakaway section of the National Union of Students march of Thursday 24 November.

Mr. Hurd: As I said in my reply on 29 November to the hon. Member for Newham, South (Mr. Spearing) at column *174*, the faction which first broke away amounted to about 1,000 demonstrators many of whom were thought to be members of the Socialist Workers' party. The action of this group encouraged several thousand others to follow suit.

Mrs. Clwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis's estimate of the number of police officers injured during the National Union of Students march of 24 November, the types of injury and the numbers that had to go to hospital, and the numbers of students injured, the types of injury and the numbers that had to go to hospital.

Mr. Hurd: As I said in my reply on 29 November to the hon. Member for Newham, South (Mr. Spearing) at column *174*, it is estimated that 72 police officers were injured, and seven demonstrators of whom the commissioner is aware. There is no central record available of how many were taken to hospital, but it is understood that most injuries were minor. One woman police constable suffered concussion, spent four nights in hospital, and is

now experiencing severe memory loss. I have received separately a letter describing a serious leg injury to one of the demonstrators.

Security Service

Mr. Richard Shepherd: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department under what statutory powers members of the Security Service have, in the past, entered on or interfered with property as defined in the Security Service Bill.

Mr. Hurd: It is not the practice to comment on the operations of the Security Service.

There have been no statutory provisions giving the Security Service special powers in this respect.

Smoke Detectors

Mr. Thurnham: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he has any plans to encourage pensioners to install smoke detectors in their homes; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: A television advertising campaign to encourage the public, including pensioners, to install smoke alarms in their homes is planned to start on Boxing day.

THE ARTS

Ethnic Minority Support

30. **Mr. Robert G. Hughes** To ask the Minister for the Arts what measures he has taken to promote the arts and culture of black and Asian British people.

Mr. Luce: I fully support the Arts Council's action plan for ethnic minority arts, which provides for a minimum of 4 per cent. of the council's expenditure to be committed in this field.

43. **Mr. Boateng:** To ask the Minister for the Arts how many ethnic minority musicians or musical organisations the Arts Council funded on a revenue or annual basis in 1987-88.

Mr. Luce: Fourteen organisations.

49. **Mr. Vaz:** To ask the Minister for the Arts what proportion of total Arts Council expenditure was spent on ethnic minority arts in 1987-88.

Mr. Luce: The Arts Council report on ethnic minority arts, due in the new year, will show the exact proportion.

51. **Ms. Abbott:** To ask the Minister for the Arts how many ethnic minority film, video and broadcasting projects were funded on a revenue basis by the Arts Council in 1987-88.

Mr. Luce: Seven.

Autumn Statement

31. **Mr. Knapman:** To ask the Minister for the Arts what representations he has received following his recent arts settlement announcement following the Autumn Statement.

Mr. Luce: The arts organisations which I sponsor welcomed my three-year funding strategy and its recent extension to 1991-92, and they are responding positively to the opportunities which the strategy presents.

Incentive Funding Scheme

32. **Mr. Wareing:** To ask the Minister for the Arts how many Liverpool arts projects, funded by Merseyside Arts Association, have made applications to the Arts Council under the incentive funding scheme.

Mr. Luce: Three Liverpool organisations funded by Merseyside Arts applied to the Arts Council for incentive funding; one of these receives the majority of its funding from the Arts Council.

34. **Mrs. Golding:** To ask the Minister for the Arts how many west midlands arts companies, currently funded by the West Midland Arts Association have applied to the Arts Council for incentive funding.

Mr. Luce: A total of 14 organisations funded by West Midlands Arts applied to the Arts Council for incentive funding; three of these are also funded by the Arts Council.

36. **Mr. Andrew Smith:** To ask the Minister for the Arts how many arts organisations in *(a)* Oxford and *(b)* the area covered by the Southern Arts Association, who are currently clients of Southern Arts, have applied to the Arts Council for incentive funding.

Mr. Luce: Six organisations funded by Southern Arts applied to the Arts Council for incentive funding; one of these receives joint funding; none are Oxford organisations.

37. **Mrs. Clwyd:** To ask the Minister for the Arts how many arts companies in Wales, currently funded by the Welsh Arts Council, have applied to the Arts Council of Great Britain for help under the incentive funding scheme.

Mr. Luce: Thirteen.

41. **Mr. Battle:** To ask the Minister for the Arts how many arts organisations in Leeds who are clients of the Yorkshire Arts Association have applied to the Arts Council for incentive funding.

Mr. Luce: Four.

48. **Mr. Boyes:** To ask the Minister for the Arts if he will list the photographic organisations who have applied to the Arts Council for help under the incentive funding scheme.

Mr. Luce: Eight applications were made by the following organisations:

Blackfriars Photography Project;
Cambridge Darkroom;
Camerawork;
Creative Camera;
F Stop Photography;
Photographers' Gallery;
The Photography Workshop; and
The Untitled Gallery.

50. **Ms. Mowlam:** To ask the Minister for the Arts how many arts companies who are clients of Northern Arts have applied to the Arts Council for incentive funding.

Mr. Luce: A total of 13 organisations funded by Northern Arts applied to the Arts Council for incentive funding; three of these are jointly funded by the Arts Council and Northern Arts.

Young People (Books and Plays)

33. **Mr. Harry Greenway:** To ask the Minister for the Arts if he will run a competition for contemporary authors of books and plays for young people; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Luce: This is a very interesting idea which I hope might be taken up. I am concerned to increase access to the arts; encouraging young people is an important part of this.

Museums and Galleries

35. **Mr. Quentin Davies:** To ask the Minister for the Arts how many new museums and galleries have been opened in the last 12 months; and how many are expected to open in the next 12 months.

Mr. Luce: The Museums Association database indicates that at July this year there were 2,400 museums and galleries in the United Kingdom, and that 10 per cent. of those had opened since 1982, a rate of about 40 per year. There is every indication that interest in the creation of new and specialist museums continues.

Initiatives and Schemes

38. **Mr. Tony Banks:** To ask the Minister for the Arts if he will publish a table listing all the initiatives and schemes launched by *(a)* the Office of Arts and Libraries and *(b)* the Arts Council in each of the last three years the administration of which has not been devolved to regional arts associations.

Mr. Luce: No. The Arts Council's annual reports for 1986-87 and 1987-88, its three-year plan and awards and schemes folder for 1988-89 have been placed in the Library. The council operates only schemes which are essentially national in character. The Office of Arts and Libraries administer only the business sponsorship incentive scheme and the arts marketing scheme.

Regional Arts Associations

39. **Mr. Sedgemore:** To ask the Minister for the Arts what plans the Arts Council has to devolve the responsibility for more clients to the regional arts associations.

Mr. Luce: The Arts Council constantly reviews the division of responsibility between itself and the regional arts associations.

Arts (Economic Importance)

40. **Mr. Maclennan:** To ask the Minister for the Arts whether he will make a statement on the findings of the report entitled "The Economic Importance of the Arts in Britain", from the Policy Studies Institute.

Mr. Luce: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave to the hon. and learned Member for Fife, North-East (Mr. Campbell) on 19 October at column *879*.

Mappa Mundi

42. **Mr. Colin Shepherd:** To ask the Minister for the Arts if he will use his powers to prevent the departure from the United Kingdom of the Hereford Mappa Mundi in the event of its purchase by a buyer who seeks to export it.

Mr. Luce: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply I have given this afternoon to the hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey (Mr. Hughes). Should a sale prove necessary, and an application for an export licence be made, this will be dealt with under our existing procedures. I cannot anticipate decisions on export applications.

Welsh Arts Council

44. **Mr. Wigley:** To ask the Minister for the Arts when he last met the chair of the Welsh Arts Council and what matters were discussed.

Mr. Luce: I met the chairman of the Welsh Arts Council on 9 November when we discussed matters of mutual concern.

Dramatic Arts

45. **Mr. Bowis:** To ask the Minister for the Arts when he next intends to visit a drama college to discuss funding of the dramatic arts.

Mr. Luce: I visited the Guildford school of acting and dance on Friday 18 November. I have no plans to visit other drama colleges at present.

Statues

Mr. Nicholas Baker: To ask the Minister for the Arts if he will encourage the erection of statues to prominent public figures of the past in inner cities.

Mr. Luce: I see this as a matter for local communities to decide.

Rural Arts Centres

47. **Miss Emma Nicholson:** To ask the Minister for the Arts if he has visited any rural arts centres; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Luce: I have visited the Piers art centre in the Orkneys and the Brewery arts centre in Kendal and the Eden court theatre in Inverness this year; I have previously visited the Beaford centre in the hon. Member's constituency and also met its director in my office this year; all are good examples of arts centres which make a vital contribution to the life of rural communities. In March this year I visited the Newent library which doubles as an arts venue for small scale performances.

Library Services

52. **Mr. Blunkett:** To ask the Minister for the Arts if his Department has undertaken any research into the link between the quality and availability of free library services and the needs of the unemployed or low-waged undertaking part-time study.

Mr. Luce: No. Some research in this area has been supported by the British Library research and development department.

Touring

Mr. Jack: To ask the Minister for the Arts what moneys for touring have been set aside by the Arts Council for the next financial year.

Mr. Luce: I have made £6 million available for incentive funding and additional touring in the United Kingdom in 1989-90. The Arts Council will be determining the precise allocation of this sum in due course. In the current financial year the sum set aside for additional touring is £1·5 million.

Private Funding

Mr. Thurnham: To ask the Minister for the Arts if he will make a statement about the current level of private funding for the arts.

Mr. Luce: *[holding answer 30 November 1988]:* There are no precise figures available, but the most important source of private funding for the arts remains the box office. The PSI report on the economic importance of the arts indicates a figure of some £433 million spent on admission to arts venues (museums and galleries; built heritage; theatres and concerts; and cinemas). In addition, business sponsorship brings in around £30 million annually to the arts and I expect this figure to grow in the future. Information is not held centrally on private donations but evidence suggests that some are substantial.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

British Subjects (Murder)

Mr. Bradley: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how many British subjects were murdered in foreign countries in 1986, 1987 and 1988 to date, by country.

Mr. Waldegrave: Not all deaths of British citizens who die overseas, whether in suspicious or other circumstances, are reported to British consular officers. However, according to records held by the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, 80 British citizens have been murdered, or are suspected to have been murdered, overseas between 1 January 1986 and 30 November 1988. The breakdown by year and country is as follows:

	1986	*1987*	*1988*
Afghanistan	—	1	—
Antigua	—	—	1
Australia	—	4	—
Belgium	—	1	—
Bermuda	—	—	1
Botswana	—	1	—
Canada	1	—	1
Colombia	1	—	—
Cyprus	—	—	1
Djibouti	—	1	—
Dominican Republic	—	1	—
France	3	1	—
Germany (Federal Republic)	2	1	1
Greece	1	1	—
Indonesia	—	—	1
Israel	1	1	—
Jamaica	1	—	—
Jerusalem	1	—	—
Kenya	—	—	1
Malta	—	—	1
Netherlands	—	—	1
Pakistan	—	—	2
Philippines	1	2	2
Saudi Arabia	—	1	1
South Africa	2	1	1
Spain	3	3	3
St. Lucia	—	—	1
Sudan	—	—	5
Thailand	—	1	3
Turkey	—	1	1
Uganda	—	2	—
USA	2	3	3
Zaire	—	1	—
Zimbabwe	1	1	—
TOTAL:	20	29	31

Hong Kong (Vietnamese Refugees)

Mr. Foulkes: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what response he intends to give to the recent urgent representations from Miss Lydia Dunn, senior member of the Hong Kong Legislative Council, concerning the situation of Vietnamese refugees in Hong Kong; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Waldegrave: We are urgently considering, with the Home Secretary, all aspects of the problem, including those raised by Miss Dunn. The reply will inter alia emphasise the priority that we attach to achieving a comprehensive solution to the problem as soon as possible and the considerable efforts that we are devoting to this end.

Mr. Foulkes: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how many Vietnamese refugees there are currently in Hong Kong; and what are the comparable figures for the same period in each of the last 10 years.

Mr. Waldegrave: On 30 November there were 25,197 Vietnamese boat people in Hong Kong, of whom 15,323 were refugees. Figures at the end of November since 1979 are as follows:

Year	*People*
1979	53,236
1980	23,980
1981	13,135
1982	12,787
1983	12,950
1984	12,254
1985	9,577
1986	8,047
1987	9,331

Iraqi Diplomats (Expulsion)

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will set out the reasons for the recent expulsion of Iraqi diplomats; and if he will place in the Library any copies of correspondence with the ambassador.

Mr. Waldegrave: On 18 October we requested the withdrawal of three diplomats from the Iraqi embassy and served an exclusion order on a fourth, all for activities

incompatible with their status. It has been the invariable practice of successive Governments not to comment on details of security and intelligence matters.

Palestine

Mr. Cummings: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if, in the light of the decisions taken at the Palestine National Council meeting in Algiers, the Government will now seek a meeting at the highest level with the Palestine Liberation Organisation in order to advance the peace process.

Mr. Waldegrave: We keep contact at official level with the PLO, which is aware that it must remove ambiguities in certain of its policies if further and wider contact is to be considered.

Namibia

Mrs. Ann Winterton: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (1) what specific steps are being taken by his Department to establish in Namibia a system which will protect the rights and freedoms of the different ethnic and social groups in that country following its independence;

(2) if he will make it his policy to promote the adoption of a pre-independence constitution in Namibia in order to protect the rights of minority ethnic and social groups following independence;

(3) if he will make a statement outlining his policy on and involvement in those current efforts in Namibia which are designed to bring about national reconciliation and a pre-independence constitution;

(4) if he will make it his policy to discuss with leaders of all the different ethnic and political groupings in Namibia the possibility of bringing about in that country national reconciliation and a pre-independence constitution.

(5) what steps he is taking to ensure that ethnic and social groups other than SWAPO continue to be represented in the Government of Namibia following independence.

Mrs. Chalker: We continue to support Namibian independence on the basis of the UN plan endorsed by Security Council resolution 435. We are satisfied that the existing provisions of the plan, in particular the constitutional principles agreed in 1982, provide sufficient safeguards for all ethnic and social groups in Namibia. The UN plan also provides for a transition period before independence in which an elected assembly will draw up a constitution.

Ethiopia

Mr. Latham: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether he will make a statement on any diplomatic steps being taken by Her Majesty's Government to bring about an end to hostilities between the Government of Ethiopia and the guerrilla fighters in Tigray and Eritrea.

Mrs. Chalker: When my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State met the Ethiopian Foreign Minister on 11 September, he urged him to seek a negotiated settlement based on genuine regional autonomy. In the declaration on the Horn of Africa issued on 24 October, we and our EC partners called for such a settlement.

Khmer Rouge

Dr. Moonie: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what steps he intends to take to prevent the Khmer Rouge from occupying Kampuchea's seat in the United Nations.

Mr. Waldegrave: We see no reason to change our present policy, shared by the great majority of United Nations members, of supporting retention of Democratic Kampuchea's credentials at the United Nations. This policy signifies neither recognition of the coalition Government of Democratic Kampuchea, nor support for the Khmer Rouge.

Convention Against Torture

Mr. Foulkes: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when Her Majesty's Government will ratify the United Nations convention against torture; and whether the relevant declarations under article 21 and article 22 of this convention will also be made in order fully to recognise the competence of the committee against torture.

Mr. Waldegrave: We intend to ratify the United Nations convention against torture later this month. We are still considering what reservations/declarations we shall need to submit.

Zimbabwe

Dr. Glyn: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how many former residents of Zimbabwe now resident in the United Kingdom are affected by the exchange controls imposed by the Government of Zimbabwe; and what action he proposes to take to assist such people to regain control of their funds.

Mrs. Chalker: We cannot be sure of the number of former residents of Zimbabwe now resident in the United Kingdom who are affected by the existing controls. In their exchange control regulations the Zimbabwe authorities have made provision for special consideration of individual cases on hardship grounds. Whenever appropriate, we continue to make representations on individual cases in order to take advantage of this provision. I raised a number of cases with Zimbabwe Ministers during my visit there last month.

EMPLOYMENT

Worker Representatives

Mr. Teddy Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will make a statement on the current European Economic Community discussions on worker representatives on the boards of companies; and whether such measures fall to be dealt with under the majority voting procedures set out in the Single Act.

Mr. Cope: The Government are opposed to European Community proposals which would require statutory employee participation as such participation is more effective on a voluntary basis. The only relevant European Community proposal currently under discussion for which a legal base has been proposed is the fifth company law directive. The proposed legal base would entail qualified majority voting.

Coal Industry (Accidents)

Mr. Illsley: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment whether he has received any representations regarding the accident rate of companies contracted to British Coal; and whether he will make a statement.

Mr. Nicholls: I have received no direct representations on this subject. However, accident trends are regularly discussed at meetings between British Coal, trade unions and Her Majesty's inspectorate of mines and quarries and the proposed new legislation to replace the Mines and Quarries Act 1954 is intended to improve safety standards for all persons employed at mines, including contractors.

Mr. Illsley: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what is the total of underground fatal and major accidents among *(a)* British Coal employees and *(b)* employees of companies contracted to British Coal.

Mr. Nicholls: The information requested is tabled for the years 1986-87 and 1987-88.

	1986-87	*1987-88*
British Coal employees		
Fatal	13	8
Major injuries	727	560
Contracted employees		
Fatal	—	1
Major injuries	45	52

Source: British Coal. Accidents reported under the Reporting of Incidents, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrence Regulations 1985 do not distinguish between British Coal Corporation employees and those of contractors.

Redundancy Payments (Women)

Ms. Richardson: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment whether legislation will be introduced this session to increase the age limit up to which women can receive a statutory redundancy payment from 60 to 65 years, as announced by the Minister of State on 29 October 1987.

Mr. Cope: Yes. The proposal is included in the Employment Bill.

Tourism

Mr. Fearn: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many tourism development action programmes were established in the last two years; and where.

Mr. Lee: During this period 12 new tourism development action programmes have been established covering the following areas: Bridlington, Carlisle, Cornwall, Forest of Dean, Isle of Wight, Lancaster, Nottingham, Norwich, Portsmouth, Shropshire, Torbay and Tyne and Wear.

Mr. Fearn: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will set out the numbers of hotels and tourism-related establishments that have benefited from receiving section 4 grants in the year 1987 and the amounts of those grants as applied through each tourist board region.

Mr. Lee: Offers of section 4 assistance by regional tourist board region for 1978-88 are given in the table. Figures for the 1987 calendar year could only be obtained at disproportionate cost.

Tourist board	*Number of projects*	*Total value of S4 offers (£ thousand)*
Cumbria	39	469
East Anglia	34	502
East Midlands	31	759
Heart of England	47	1,049
London	12	1,030
Northumbria	26	1,480
North West	73	2,062
South East England	44	1,221
Southern	52	922
Thames and Chilterns	30	880
West Country	157	3,125
Yorkshire and Humberside	64	1,346
Total	609	14,845

Health and Safety

Mr. Terry Patchett: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment whether the Government will ratify International Labour Organisation convention 161 and recommendation 177 on occupational health services.

Mr. Cope *[holding reply 2 December 1988]:* The Government have deferred a decision on whether to ratify International Labour Organisation convention 161 and to accept recommendation 171 on occupational health services for a period of three years because of anticipated developments in this field. At the end of that time we expect to receive further advice from the Health and Safety Commission.

SCOTLAND

Mental Illness

Mr. Goodlad: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how much his Department spent on research into *(a)* mental disorders and *(b)* schizophrenia in the last year.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The figure for research into mental disorders funded by the Scottish Home and Health Department in 1987-88 is £176,300. Of this amount £21,950 is for projects specifically related to schizophrenia.

Mr. Goodlad: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he gives any guidance to mental illness hospitals on the retention of patients whose condition is unlikely to improve similar to the other advice contained in the Department of Health's policy paper on mental illness services, Cmnd. 9674; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Decisions about the treatment of individual patients involve issues of clinical judgment. Nearly all NHS mental illness hospitals in Scotland have facilities for those patients who require long-term care in conditions of medium security. My right hon. and learned Friend has not issued any specific guidance in this area.

Psychiatric Nurses

Mr. Goodlad: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many community psychiatric nurses there have been in Scotland in each of the last two years.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: This information is not held centrally, but arrangements are under discussion to make it available for the first time next year.

Civil Defence

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what are the numbers of members of staff employed for emergency planning in district authorities whose salary costs are funded either wholly or partly by Scottish Office civil defence grant.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: There are no such district council posts which are funded by civil defence grant.

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many members of staff are employed by each regional and island authority *(a)* as emergency planning officers and *(b)* as emergency planning team administrative and support staff.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The available information is in respect of grant-aided emergency planning posts. The number of staff employed by regional and islands authorities in such posts at 30 September was as follows:

Region or Islands Authority	*Emergency Planning Officers*	*Clerical/ Support Staff*
Borders Region	4	1
Central Region	4	2
Fife Region	4	1
Dumfries and Galloway Region	4	2
Grampian Region	3	2
Highland Region	6	2
Lothian Region	5	2
Strathclyde Region	11	5
Tayside Region	5	2½
Orkney Islands	2	0
Shetland Islands	1	1
Western Isles	1	0
TOTAL	50	20½

YTS

Mr. Wilson: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many YTS places are currently available in the Ayrshire, Dumfries and Galloway area.

Mr. Lang: On 11 November 1988, the latest date for which information is available, there were 1,172 unfilled YTS places in the Ayrshire, Dumfries and Galloway area.

Greater Glasgow Health Board

Mr. Galbraith: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if the Lord Advocate will investigate the disappearance of pacemakers from Greater Glasgow health board with a view to proceedings.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: This matter is being investigated by Strathclyde police and a report will be submitted to the procurator fiscal, Glasgow in due course.

Marine Biology

Mr. Wray: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what information he has on the main research projects on marine biology carried out in the North sea by Scottish research institutes and laboratories for each year since 1974; and if he will list those projects.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Information in the form requested is not collected or held by the Department. Details of research carried out by the DAFS marine laboratory, Aberdeen, have been given in its triennial reports for the period 1973-84 and annual reports for 1985-86 and 1986-87. I am arranging for copies of these reports to be placed in the Library.

Mr. Wray: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what is, for each year since 1974, the amount of public funds given to the Scottish Marine Biology Association and its laboratory at Dunstaffnage.

(2) what is the number of staff in full-time and part-time jobs in the marine laboratory at Dunstaffnage for each year since 1975.

Mr. Jackson: I have been asked to reply.

The information is as follows:

Year to 31 March	*[3]Science budget*	*Public sector commissions*	*Staff total*	*Full-time*	*Part-time*
	£K (cash figures)				
1988	1,347	394	67·5	64·5	3
1987	1,378	544	72·5	70·5	2
1986	1,256	472	78	75	3
1985	1,024	655	84	82	2
1984	1,001	628	92	88	4
1983	860	772	101	95	6
1982	1,037	783	98	92	6
1981	990	456	100	95	5
1980	906	[1]—	101	101	0
1979	817	—	99	98	1
1978	540	—	95	94	1
1977	418	—	96	94	2
1976	618	[2]—	100	94	6
1975	557	—	103	97	6

[1] Separate figures for public funds are not available prior to the year ending March 1981. The total from public and private funds was (£K): 1980, 399; 1979, 383; 1978, 268; 1977, 264.

[2] Information on commissions prior to the year ending March 1976 could only be provided at disproportionate cost.

[3] Includes Capital Expenditure.

Forestry

Mrs. Margaret Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland whether the Government's target of 33,000 hectares of new planting per year has been met to date.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The Government's target has not yet been met. However, some 29,000

hectares of new planting was achieved in the year to 31 March 1988, and the figure for the current year is expected to be of the same order.

Mrs. Margaret Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what steps the Government are taking to ensure that long-term confidence in both the forestry and wood processing industries is not adversely affected by low planting levels.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The Government have made clear their continued support for the expansion of the forestry industry, and substantial grants are available under the woodland grant scheme and the farm woodland scheme. A close watch will be kept on planting trends.

Mrs. Margaret Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what steps the Government are taking to ensure that the 70,000 hectares estimated by the Forestry Commission to have been cleared for planting under the previous taxation/grants scheme will be fully utilised.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Under the transitional arrangements announced on 15 March 1988 by my right hon. Friend, the Chancellor of the Exchequer, tax reliefs will continue to be available until 1993 in respect of planting approved under those Forestry Commission grant schemes which have been closed to new applications. The amount of such planting that actually takes place will depend on the decisions of a large number of individual landowners.

Mrs. Margaret Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland, if he will list the total number of hectares: *(a)* approved for planting under the woodland grant scheme in each of the Forestry Commission conservancy areas and *(b)* awaiting approval for planting under the woodland grant scheme.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The information is as follows, covering the period from the 15 June 1988, when the woodland grant scheme was first opened to applications, to 31 October 1988:

Conservancy	*Area approved for planting (including replanting) under the Scheme (hectares)*	*Area awaiting approval for planting (including replanting) under the Scheme (hectares)*
North England	207	1,366
East England	106	3,055
West England	226	1,330
Wales	302	675
North Scotland	2,262	5,727
Mid Scotland	751	2,894
South Scotland	344	4,782
Totals	4,198	19,829

Mrs. Margaret Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what assessment he has made of the likely impact of the Environmental Assessment (Afforestation) Regulations 1988 (S.I. 1988 No. 1207) on applications for grant aid for new forestry planting.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: An environmental assessment is intended to provide information that will be helpful in deciding on the likely effects of a forestry proposal on the environment, and the need for one should not be taken as indicating a presumption against afforestation. The number of assessments called for is unlikely to be large, and the regulations are not expected to have a significant effect on the level of applications for planting grants.

Mrs. Margaret Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what are the Government's main objectives contained in the report forwarded to the European Commission in terms of Council regulation (EEC) No. 3528/86.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Reports are submitted annually by member states to enable the European Commission to obtain a picture of tree health throughout the Community, and to provide data on a consistent basis for the situation to be monitored from year to year.

Mrs. Margaret Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list the total amount of hectares of forest lost or damaged by *(a)* atomospheric pollution and *(b)* natural phenomena since 1980 in each of the Forestry Commission conservancy areas.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: *(a)* The Forestry Commission has conducted nationwide surveys of forests since 1984 in order to assess tree health in relation to air pollution. The surveys rely mainly on the criterion of "crown density" as a measure of tree condition because no loss of forest areas has been observed in Britain which can be ascribed specifically to air pollution. The results of the latest surveys are contained in a report which was published by the Commission on 1 December copies of which are being placed in the Library of the House.

(b) Certain insects can damage forest trees, by far the largest cause of loss being the pine beauty moth which has killed or severely damaged 263 hectares of Lodgepole pine in North Scotland Conservancy since 1980. Wind damage is another cause of tree loss, but the only significant forest windblow since 1980 has been in East England Conservancy where some 16,000 hectares of woodland were blown down by the October 1987 storm.

Mrs. Margaret Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement about the environmental safeguards which apply to the location of forestry, as stated in his reply to the hon. Member for Dumfries, *Official Report*, 17 March, columns *670-1*.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The Forestry Commission's woodland grant scheme places emphasis on the need for planting to be carried out in an environmentally sensitive way. Applicants are required to give proper attention to landscaping, wildlife conservation, the management of water courses and the protection of ancient monuments, as appropriate. Every planting proposal is carefuly scrutinised by the Forestry Commission with such aspects in mind, and the existing consultation arrangements also provide a safeguard, particularly for areas of special environmental importance. In addition, the Commission may call for an environmental assessment for those proposals which they consider are likely to have a significant effect on the environment.

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what are the arrangements whereby the Forestry Commission pays the domestic rates of its tied cottages; and if he will make a statement.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The Forestry Commission follows the Civil Service pay and conditions code in the rent charged for its key houses (tied cottages). These rents include an element to cover general and water rates. Tenants of key houses pay a standard rent in respect of their tenancy and the commission pays the general and water rates.

Schools

Mr. Norman Hogg: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what percentage of Scottish schools he expects will opt out of local authority control.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The legislation we are to introduce will enable parents generally to opt for self-governing status for their schools. Recent polls suggest that a significant number will welcome the opportunity offered by this measure.

Mr. Norman Hogg: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what representations he has received from parents, teachers or educational organisations concerning the likely effects of primary school testing upon remedial pupils; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: A number of respondents to the consultation paper "Curriculum and Assessment in Scotland: a Policy for the 90s" referred to the position of pupils with special educational needs. As the consultation paper makes clear it will be for education authorities, in consultation with parents, to decide whether pupils recorded as having special educational needs would benefit from participation in the tests.

Mr. Norman Hogg: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will publish figures showing the numbers of primary schools in Scotland currently undertaking their own schemes of assessment for English and mathematics.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Assessment is an integral part of teaching and my right hon. and learned Friend would expect some form of assessment in these subjects to be carried out in every primary school. Current policy is designed to improve the quality of consistency of that assessment.

Mr. Norman Hogg: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will outline the curricula guidelines which he intends to introduce for Scottish primary schools in those subjects apart from English and mathematics.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: My right hon. and learned Friend has asked the Scottish Consultative Council on the Curriculum to review existing guidance in each subject area and, where appropriate, to develop revised guidelines. their reports are expected to be completed by the end of 1990.

Further Education

Mr. Norman Hogg: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what responses he has received from industry concerning funding of the proposed technology academies in Scotland.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: We have already announced our welcome for the decision by Trusthouse Forte to contribute £1·5 million to sponsor the first technology academy in Scotland.

In addition to this commitment, we have received a number of very positive approaches from the private sector. These are being treated in confidence at this stage.

Mrs. Ray Mitchie: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many students who are studying at Scottish universities, central institutions and colleges of education and who are in receipt of an SED award take *(a)* three years or less to complete their degree, *(b)* four years to complete their degree, *(c)* five years to complete their degree and *(d)* six or more years to complete their degree; and what proportion of female students are in each category.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The information requested is not readily available.

Roads

Mr. Home Robertson: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list the road traffic accidents involving injury or death on the A1 in Scotland for the past three years, giving the date, location and extent of injury for each accident.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: This information is being collected and will be sent to the hon. Member as soon as possible.

Mr. Home Robertson: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when he intends to publish his Department's report on A roads south of Edinburgh.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: I expect to receive the technical report from the consulting engineer in January.

Thereafter, I intend to make a statement on its findings and on our proposed way ahead. There will then be a period for comment before we reach final decisions.

Hospital Services

Mr. Home Robertson: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will call for a report from the chairman of Lothian health board on the future provision of acute hospital services and accident and emergency services in east Lothian.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Lothian health board is currently reviewing its acute service and accident and emergency needs and, following public consultation, proposals covering future requirements throughout the area of the board will be submitted to the Secretary of State. Public consultation is planned for early next year.

Cockenzie Power Station

Mr. Home Robertson: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will call for a report from the chairman of the South of Scotland Electricity Board on the board's policy for the operation of Cockenzie power station, including the estimated coalburn for each of the next three years, the current stock of coal at Cockenzie, and the origin of that stock and of future supplies.

Mr. Lang: No, the operation of Cockenzie power station is a commercial matter for the South of Scotland Electricity Board. I have, however, asked the chairman to write to the hon. Gentleman.

Coal Industry (Employment)

Mr. Home Robertson: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement on future trends in the level of employment in the coal industry in the Lothian region.

Mr. Michael Spicer: I have been asked to reply.

The number of jobs in the coal industry depends on several factors, including the reduction of costs to competitive levels.

ENERGY

Berkeley Power Station

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy when reactor 1 at Berkeley power station was last refuelled.

Mr. Michael Spicer: The last refuelling of reactor 1 was between the dates given in my reply to the hon. Member on 14 November 1988 at column *425*.

Esturial Barrages

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he will list all the feasibility studies being carried out into barrages across United Kingdom estuaries for schemes to produce electricity.

Mr. Michael Spicer: The Department of Energy is supporting feasibility studies of tidal energy barrages on the Severn, Mersey and Loughor estuaries, with two other possibilities under consideration.

Standing Charges (Pensioners)

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he will introduce legislation to provide that pensioners will be exempted from paying standing charges on their power bills in line with consumers who use solid fuel for heating purposes; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Spicer: No.

Sellafield (Discharges)

Mr. Butler: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy (1) what was the discharge of total alpha activity to the sea from Sellafield in (i) 1974 and (ii) the latest available year;

(2) what was the discharge of total beta activity to the sea from Sellafield in (i) 1974 and (ii) the latest available year.

Mr. Michael Spicer: Discharges to sea from Sellafield in 1974 and 1987 (the latest available year) were as follows:

TBq

	1974	*1987*
Alpha	170	2·2
Beta	7,200	89

Further reductions in discharge levels are expected in the early 1990s upon completion of BNFL's effluent treatment plant investment programme.

Bristol Channel (Oil Exploration)

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what were the findings of the oil exploration activities carried out in the Bristol channel.

Mr. Peter Morrison: To date the results of hydrocarbon exploration in the Bristol channel and adjacent waters have been disappointing with no discoveries of either oil or gas.

West Burton B

Mr. Ashton: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy when he expects to annouce his final decision on the West Burton B power station in Bassetlaw, Nottinghamshire.

Mr. Michael Spicer: I refer the hon. Member to the reply that I gave him on 3 November at column *713*.

Arkwright Colliery

Mr. Skinner: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy (1) whether he will make it his policy to hold discussions with British Coal regarding the escape of methane gas at Arkwright colliery with a view to ensuring that British Coal accepts total liability for claims made by the families and others concerned;

(2) what recent inquiries he has made of British Coal regarding payments of compensation to families and others affected by the escape of methane gas at Arkwright colliery; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Spicer: This is a matter for British Coal. However it has kept me regularly informed of the situation at Arkwright, following the emission of methane. I understand that British Coal has already made a £100 ex gratia interim payment to all the families who had to be evacuated. This is an advance against the settlement of reasonable future claims, which British Coal has agreed to pay on a "good neighbour" basis. Legal liability is ultimately at matter for the courts to decide.

NATIONAL FINANCE

Financial Management Initiative

60. **Mr. Tim Smith:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what estimate he has made of the contribution that the financial management initiative has made to securing value for money in public expenditure.

Mr. Brooke: The financial management initiative is seeking to improve the basis on which resources are managed by Departments. I regret that it is not possible to quantify the contribution that it is making to improving

value for money, nor to distinguish that contribution from the effect of other actions to increase the efficiency with which resources are used. There is however general agreement that the FMI has made a significant impact by clarifying responsibilities, securing a greater awareness of costs and by providing a framework for other reforms.

The "Next Steps" initiative, which the Prime Minister announced on 18 February 1988 at column 1149, builds on and carries forward the principles of the FMI in relation to executive functions. The Government remain committed to maintaining the momentum of their overall programme for improving value for money.

Recruitment

61. **Mr. Teddy Taylor:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will publish a White Paper on measures to deal with recruitment into the Civil Service; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Brooke: There are no plans to issue a White Paper on Civil Service recruitment. My Department keeps Civil Service recruitment policies under continuous review, to ensure that they are responsive to changes in both the needs of Departments and in the general labour market, bearing in mind the need to ensure value for money.

Computer Projects

62. **Mr. Allen:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make a statement on monitoring of the costs of Civil Service computer projects.

Mr. Brooke: Individual Departments are responsible for monitoring the costs of their computer projects to ensure financial propriety and value for money.

Capital Allowances

Mr. Barry Field: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what representations he has had concerning the abolition of capital allowances from guest houses and small hotels.

Mr. Norman Lamont: Capital allowances have not been abolished. Annual writing down allowances remain available for construction costs of guest houses and small hotels which satisfy certain minimum criteria and for capital expenditure on machinery or plant for business use. Rates of allowance now correspond more close with rates of commercial depreciation. A number of representations have been received from the hotel industry about the withdrawal of incentive first-year and initial allowances.

Tax Office, Londonderry (Explosion)

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will give details in the *Official Report* as to the extent of the disruption caused to the collection of taxes and to tax records as a result of the recent explosion in the tax offices in Londonderry; and whether any delays in the collection of taxes will result.

Mr. Norman Lamont: There was a temporary disruption to normal working in the tax and collection offices in Londonderry while alternative premises were being made ready.

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the cost of repairing the damage caused to the Inland Revenue building in Londonderry by the recent terrorist explosion there.

Mr. Norman Lamont: The building itself is beyond repair. Other arrangements to accommodate staff and work for the time being have been made.

Personal Pensions

Mr. John Marshall: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether he will make a statement on what proposals he has for making PEP's more attractive to the investing public.

Mr. Norman Lamont: The scheme is kept under review.

Pensioners

Mr. Rooker: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is his best estimate of the number of pensioners liable for income tax in the current year.

Mr. Norman Lamont: Estimates are available for single people aged 65 and over and married couples in which one or both members are aged 65 and over. In 1988-89, 2·6 million of these tax units are liable to income tax, approximately one third of all aged tax units. This estimate is based on a projection of the 1985-86 survey of personal incomes and is therefore provisional.

Secret Services (Expenditure)

Mr. Allen: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what was the expenditure on the secret services vote for each previous year for which figures are available taking 1988-89 as 100.

Mr. Norman Lamont: Outturn figures are published in the annual appropriation accounts. The figures for the secret service vote for the last five years in the form requested are:

	£ million
1983-84	62·4
1984-85	66·3
1985-86	71·4
1986-87	81·1
1987-88	91·7

Note: Based on 1988-89 Estimates provision of £113·2 million = 100.

Mr. Allen: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer under which headings other than class XX vote 3 Cabinet Office: Secret Services, expenditure on the secret services is accounted for.

Mr. Norman Lamont: In the interests of national security, successive Governments have declined to publish the information requested.

Earnings

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether he will publish in the *Official Report* the relevant allowances referred to in annex 7 of Cmnd. 9756 in each case in terms of local currency and as a percentage of average adult male earnings or the nearest available equivalent together with the marginal and

average rates of tax for single persons and one-earner married couples with such earnings; and if he will add *(a)* the average and marginal rates for a two-earner married couple where the wife's earnings are the average for an adult female and *(b)* the amount of child benefit or child allowance.

Mr. Norman Lamont: This information could be provided only at disproportionate cost. Information on the level of tax thresholds and on the marginal rates of tax in some of the countries mentioned in annex 7 of Cmnd. 9756 is published in the Inland Revenue's note "International Comparisons of Direct Tax on Employment Income" a copy of which is available in the Library.

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the current married man's tax threshold as a percentage of adult manual workers' average earnings currently as calculated in chart 2.4 of Cmnd. 9756; and what is his latest estimate of the number of families who would now receive at least 80 per cent. of their present income if they did not work at all.

Mr. Norman Lamont: In 1988-89, the married man's tax allowance is 37·3 per cent. of average adult manual earnings. The number of families who would receive at least 80 per cent. of their current income if they did not work is a matter for my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Social Security.

Taxation

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer in what respect his latest proposals for separate taxation of husbands and wives differ in principle from those given in paragraph 3.4 of Cmnd. 9756; and what is the gain or loss to the Revenue from the change at current tax and allowance levels.

Mr. Norman Lamont: Information about the new system of independent taxation for husband and wife and its costs is given in the Financial Statement and Budget report 1988-89, pages 39 and 46.

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the net gain or loss to the Revenue from *(a)* reducing the standard rate of income tax by 5p, *(b)* raising the ceiling for means-tested income support by 25 per cent. and *(c)* increasing the state pension by 10 per cent.

Mr. Norman Lamont: The direct revenue cost in a full year, at 1989-90 income levels of a 5p reduction in the basic rate of tax is about £7·5 billion. If introduced for 1989-90 the change would reduce tax receipts by about £7 billion in that year. A 10 per cent. increase in the basic state pension would lead to an increase of about £2 billion in the amount of pensions paid in 1989-90. An estimate of the cost of increasing the level of income support could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer (1) whether he has come to a decision on the option in paragraph 4.16 of Cmnd. 9756 of restricting the additional personal income tax allowance to those in receipt of one-parent and other appropriate benefits; and if he will publish in the *Official Report* a table showing what the effect of such a change would be in terms of the number of allowances claimed and the savings to the Revenue;

(2) if he has come to a decision on the option in paragraph 4.15 Cmnd. 9756 of converting the additional personal income tax allowance into increased social security provision; and if he will provide an estimate of *(a)* the amount of revenue which could be transferred to the social security budget in this way and *(b)* what increase in benefits would be required to ensure that nobody is worse off as a result of the change.

Mr. Norman Lamont: Section 30 of the Finance Act 1988 changed the rules for the additional personal allowance so that from April 1989 unmarried couples with children will be able to quality for only one additional personal allowance between them. No consequential changes in social security benefits were made and there are no plans for further changes in the allowance.

Mr. Anthony Coombs: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what tax reliefs are available towards the costs of company employees studying for vocational or professional qualifications in the United Kingdom; and what information he has on such allowances in France and West Germany.

Mr. Norman Lamont *[holding answer 29 November 1988]:* There are tax reliefs for employees' job-related training which exempt from income tax training costs met by employers and by employees themselves provided certain conditions are satisfied. Last year we were able to introduce a new relief for employees whose employers pay for the cost of retraining in new skills and for self-employment.

Details of the tax reliefs for training available in France and Germany, together with those of a number of other major industrial countries, including the United Kingdom, are available in a report published last May by the PICKUP programme of the Department of Education and Science. I believe that my hon. Friend already has a copy.

Mortgages

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is his estimate of the amount of the mortgage taken out by the median mortgagor claiming mortgage interest relief, the increase since May in the rate of interest, the amount of interest payable in a full year, and the total amount of relief at the standard rate payable in a full year at the standard rate of income tax.

Mr. Norman Lamont: In 1988-89 the estimated median mortgage is £22,000. The mortgage interest rate has increased since May from 9·75 per cent. to 12·75 per cent.; and increase of three percentage points. The gross amount of interest payable in a full year at 1988-89 levels by the median mortgagor is £2,550; the amount of relief at the basic rate of income tax is £640 leaving a net interest payment of £1,910 in 1988-89.

National Insurance Contributions

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how much is paid by the top 5 per cent. of taxpayers in employees' national insurance contributions; and what would be the gain to the Revenue by removing the upper earnings limit.

Mr. Norman Lamont: The top 5 per cent. of taxpayers, including employees and the self-employed, are provisionally estimated to pay about £1·4 billion in national

insurance contributions in 1988-89. I refer the hon. Member to my reply to him on 31 October at columns 500-01 for the Revenue effect of abolishing the upper earnings limit.

Tax Allowances

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether he proposes to extend the proposed married couples' income tax allowance to single parents in the form of an additional personal income tax allowance when separate taxation of husbands and wives is introduced in 1990-91.

Mr. Norman Lamont: The additional personal allowance for those with single-handed responsibility for children will continue to be available after independent taxation is introduced in April 1990. The additional personal allowance and the new married couple's allowance will be equal in value.

Deposit Takers

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether he will publish in the *Official Report* a table showing for *(a)* banks, *(b)* building societies and *(c)* other licensed depositors the percentage of advances to gross deposits together with the percentage held in, respectively, cash, call money and discounts, special deposits and investments; and if he will provide corresponding figures for 1958, 1968, 1976 and 1978.

Mr. Lilley: The information requested is available as follows:

a. for Banks—in various issues of the Bank of England Quarterly Bulletin, (Table 3.1 in the latest edition). No figures are available for 1958.

b. for Building Societies—in the BSA (Building Societies Association) Bulletin, Table 6, and also in Financial Statistics, Table 7.7. Figures for earlier years are available in "A Compendium of Building Society Statistics", published by the Building Societies Association.

c. for other deposit takers—no separate information is available.

Capital Gains Tax

Mr. Tim Smith: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the yield from capital gains tax on the sale of shares in unquoted companies for the latest year for which figures are available.

Mr. Norman Lamont: Receipts in 1987-88 from capital gains tax from individuals and trusts were £1,380 million. It is estimated that 40 to 50 per cent. was derived from ordinary shares quoted on the United Kingdom stock exchange, about 20 per cent. from other shares and securities, and the rest from other property. I regret that finer analyses to isolate the yield from the sale of shares in unquoted companies are not available. Analyses are not available for the yield within corporation tax from gains on the sales of such shares by companies.

Fraud

Mr. Ian Bruce: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make a statement on the detection of fraud by the Inland Revenue; and what tax has been recovered by such fraud investigations in the last financial year for which figures are available.

Mr. Norman Lamont: Since 1979 more Inland Revenue resources have been deployed, not just on fraud detection but on tax investigation work generally. This, together with improved case selection and working methods, has increased the yield—tax, interest and penalties—from such compliance work from £111 million in 1979 to £877 million in 1987-88. In the year to 31 March 1988 tax of £495 million was recovered through fraud investigations.

EEC (Overdraft Loans)

Mr. Teddy Taylor: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make a statement outlining the powers which are available to the European Economic Community to seek overdraft loans from member states; and under what powers such demands have been met by Her Majesty's Government.

Mr. Brooke: The Commission is empowered to request overdraft facilities under article 12(2) of Council regulation 2891/77. This article allows the Commission to overdraw its accounts with member states to meet a prospective cash deficit. The member states share the overdraft in proportion to the estimated budget revenue due from each of them.

Member states are legally obliged to comply with properly constituted requests under article 12(2). The Government therefore meet such requests directly from the Consolidated Fund in accordance with article 2(3) of the European Communities Act 1972. Repayment of any drawing under the overdraft facility is made by deduction from future own resources payments. The article 12(2) facility does not affect the total amount which the Community is authorised to spend during the year.

EEC (IGA Payments)

Mr. Teddy Taylor: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer on what date the IGA payments failed to be made in consequence of the recent European Council decision; what member states have failed to make the necessary payments; what sums are involved; and if such member states are obliged in terms of the agreement to pay interest on late payments.

Mr. Brooke: Member states are not obliged to make payments under the 1988 IGA until they have obtained the necessary approval from their national legislatures. This means that there is no fixed date on which the initial payments are due. Information relating to the timing of payments by individual member states is not generally available. There is no explicit provision in the IGA for interest charges. It would be for the Commission to consider whether to claim interest in the event of any default.

Mr. Teddy Taylor: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer why Her Majesty's Government agreed to make an advance payment to the EEC of their non-value added tax own resources because of the EEC's cash flow problems created by the non-payment of IGA by certain member states; what other member states were invited to make such advance payments; and under what powers the EEC has asked for such facilities from individual states.

Mr. Brooke: The last date on which the Government made an advance payment of non-VAT own resources was 21 November. At that time the Commission was

experiencing cash flow difficulties because most member states, including the United Kingdom, had not paid their contributions under the IGA. The Government were satisfied that the Commission's request for this advance —as for advances made earlier in the year—complied with article 10(2) of Council regulations 2891/77. All such requests are made simultaneously to all member states; none is singled out.

EEC (Expenditure)

Mr. Teddy Taylor: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the total amount of the expenditure authorised in the EEC budget for the EEC's current financial year; what measures have been introduced to prevent the EEC from overspending its budget by means of seeking advance payments under regulation 2891/77 or in delaying payments to member states which would normally fall to be made; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Brooke: The 1988 budget, as amended, provides for expenditure of 43,820 mecu (around £29,213 million). In its amending letter to the 1989 preliminary draft budget the Commission estimates that there will be underspending of some 1,300 mecu (around £867 million) in 1988. Advance payments made under article 10(2) of regulation 2891/77 do not increase the total amount which the Community is authorised to spend in any given year. The Brussels European Council in February agreed on measures to improve budgetary management and to strengthen the principle of annuality.

Industrial and Manufacturing Investment

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what has been the level of *(a)* industrial investment and *(b)* manufacturing investment in each of the last 20 years, including the latest information for 1988, at current and at 1988 prices.

Mr. Major: The information requested is as follows. The latest figures produced by the DTI for investment at constant prices use 1985 as the base year.

Fixed capital expenditure—£ million current prices

	Industrial investment[2]	*Manufacturing (including leased assets)*[1]
1968	2,717	1,569
1969	3,040	1,774
1970	3,550	2,090
1971	3,835	2,102
1972	2,174	1,969
1974	6,243	3,062
1973	4,984	2,357
1975	6,777	3,646
1976	7,770	4,146
1977	9,593	5,083
1978	11,755	6,170
1979	14,618	7,154
1980	15,719	7,309
1981	15,307	6,235
1982	16,732	6,521
1983	17,372	6,822
1984	20,988	8,427
1985	25,063	10,265
1986	25,735	9,982
1987	30,224	10,945
Unadjusted		
1988 Q1	7,787	2,889
Q2	8,018	2,978
[4]Q3	8,360	[3]

[1] Separate figures for assets leased to manufacturers were only collected from 1975.
[2] Manufacturing, construction, distribution and financial industries.
[3] Figures for assets leased to manufacturers at current prices not yet available.
[4] Provisional.
Source:
Monthly Digest of Statistics (CSO) and British Business 25 November 1988.

Fixed capital expenditure—£ million at 1985 prices

	Industrial investment[2]	*Manufacturing (including leased assets*[1]
1968	15,499	9,195
1969	16,599	10,026
1970	17,730	10,808
1971	17,352	9,865
1972	16,388	8,582
1973	18,019	9,178
1974	18,933	10,053
1975	16,849	9,666
1976	16,601	9,263
1977	17,778	9,828
1978	19,558	10,716
1979	21,546	11,157
1980	19,892	9,920
1981	17,692	7,735
1982	18,525	7,603
1983	18,751	7,541
1984	22,059	8,923
1985	25,057	10,259
1986	24,697	9,576
1987	27,603	10,050
Seasonally adjusted		
1988		
Q1	7,299	2,638
Q2	8,016	2,873
[3]Q3	7,529	2,721

[1] Separate figures for assets leased to manufacturers were only collected from 1975.
[2] Manufacturing, construction, distribution and financial industries.
[3] Provisional.
Source: DTI capital expenditure press notice.

Inflation

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what was the average annual rate of inflation between March 1974 and May 1979 and for the last five years; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lilley: The average rate of retail price inflation between March 1974 and May 1979 was 15·5 per cent. per annum. Inflation between October 1983 and October 1988 has averaged 4·9 per cent. per annum.

Tobacco Tax

Mr. Michael Brown: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer (1) if his Department will be supporting the clauses within the European Community draft directives on the approximation of taxes on cigarettes, to subject all tobacco products to excise levy; and if he will support

amendments to exempt any specific categories of tobacco products which are currently subject to United Kingdom excise tax;

(2) what is his policy towards the implementation of the European Community draft directives on the approximation of taxes on cigarettes and manufactured tobacco other than cigarettes which would result in a reduction of the retail price of cigarettes and other tobacco products.

Mr. Lilley *[holding answer 2 December 1988]:* We have made it clear that we do not consider the European Commission's proposals for the approximation of indirect taxes to be necessary for the completion of the internal market. As such changes require the unanimous agreement of the member states before becoming law, there is no question of these proposals being forced upon us.

Value Added Tax

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make a statement on proposals by the European Commission to end value added tax zero rating on voluntary activities conducted in village halls.

Mr. Lilley *[holding answer 1 December 1988]:* There is no value added tax zero rating for voluntary activities in village halls, as such. What I think my hon. Friend has in mind is the judgment of the European Court of Justice published on 21 June which found that certain of the United Kingdom's zero rates were not permissible under EC VAT law; this may affect goods and services bought by village halls. We have been consulting widely with interested parties, including representatives of village halls, about how best this judgment can be implemented. All the representations that we have received will be taken fully into consideration in reaching decisions. An announcement will be made in due course.

Family Income

Sir Ian Gilmour: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will give figures showing the net incomes, including family credit, of a married man with two children aged four and six years, where the father's weekly earnings are £100, £150, £200, £250, £300, £400, £500, £750, £1,000 and £2,000, assuming no mortgage or superannuation tax reliefs and in each of the following circumstances *(a)* existing system, 1988-89, *(b)* child benefit abolished, £500 million of the savings on child benefit put into family credit and the rest used to finance a further cut in the standard rate of income tax, *(c)* child benefit abolished, £1,000 million of the savings put into family credit and the rest used to finance a further cut in the standard rate of income tax, and *(d)* ditto, but with all the savings from child benefit used to finance a further cut in the standard rate of income tax.

Mr. Lawson *[holding answer 30 November 1988]:* The table below shows the net income of a married man with two children aged four and six at the various levels of gross earnings specified. The first column relates to the tax and benefit system in force in 1988-89; the second column reflects the position which would have arisen in 1988-89 if child benefit had been abolished and all of the savings had been used to finance a cut in the basic rate of tax.

I regret that it is not possible to provide comparable figures under the other two options requested since insufficient information has been provided about the way in which the family credit system would be changed.

Gross earnings £ per week	*Net weekly income[1] (£ per week) Current tax and benefit regime*	*Child benefit abolished and basic rate of tax reduced*
100	121·02	118·20
150	133·19	120·54
200	166·19	154·84
250	199·19	189·14
300	232·19	223·44
400	306·74	300·59
500	374·22	369·37
750	524·22	519·37
1,000	674·22	669·37
2,000	1,274·22	1,269·37

[1] Net weekly income equals gross earnings less income tax less national insurance contributions plus child benefit plus family credit plus housing benefits based on the assumption that the family are local authority tenants paying average rent and rates.

SOCIAL SECURITY

Housing Benefit

Mr. Flannery: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security whether he will adjust the weighting of private sector housing benefit claims to reflect the complexity of the liaison between the local authority and the rent office.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Discussions on the allocation of housing benefit administration costs subsidy for 1989-90 are currently taking place between the Department and the local authority associations. It has been agreed in those discussions that the weighting used for private sector housing benefit cases for 1989-90 should not be adjusted to take account of the new rent officer arrangements. For future years, the weighting used will be reconsidered in the light of data on the operation of the new arrangements.

Stolen Pension Books

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security, pursuant to his reply to the hon. Member for Liverpool, Mossley Hill, *Official Report*, 28 November, concerning stolen pension books, if he will now reinstate the urgent needs allowances for pensioners left destitute after their pension is stolen.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: No. A pensioner whose pension has been stolen and is unable to manage until his next payment of pension is due may apply for a crisis loan from the social fund in the same way as can any other person who has had money stolen and has insufficient means to meet their immediate needs.

Computerisation

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will make a statement on the projected costs of the computer operational strategy; whether the costs conform to budget; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Robin Cook: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security (1) what is his Department's *(a)* original and *(b)* latest estimate of the cost of the operational strategy computerisation project;

(2) what are his Department's *(a)* latest and *(b)* original estimates of the annual savings from implementing the operational strategy computerisation project.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The 1982 publication "Social Security Operational Strategy: A Framework for the Future", a copy of which is in the Library, provided broad estimates that, at November 1981 prices, the operational strategy would cost £720 million and produce net savings of £1,160 million over the 20 years to 2001-20.

Our latest estimate, at 1987-88 prices, is that the Department's total investment will be in the order of £1,200 million. These costs have been, and are expected to be, contained within the moneys allocated to the Department annually and as shown in the Public Expenditure White Paper. The strategy is already producing small savings in administration costs and these are expected to rise to around £150 million per annum by 1993.

These estimates are not directly comparable because the original figures were calculated for a group of projects significantly different in scope and content from those now under development or in operation.

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what contact has been made with those concerned with the supply to local Department of Social Security offices of computer equipment and software since the social fund was introduced; and what penalty payments manufacturers or suppliers have been required to make because of dissatisfaction with equipment and software.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The Department maintains regular contact with its suppliers by means of monthly contract meetings. The principal contractor has assigned staff to support the Department and they frequently attend at the development centre. Initial bedding-in problems are not uncommon with new systems and those experienced by the social fund computer systems are now being satisfactorily resolved. No circumstance has arisen in which it has been necessary to consider the imposition of penalty payments.

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what complaints he has received from local Department of Social Security offices about the breakdown rate of computers; and how many complaints from Department of Social Security offices in Bradford have been received.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: A number of complaints have been received from local offices about the social fund microcomputer system. These include instances of system non-availability due to software problems and malfunctions due to hardware faults which do not result in total system failure because of the availability of back-up computers. The release of new software in July 1988 has led to significant reductions in software difficulties.

Offices in Bradford have reported faults on the computer since April 1988 but none of these has resulted in a complete breakdown in the system.

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what complaints he has received about difficulties experienced by local Department of Social Security offices about problems in inputting data about crisis loans into computer systems.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: A number of complaints were received from local offices in the early stages of the new social fund microcomputer system. These related mainly to the unreliability of the early versions of software. There have been no specific complaints about inputting crisis loans data to the computer system.

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will list, by type and system, microcomputer equipment issued to local Department of Social Security offices; what is the total cost, to date, of supplying such equipment; and in how many cases such equipment has been supplemented or replaced.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The Department uses British Telecom Merlin M4000 microcomputers in its local offices to help with the administration of the social fund and income support. Local offices also use a small number of microcomputers to provide general administrative support. The equipment was supplemented earlier this year to enable the systems to handle the newly introduced income support in place of supplementary benefit, its predecessor benefit. In addition, the part of the system which helps local office staff locate beneficiaries' casepapers is currently being upgraded to provide additional memory and other enhancements. The total costs of these systems to date is £27 million.

This investment has brought significant improvements in efficiency and has provided local offices with useful computer assistance whilst our mainframe computerisation programme has been under development.

Mr. Robin Cook: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what has been the total expenditure on computer consultants in connection with the operational strategy computerisation project.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The total expenditure on computer consultants' fees, from April 1982 until March 1988, was £45·455 million.

Credit Transfer

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will publish in the *Official Report* the proportion of each of the main benefits paid to recipients by credit transfer over the last five years.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The information required is shown in the following table:

Proportion of retirement pensioners and child benefit recipients paid by credit transfer

	Retirement Pension per cent.	*Child Benefit per cent.*
December 1984	8·63	2·57
December 1985	10·75	4·45
December 1986	12·95	6·30
December 1987	14·65	8·00
December 1988	17·30	11·11

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what steps he is taking to promote credit transfer as opposed to post office counter transactions; what budget is allocated to the promotion of credit transfer; what recent representations he has received from the Post Office about the potential effect on the financial viability of rural sub-post offices; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: All existing retirement pensioners have been invited by letter to opt for payment by credit transfer. By February 1989 similar invitations will have been sent to all recipients of child benefit. New claimants to retirement pension and child benefit are offered a choice of payment by credit transfer or order book. No specific

budget is allocated to the promotion of credit transfer. Any such costs are met from the social security publicity budget of £12·77 million for 1988-89. No representations have been received recently from the Post Office about the potential effect of credit transfer on the viability of rural sub post offices.

Disabled Persons (Lodgings)

Mr. Soley: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security who will be responsible for meeting the care costs of disabled people in supported lodgings after April 1989.

Mr. Scott: From next April people in lodgings, including supported lodgers, will receive normal income support and housing benefit in place of the present special payments of income support which include help with accommodation costs. These changes will mean that many disabled people in supported lodgings will be better-off, after meeting charges for accommodation and the provision of care, than under existing benefit arrangements. Existing claimants who might otherwise lose benefit overall will be given cash protection whilst they remain in a supportive environment. The overall effect will be to provide an estimated £1 million extra for supported lodgers as a whole. There will thus be no overall reduction in the level of help to this group.

Family Credit

Mr. French: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security (1) if he will list the reasons why the family credit unit requires audited accounts from self-employed applicants;

(2) if he has any plans to allow self-employed applicants for family credit to provide documentary evidence other than audited accounts as proof of income.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: I refer my hon. Friend to my reply to the hon. Member for Caernarfon (Mr. Wigley) on 19 October at columns *895-96*. The Family Credit (General) Amendment No. 4 Regulations 1988 which were laid before Parliament on 14 November to come into force on 5 December remove the requirement that only audited accounts are acceptable. In respect of claims for family credit made on or after 5 December a profit and loss account which has not been audited will be acceptable provided that it covers a period of not less than six months and not more than 15 months and is for a period ending not more than 12 months prior to the date of claim.

Community Care

Mr. O'Brien: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what are the guidelines set down by his Department for consultation between Social Fund officers or his Department and local authority social services officers for the allocation of community care grants.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Guidelines on consultation between the Department and local authority social services and social work departments are contained in paragraphs 1046-1050 of the social fund manual. A copy of the manual is in the Library.

Mr. O'Brien: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what is the procedure for social fund officers or his Department to make more community care grant provisions for people being transferred from health authority accommodation to local authority accommodation; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Guidance and directions for the award of community care grants appear in the social fund manual, a copy of which is in the Library.

The guidance makes it clear that community care grants may be awarded to people being resettled in the community but not to those moving from one form of residential care to another. It also emphasises the importance of liaison between the Department and local authorities.

Social Fund

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what manual checks are being made by local Department of Social Security offices on social fund expenditure; when such checks were introduced; and in how many local offices such checks are being made.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: There are no prescribed manual checks of social fund expenditure.

Some local offices may maintain clerical records as an aid to local management but no information is available as to the extent of such unofficial record keeping.

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what representations he has received about the reliability of social fund data; and what action he has taken to resolve doubts about the reliability of social fund data.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: We have received a small number of representations from hon. Members about the reliability of the social fund data. Major budgetary errors were corrected in version five of the social fund software which was issued in July. After release of version six of the software later this month we expect that in general statistical reports will accurately record the present month's figures. However, some cumulative year-to-date figures will continue to be unreliable because of problems in earlier months.

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security when he proposes to announce next year's budgets for the social fund for each of his Department's local offices.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: We hope to make an announcement early in the new year.

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if the Audit Commission has expressed any concern or made representations about the reliability of social fund data.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: No.

Local Offices

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security (1) what information he has as to the reasons why amounts of community grants paid by local Department of Social Security offices in Bradford vary substantially;

(2) what examination he has undertaken into the apparent inconsistencies between local Department of Social Security offices in spending budgets allocated under the social fund, including between Department of Social Security offices serving the same district.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: There are a number of possible reasons for differences between the amounts of community care grants paid by the three Bradford offices. The total amounts paid will depend on the number of eligible applications, the purpose of the application, the amount applied for, the relative priorities of different applications and the discretion of social fund officers in deciding whether or not to award a payment.

We are monitoring expenditure by local offices on the social fund, and regional teams have been set up to monitor the quality of decision-making by social fund officers. Social fund officers are expected to exercise their discretion flexibly within the framework of the law and the Secretary of State's directions and having regard to the guidance in the social fund manual. As the social fund is a locally managed discretionary scheme, absolute consistency in spending between different local offices is therefore not feasible.

Pensioners

Mrs. Ray Michie: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many Scottish pensioners who are in receipt of income support are in receipt of transitional addition; and what is the average level of transitional addition paid.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: I regret that the information requested is not available.

Sir Ian Gilmour: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will update the reply to Sir Brandon Rhys Williams, the former hon. Member for Kensington, *Official Report*, 14 July 1987, column 451, in respect of pensioners' gross weekly incomes other than the state basic pension.

Mr. Peter Lloyd *[holding answer 28 November 1988]:* The table shows the number of pensioners with income other than retirement pension of any category at the levels specified.

Gross income excluding pension (£ per week at 1986 prices)	*Single pensioners (thousands)*	*Married couples (thousands)*
less than £5	480	120
5-10	370	120
10-15	490	200
15-20	550	200
20-30	1,000	300
30-40	340	250
40-50	310	180
50-60	160	130
60-70	110	100
70-80	60	60
80-90	60	80
90-100	60	60
100-150	110	270
150-200	80	100
200-250	30	70
250-300	20	20
300-350	10	40
350-400	¹	10
400-450	¹	¹
450-500	¹	¹
over 500	¹	20
Total	4,160	2,330

The updated table shows a slight increase in the number of pensioner units in receipt of additional income.

Note: Pensioners are defined as individuals in a tax unit which receives some form of retirement pension. Figures are for single pensioners or for married couples where the husband is aged 65 or over.
¹ Indicates less than 10,000 cases.
Source: Family Expenditure Survey 1986.

DEFENCE

Challenger

Mr. Jack: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list in the *Official Report* the value of work undertaken by each company supplying any components or undertaking assembly work for the Challenger I tank in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Sainsbury: This is a matter for the manufacturer and is commercial in confidence, but a significant proportion of the tank by value is understood to be "bought out".

Helicopter Crash (Falklands)

Mr. Conway: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list the dates and format of official contact between the Royal Air Force or his Department and the dependants or next of kin of the seven airmen killed in the Chinook helicopter crash in the Falklands on 27 February 1987.

Mr. Freeman: It is not practicable to list here each individual official contact with each of the dependants and next of kin of the seven RAF personnel killed in the Chinook accident in the Falkland Islands in February 1987. It is the aim of the service, following the death of a member of the Royal Air Force, to provide to the next of kin as much moral and practical support as may be needed or requested. This aim has been met according to the circumstances, needs and wishes of each of the next of kin.

Initial contacts took the form of visits by senior officers, letters of condolence from both the Royal Air Force and the Air Force Department and consultation over the funeral arrangements.

As is customary, a serving RAF officer was appointed as visiting officer to each of the widows, to help in her care and support and to ensure that everything possible was done to help her to adjust to life without her husband. The fiancee of one of the casualties was afforded similar support. Assistance is still available if required.

From a practical financial standpoint, there has been considerable direct contact with the next of kin by the Department over pensions, gratuities, estates, probate and tax.

Mr. Conway: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what provision his Department has made for the continued education of the dependants of the seven airmen killed in the Chinook helicopter crash in the Falklands on 27 February 1987.

Mr. Freeman: No specific provision has been made, but a child's forces family pension is payable in respect of each eligible dependent child of the deceased until the child reaches the age of 17 or ceases full time education if later. It is not, however, a condition of payment that the pension should be used in respect of the child's education.

Mr. Conway: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence (1) what review his Department has conducted of the air-safety of Chinook helicopters following the fatal air crash in the Falklands on 27 February 1987;

(2) what was the cause of the fatal Chinook helicopter crash in the Falklands on 27 February 1987.

Mr. Freeman: As the hon. Member is aware, the county coroner of Oxford is conducting an inquiry into this tragic accident. The Royal Air Force has in the usual way conducted its own inquiry, the results of which have been made known to the coroner. Measures identified by the board of inquiry to improve the safety of Chinook helicopters in service with the Royal Air Force have been taken. In accordance with the usual practice, I shall place a copy of the military aircraft accident summary in the Library of the House as soon as the inquest is completed.

Mr. Conway: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when he expects a compensation settlement to be granted to the widows and dependants of the airmen killed in the Chinook helicopter crash in the Falklands on 27 February 1987.

Mr. Freeman: Claims on behalf of the dependants of five of the Royal Air Force personnel who lost their lives on 27 February 1987 were commenced by solicitors acting on their behalf in August 1987. Since then, correspondence has continued between the solicitors and the Ministry of Defence's claims branch, who are awaiting the completion of all necessary inquiries into the incident, including an inquest by HM coroner. Once these have been concluded, it should be possible to come to a decision very quickly on any ex-gratia compensation which might be payable.

Service Personnel (Dependants)

Mr. Conway: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what provision for financial support his Department has made for Royal Air Force personnel, killed whilst on duty, separate to that provided by the various service charities including the Royal Air Force Benevolent Fund; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Freeman: Royal Air Force personnel killed whilst on duty are entitled to benefits under the armed forces pension scheme. The scheme makes provision for short term families' pensions, equal to the deceased service man's basic pay, to be awarded to widows and dependent children for periods ranging from three to nine months depending upon family circumstances. Subsequently, long term widows' and children's pensions are awarded to those eligible. These are index-linked and remain in payment in the case of the widow for life provided that she remains unmarried, and in that of the children until the age of 17 or completion of full-time education if later. In the case of those who are unmarried a lump sum gratuity is paid into the deceased service man's estate.

In addition to these provisions, widows may be entitled to benefits under the war widows scheme administered by the Department of Social Security.

Mr. Conway: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what was the number and value of any compensation ex-gratia payments made by him to dependants of service personnel who fail to qualify under the provisions of the Crown Proceedings (Armed Forces) Act 1987.

Mr. Freeman: One claim from the dependant of a decease service man has been settled, at a cost of approximately £130,000 on an ex-gratia basis as a result of an incident during the period between 8 December 1986, when the Government announced their intention to repeal section 10 of the Crown Proceedings Act 1947, and 15 May 1987, when the Crown Proceedings (Armed Forces) Act 1987 became law. A number of such claims are still awaiting settlement, and are the subject of discussions between the Ministry of Defence and the claimants or their legal advisers.

Royal Navy (Tobacco)

Mr. Speed: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will review the facility whereby male Royal Navy personnel are eligible to purchase specially produced low priced cigarettes and tobacco while serving in United Kingdom shore establishments.

Mr. Freeman: The Admiralty board has recently reviewed this concession—known as the "Blue Liner" concession. Mindful of its responsibility to promote the health and physical fitness of personnel in the Royal Navy, the board has concluded that in the light of medical evidence about the consequences of smoking, it would be inappropriate for the concession to continue. They have decided accordingly that the price of these "Blue Liners" should be increased progressively in order to discourage use of the concession which will be finally withdrawn at the end of 1991. The price will be increased first in April 1989, followed by two further increases in January 1990 and January 1991 to bring prices much closer to those charged for proprietary brands. The extra revenue realised by these price increases will be paid into the fleet amenities fund and will be used specifically to provide benefits for naval personnel.

Queen's Own Highlanders (HIV Tests)

Mr. Salmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when the most recent tests for antibodies against the human immunodeficiency virus were performed on the men of the Queen's Own Highlanders, who returned to Scotland from Kenya in December 1986; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Freeman: It is not my Department's policy to disclose specific details of medical cases, which are confidential. I can confirm that tests have been carried out in 1987 and 1988.

Research

Ms. Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what sources of funding are available for research in veterinary schools.

Mr. Sainsbury: The MOD has funds available for research in support of the Defence research programme, including extramural research work at higher education institutions. At present there are no agreements placed with veterinary schools.

Ms. Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence (1) if classified research is carried out for his Department in British universities;

(2) what approximate proportion of the published results of research funded by his Department is classified;

(3) if the results of the research into aerobiology being undertaken by his Department at Bristol university will be shared with other nations;

(4) what are the research objectives of his Department in the field of aerobiology.

Mr. Sainsbury: My Department's sole objective in carrying out research into aerobiology is to provide information which should assist in the provision of effective protective measures against the threat that chemical or biological weapons might be used against the United Kingdom armed forces. Work carried out at universities is generally not classified and publication is a matter for the universities concerned.

Ms. Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what are the figures for funding of research by his Department in British universities over each of the past five years.

Mr. Sainsbury: Expenditure over each of the last five years on research with British universities and further education establishments is as follows:

	£ million
[1]1984-85	10
[1]1985-86	13
[1]1986-87	15
[2]1987-88	15
[2]1988-89	16

[1] Actual.
[2] Estimated.

Ms. Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is the total budget of his Department for research.

Mr. Sainsbury: In 1988-89 we expect to spend a net total of £403 million on research.

Ms. Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is the total current annual funding for research by his Department in British universities.

Mr. Sainsbury: In 1988-89, we expect to spend £16 million on research with British universities and further education establishments.

Ms. Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what projects in British universities his Department currently is funding in the field of aerobiology; and what further projects he expects to fund.

Mr. Sainsbury: The Chemical Defence Establishment has no projects currently placed with universities or other higher education institutions in the field of aerobiology. There is one proposal being considered.

Chieftain Tank (Replacement)

Mr. Menzies Campbell: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if, in discussing bids tendered for the contract to replace the Chieftain tanks, he has considered the introduction of penalty clauses in relation to delivery dates and conformity with specification.

Mr. Sainsbury: All relevant factors are being considered.

Military Bases and Establishments (Scotland)

Mr. Menzies Campbell: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list all the Army bases and establishments in Scotland which are currently in use.

Mr. Freeman: The Army bases and establishments in Scotland which are currently in use are as follows:

REGULAR ARMY BASES/ESTABLISHMENTS
Location
Craigiehall Edinburgh
The Castle Edinburgh
Highland House Perth
Benbecula Hebrides
Kentigern House Glasgow
Livingston West Lothian
NATO FSS Balado Bridge, Kinross
Buchan Grampian
Collarfirth Hill Shetland
Mormond Hill Shetland
Mossy Hill Shetland
Saxa Vord Shetland
Fort George Inverness
Redford Edinburgh
Sauchiehall Street Glasgow
Balhousie Castle Perth
St. Lukes Aberdeen
Stirling Castle
Rhu Dunbartonshire
Strathearn Road Edinburgh
Forthside Stirling
AGIOS Union Street Aberdeen
Bank Street Dundee
Rutland Square Edinburgh
Queen Street Glasgow
Bridge Street Inverness
Garelochhead Dunbartonshire
Barry Buddon Angus
Cameron Barracks Inverness
Cultybraggan Perthshire
Drip Bridge Stirling
Inchterf Glasgow
Kirkcudbright
JSMTC Bases Ballachulish
Kingussie
Tulloch
Dundonnel
QVS Dunblane

TA BASES/ESTABLISHMENTS
Principal Locations
Don Street Aberdeen
Prince Charles Barracks Aberdeen
Gordon Barracks Aberdeen
Montrose Road Arbroath
Commerce Street Brechin
Main Street Brora
Glencryan Road Cumbernauld
Yeomanry House Cupar
Ferry Road Dingwall
Latta Street Dumbarton
Duckburn Park Dunblane
Perth Road Dundee
Oliver Barracks Dundee
Mid Craigie Road Dundee
Park Wynd Dundee
Elgin Street Dunfermline
Queen Street Dunoon
Cooper Park Elgin
Brechin Road Forfar
Belford Road Fort William
Baltimore Road Glenrothes
Central Avenue Grangemouth
Lassen House Invergowrie
Gordonville Road Inverness
Union Street Keith
RAF Kinloss Kinloss
Hunter Street Kirkcaldy
Weyland Park Kirkwall
High Street Laurencekirk
Fort Charlotte Lerwick
RAF Leuchars Leuchars
North Street Leven
RAF Lossiemouth Lossiemouth
Broomfield Road Montrose
Queens Barracks Perth

Catto Drive Peterhead
City Road St. Andrews
Forthside Stirling
Meadowforth Stirling
Church Street Stornaway
Princes Street Thurso
Dempster Street Wick
Yeomanry House Ayr
Torpichan Street Bathgate
Quarry Street Coatbridge
Nunfield House Dumfries
Whitemoss East Kilbride
Dalmeny Street Edinburgh
Forrest Hill Edinburgh
Redhall View Edinburgh
Chesser Crescent Edinburgh
East Claremont Street Edinburgh
Colinton Road Edinburgh
Alnwickhill Edinburgh
Gilmore Place Edinburgh
McDonald Road Edinburgh
Great King Street Edinburgh
Paton Street Galashiels
Crow Road Glasgow
Houldsworth Street Glasgow
Yorkhill Parade Glasgow
Jardine Street Glasgow
Walcheren Barracks Glasgow
Pearson Hall Glasgow
Eastvale Place Glasgow
Carmunock Road Glasgow
Cameronian House Hamilton
Union Street Hawick
Dreghorn Irvine
Grange Road Livingstone
Muir Street Motherwell
Hight Street Paisley
Eastfield Penicuik
Highholm Street Port Glasgow
Glasgow Road Rutherglen
Belleview Road Stranraer
Portland Street Troon

Mr. Menzies Campbell: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list all the Royal Air Force bases and establishments in Scotland which are currently in use.

Mr. Freeman: The Royal Air Force bases and establishments in Scotland which are currently in use are as follows:

Operational Airfields
RAF Leuchars
RAF Lossiemouth
RAF Kinloss

Other RAF Establishments
RAF Benbecula
RAF Buchan
RAF Machrihanish[1]
RAF Pitreavie Castle
RAF Prestwick
RAF Rosehearty
RAF Saxa Vord
RAF Stornoway
RAF Tain
RAF Turnhouse

United States Contingency Wartime Hospitals[2]
RAF Arbroath
RAF Kirknewton
RAF Lanark

United States Communications Facilities[2]
Aberdeen
RAF Edzell
RAF Inverbervie
RAF Kinnabeer
Latheron
Fort Murkle
RAF Thurso

[1] The Royal Air Force is the major user, with United States Forces facilities on the Station.
[2] Facilities made available to the United States Forces, and under the command of the Royal Air Force.

Mr. Menzies Campbell: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list all the Royal Navy shore-based establishments in Scotland which are currently in use.

Mr. Freeman: Royal Navy and Royal Marine establishments in Scotland are as follows:

	Establishment
Aberdeen	University Royal Navy Unit
Aberdeen	Royal Navy/Royal Marines Careers Office
Aberdeen	Royal Navy Auxiliary Service HQ
Arbroath	Royal Marines Base Condor
Ayr	RN Air Station (HMS Gannet)
Campbeltown	NATO POL Depot
Cape Wrath	Naval Bombardment Range
Coulport	Royal Navy Armament Depot
Crimond (Peterhead)	Wireless Telegraphy Station
Crombie	Royal Navy Armament Depot
Dundee	Royal Navy Reserve HQ
Edinburgh	Royal Navy Stores Depot
Edinburgh	Joint Maritime Operations Training School
Edinburgh	Royal Navy Reserve Centre
Edinburgh	Royal Navy/Royal Marines Careers Office
Elgin	Royal Navy Auxiliary Service HQ
Fairlie	NATO Salvage Depot
Faslane	Clyde Submarine Base
Garelochhead	Royal Navy Oil Fuel Depot
Glasgow	Royal Navy Reserve Centre
Glasgow	Royal Navy/Royal Marines Careers Office
Glasgow	Royal Marine Reserve
Glen Douglas	NATO Armament Depot
Greenock	Royal Navy Reserve Centre
Greenock	Clyde Marine Services Base
Invergordon	Her Majesty's Oil Fuel Depot
Inverness	Royal Navy/Royal Marines Careers Office
Inverness	Royal Navy Auxiliary Service HQ
Kyle of Lochalsh	Regional Naval Officer
Loch Ewe	Royal Navy Depot
Loch Ewe	NATO POL Depot
Loch Striven	NATO POL Depot
Lathalmond (Fife)	Royal Navy Stores Depot
Orkney	Royal Navy Auxiliary Service HQ
Perth	Royal Navy Aircraft Workshop
Rosneath	Royal Navy Degaussing Range
Rosyth	Royal Navy/Royal Marines Regional Careers Office
Rosyth	Naval Maritime HQ
Rosyth	Her Majesty's Naval Base
Shetland	Royal Navy Auxiliary Service HQ
Stranraer	Royal Navy Auxiliary Service HQ
Strathclyde	University Royal Navy Unit
Thurso	Royal Navy Auxiliary Service HQ
Thurso	Nuclear Reactor Training Establishment (HMS Vulcan)

Procurement

Mr. Menzies Campbell: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what percentage of expenditure incurred by the procurement division of his Department is spent within Scotland.

Mr. Sainsbury: I refer the hon. and learned Member to the answer that I gave to the hon. Member for Meriomnydd Nant Conwy (Dr. Thomas) on 18 April at column *334*. However it should be noted that this information is based on the billing addition of the main contractors and some or all of the work might be carried out by the companies subsidiaries and subcontractors in another region.

Expenditure

Mr. Menzies Campbell: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what percentage of defence expenditure is currently being incurred within Scotland; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Freeman: Defence expenditure is not accounted for on a regional basis.

Lance Missile (Warhead)

Ms. Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if any decision has been taken by the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation to deploy a new warhead for the Lance missile.

Mr. Freeman: The possible deployment of a follow-on to Lance is one of the matters under consideration by NATO as part of its current review of theatre nuclear forces; no decisions have been taken.

HEALTH

Competitive Tendering

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will list all contracts for domestic services let by competitive tendering to outside operators within each of the regional health authorities in England and Wales, together with their annual costs, for the period 1 October 1985 to 30 September 1988, and the cost of provision for the same services in each case in the last year before competitive tendering was introduced.

Mr. Mellor: We do not hold information centrally in the form requested. From 1 October 1985 to 30 September 1988 some 100 contracts for domestic services were awarded to outside contractors. Estimated annual net savings against previous costs, total around £12 million.

Information about Wales is a matter for my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales.

Rights of the Child Convention

Mr. Dickens: To ask the Secretary of State for Health whether he will make it his policy to implement recommendations of the forthcoming United Nations convention on the rights of the child in so far as they relate to his responsibilities.

Mr. Mellor: A working group, on which the United Kingdom is represented, began the second reading of the draft convention in Geneva on 28 November.

The draft covers a range of issues of interest to several Government Departments. The United Kingdom has played a leading part in discussions on the drafting of the convention and we hope to be in a position to ratify its recommendations on completion.

Civil Defence

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will place in the Library a copy of the joint DHSS/MOD planning group guidance to regional health authorities on the reception and allocation arrangements for armed forces' casualties to the National Health Service in war.

Mrs. Currie: I refer the hon. Member to my reply to him on 19 April at column *375*. The answer is still no.

Retford Hospital

Mr. Alexander: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will direct Trent regional health authority not to sanction the sale of land adjoining Retford hospital in the light of the terms of the conveyance dated 26 November 1928 which required the purchasers and their successors in title to hold, use and enjoy the same so long as may be desirable for the benefit of the inhabitants of the Retford and District hospital.

Mrs. Currie: No. It would be inappropriate to issue such a direction. The district health authority's legal advisers have examined the deeds of conveyance. Their advice is that the deeds do not contain any restriction preventing the sale of the land but they are complex and a search is being made by the Land Registry in order to resolve any doubt.

The proceeds from the sale of this surplus land will be used to maintain and improve the delivery of health care in Bassetlaw and the sale proceeds will bring significant benefit to the Retford community.

Residential Care

Rev. Martin Smyth: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what response he has had from regional and district health authorities to circular HC(88)43; and if he will make a statement about his efforts to promote co-operation between authorities and organisations representing those in residential care.

Mrs. Currie: HC(88)43 entitled "Health Services Development—Resource assumptions and planning guidelines" provides health authorities with guidelines for their plans for 1989-90. Regional health authorities' proposals for that year are not due to arrive at the Department until February 1989. We have therefore had no substantive response from health authorities yet. The circular asks health authorities, in planning the care of people with mental handicaps, mental illness, physical or sensory disabilities, and the care of elderly people, to take the views of consumers and the voluntary organisations which represent them into account. Following Lady Wagner's report (Residential Care—A Positive Choice) we are considering ways of making residential care more responsive to consumer choice.

Health Authorities

Mr. James Lamond: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will list National Health Service capital expenditure projects costing more than £1 million which have been completed in the Oldham district health authority during the last 14 years and those projected in the next five years.

Mrs. Currie: We do not hold this information on small-scale developments centrally. The hon. Member may wish to pursue his inquiries with Mr. R. B. Martin QC, chairman of North Western regional health authority.

Ophthalmology

Mr. James Lamond: To ask the Secretary of State for Health whether he has any information concerning the

average waiting list times and numbers of patients currently on the waiting lists for ophthalmological procedures in *(a)* the Oldham health authority, *(b)* the health authorities covering the Greater Manchester area and *(c)* on average in England and Wales.

Mr. Mellor: The available information is given in the table. Questions about Wales are a matter for my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales.

Ophthalmology Departments, NHS hospitals, England

	Number of patients[1] on in-patient waiting list at 31 March 1988	*Median waiting time of patients treated[2] during quarter ending 31 March 1988*
Oldham DHA	712	20 weeks
Greater Manchester area[3]	5,772	Not available
Average for the 152 DHAs in England which provide in-patient treatment	420 approx.	11 weeks

[1]On a comparable basis with previous statistics.
[2]In-patients and day cases.
[3]Aggregate of 12 DHAs.

General Medical Council

Mr. Ashley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will set up an independent committee to investigate the way in which the General Medical Council deals with complaints against doctors and to make recommendations for the future; and if he will include on the committee representatives from his own Department, the Ombudsman's office, the Lord Chancellor's office, the Association of Community Health Councils, the Patients Association and the Consumers' Association.

Mr. Mellor: The GMC is an independent statutory body. In 1987 it established a working party to review the procedures of the council in relation to disciplinary cases in which it is alleged that a doctor has seriously neglected or disregarded his professional responsibilities to patients. The GMC sought evidence from organisations representing patients and the health professions.

We have no plan to set up a separate independent committee.

Mr. Ashley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is the current membership of the General Medical Council; how many members are *(a)* elected doctors and *(b)* lay people; and if he will take steps to increase the number of lay people on the General Medical Council so that there is no majority of elected doctors.

Mr. Mellor: The GMC has 50 medically qualified elected members and 13 nominated members of which 11 are lay members. In addition there are 34 appointed members who are medically qualified.

The Medical Act 1983 provided that there should be a majority of elected members over other members. We have no plans to change the legislation.

Mr. Ashley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will take steps to require the General Medical Council to deal with all complaints referred to it rather than rely on its present policy of first requiring a National Health Service investigation that establishes that there is a serious case.

Mr. Mellor: No. Under the provisions of the Medical Act 1983 the GMC is empowered to consider and determine cases of serious professional misconduct in whatever way it considers appropriate. I understand that the GMC has no general policy of referring complaints to the relevant NHS authority but that each case is looked at on its merits. However, where appropriate the council will advise complainants if a matter appears suitable for investigation by the NHS.

Mr. Ashley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what information about medical complaints made to the General Medical Council regarding doctors working in *(a)* private medicine, *(b)* the National Health Service, *(c)* the prison medical service, *(d)* the forces medical service, is routinely passed on to his Department; in the last year for which figures are available, how many such complaints were received by the General Medical Council; and how many were rejected by (i) General Medical Council staff, (ii) the preliminary screener, (iii) the preliminary proceedings committee, (iv) the professional conduct or health committees.

Mr. Mellor: Information at this level of detail is not routinely passed to the Department. The council publishes a summary of information in its annual report, copies of which are in the Library.

Mr. Ashley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will require the General Medical Council to adopt identical procedures for handling all the medical complaints it receives, regardless of whether they concern doctors operating in the National Health Service, in private medicine or in the prison or forces medical services.

Mr. Mellor: I understand that the General Medical Council adopts identical procedures in respect of all registered doctors.

Mr. Ashley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will take steps to ensure that the General Medical Council involves lay people in every stage of its disciplinary procedures.

Mr. Mellor: It is for the General Medical Council to determine its procedures, but there are lay members on each General Medical Council committee which considers cases in which a question of serious professional misconduct arises.

Mr. Ashley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will take steps to ensure that all complainants to the General Medical Council are kept fully informed of any action that is taken.

Mr. Mellor: I understand that the General Medical Council routinely informs complainants of the action taken to deal with their complaint.

Mr. Ashley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will take steps to ensure that transcripts are made of all hearings before the professional conduct committee of the General Medical Council, and that these are made available to all interested parties at reasonable cost.

Mr. Mellor: The GMC is required to arrange that a shorthand writer is appointed to take notes of hearings before the professional conduct committee. The solicitor to the council is required to provide on request a transcript of those parts of the proceedings at which the parties are entitled to be present. The charges levied for such transcripts are a matter for the GMC.

Mr. Ashley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will take steps to ensure that the General Medical Council treats the falsification of a patient's notes as a matter of serious misconduct.

Mr. Mellor: The 1987 annual report of the GMC refers to a statement approved by the council on this matter. The council considers deliberate falsification of case notes to be unethical and a doctor so doing is liable to disciplinary proceedings if reported to the council.

Mr. Ashley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many doctors with qualifications obtained only from other European Economic Community countries have been registered by the General Medical Council; what proportion this is of all registered doctors; and, in the past five years, what has been the rate of change of applications for registration from European Economic Community trained doctors.

Mr. Mellor: We have figures only for the period June 1976 to December 1987 in which the GMC registered 3,301 doctors who obtained their qualifications in other EC states. We do not have information on how many have taken up practice or remained on the register and this figure cannot be directly compared with the total of 136,959 doctors registered.

The figures for EC doctors registered in the past five years and the rates of change are given in the table.

	Registrations	[1]*per cent.*
1983	325	+ 40
1984	300	− 8
1985	332	+ 11
1986	443	+ 33
1987	995	+125

[1] Increase/decrease on previous year.

Mr. Ashley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many doctors with qualifications obtained only from countries outside the European Economic Community have been registered by the General Medical Council; what proportion this is of all registered doctors; and, in the past five years, what has been the rate of change of applications for registration from non-European Economic Community trained doctors.

Mr. Mellor: I regret that we do not have information on the total number of doctors on the medical register who qualified outside the European Community. Since 1980 a total of 21,596 such doctors have been registered. We do not have information on how many took up practice or remained on the register and this figure cannot be directly compared with the total of 136,959 doctors registered at the end of 1987.

The number of overseas doctors registered in the last five years and the rates of change are given in the table.

Year	*Registrations*	*Percentage*[1]
1983	1,996	−11
1984	2,052	+3
1985	1,991	−3
1986	1,955	−2
1987	2,151	+10

[1] Increase/decrease on previous year.

Mr. Ashley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what provision there is for the General Medical Council or any other body to ensure that all doctors trained in other parts of the European Economic Community or in non-European Economic Community countries meet standards of professional training equivalent to those laid down by the royal colleges.

Mr. Mellor: Under the terms of the Medical Act 1983 the General Medical Council accepts for registration the primary qualifications laid down in EC directives for recognition within member states. The Act also specifies that doctors from non-EC countries must have qualifications which the council can accept as equivalent to those required for United Kingdom registration. The General Medical Council also has a general function to assess which postgraduate EC qualifications are equivalent to United Kingdom counterparts. There are no equivalent formal provisions for doctors who have obtained postgraduate qualifications in non EC-countries, but the medical royal colleges are considering ways of assessing the post graduate qualifications of non-EC doctors applying under their sponsorship schemes.

Mr. Ashley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health in the past five years, whether the General Medical Council has provided him with information regarding the cases that have come before their professional conduct committees; and whether any of these originated from an individual's complaint.

Mr. Mellor: The GMC routinely notifies the Department of those cases heard by the professional conduct committee which result in a sanction affecting the doctors registration.

The minutes of the professional conduct committee are published by the GMC and indicate whether a case originates from an individual complaint.

Doctors

Mr. Ashley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what procedures there are to ensure that practising doctors keep abreast with advances in medical knowledge; and to what extent these are controlled by his Department.

Mr. Mellor: Every registered medical practitioner is responsible for keeping up to date with medical knowledge appropriate to his or her chosen specialty. We allocate funds for the provision of courses and other educational activities and for the expenses of attending such activities. The content of educational activities is largely determined by the profession itself.

As the White Paper "Promoting Better Health" states (paragraph 3.48), we propose to introduce a new postgraduate education allowance payable to family doctors who maintain regular programmes of education and training throughout their careers.

Tonometry and Perimetry

Mr. Ashley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he proposes to discuss tonometry and perimetry with the professional organisations.

Mr. Mellor: We are seeking the views of the professional bodies on the duties to be placed on sight testers as part of our consultations on implementing the optical provisions of the Health and Medicines Act. We shall consider any proposals they may make for conducting an examination of the eye to detect injury, disease or abnormality.

Glaucoma

Mr. Ashley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if, in addition to the arrangements he is making for blood relatives of those who have glaucoma to be identified and advised to have an eye test, he will provide for these tests to be free.

Mrs. Currie: Yes, the proposals on these arrangements which have been issued for consultation envisage that identified close relatives of those with glaucoma would be given a free eyesight test.

Mr. Ashley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he anticipates any increase or decrease in the numbers of people suffering from glaucoma in the next five years; and which age groups will be most affected.

Mrs. Currie: The prevalence of glaucoma increases with age. Due to an increasingly aging population it is likely that the numbers of people suffering from glaucoma will increase in the next five years. The age group most affected will be those over 60.

Mr. Ashley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is his estimate of the number of people who go blind from glaucoma as a result of failure to have the disease detected at an early stage.

Mrs. Currie: The figures giving the number of registrations due to blindness caused by glaucoma are collated only every 10 years.

In the year ending 31 March 1981, the latest date for which figures are available, there were 1,149 new blind registrations as a result of glaucoma. We do not have information on how many of these resulted from failure to detect the disease at an early stage. However, people with a close relative who has glaucoma who are themselves over the age of 40 should ensure that they have a regular eye check.

Mr. Ashley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what proportion of new cases of glaucoma are detected by optometrists or ophthalmic medical practitioners.

Mrs. Currie: We do not hold this information centrally.

Mr. Ashley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) how many new cases of glaucoma are detected each year on average;

(2) how many people suffer from glaucoma; and how many of them are being medically treated.

Mrs. Currie: I regret that we do not hold information centrally on the number of people suffering from glaucoma, or on the numbers detected each year on average.

The estimated total number of in-patient admissions treated in National Health Service hospitals in England for glaucoma in 1985, the latest year for which data are held centrally, was 13,510.

Sight Tests

Mr. Ashley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is his estimate of the effect of charges for sight tests on the numbers of people seeking these tests.

Mr. Mellor: The free NHS sight test will continue to be available to nearly 40 per cent. of the population, including those less well off and competition in the optical market should keep any private fees at modest levels. Opticians will determine the level of any fees for those not entitled to an NHS sight test. We believe that people will continue to have periodic sight tests as at present.

Mr. Ashley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many eye sight tests are carried out each year under the National Health Service.

Mr. Mellor: I refer the hon. Member to my reply to the hon. Member for Romsey and Waterside (Mr. Colvin) on 14 November 1988 at column *476* which lists the number of sight tests in the years 1978 to 1987.

Blindness

Mr. Ashley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is the most common cause of blindness in Britain.

Mr. Mellor: The most common cause of registered blindness in England at all ages is degeneration of the macula and posterior pole. For children up to 15 years of age the most common cause is congenital abnormalities of the eye, and for the 16 to 64 group it is diabetic retinopathy.

Negligence Claims

Mr. McCrindle: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he has any plans to review the system for dealing with negligence claims; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Mellor: We have no current plans to review the system for dealing with negligence claims. Negligence is determined in the courts. The civil justice review has examined court procedures. Its recommendations to speed up and to reduce the costs of litigation are under consideration.

Nurses

Mr. Fearn To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will publish a list showing how nurses and midwives were regraded in each district health authority in the Merseyside region and the guidelines used in this regrading exercise; and if he will specify *(a)* the amount of finance allocated to Southport and Formby health authority and the national average sum allocated to health authorities and *(b)* the grades awarded to Southport and Formby health authority and those awarded nationally.

Mr. Mellor: I refer the hon. Member to my replies to my hon. Friend the Member for Staffordshire, Moorlands (Mr. Knox) on 28 November 1988 and to the hon. Member for Warrington, North (Mr. Hoyle) on 2 December 1988.

Ms. Harman: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is the number of nurses employed within each regional health authority.

Mr. Mellor: The overall numbers of nursing and midwifery staff (including agency staff) in each regional health authority at 30 September 1987 are given in the table.

Nursing and midwifery staff (including agency staff[1]) England 30 September 1987

Regional health authority	*Wholetime equivalent[2]*
England	404,040
Northern	27,540
Yorkshire	30,390
Trent	37,970
East Anglian	15,980
North West Thames	27,790
North East Thames	34,320
South East Thames	30,780
South West Thames	23,930
Wessex	23,160
Oxford	17,180
South Western	27,430
West Midlands	43,180
Mersey	22,020
North Western	37,250
London Post Graduate Special Health Authorities	5,140

Source: Department of Health Annual Census of NHS Non-Medical Manpower.

[1] Includes all qualified registered and enrolled nurses, midwives, learners and unqualified nursing staff.

[2] Figures are independently rounded to nearest ten (10) wholetime equivalents.

Ms. Harman: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what instructions have been issued by him to members of employing authorities who formally hear the appeals from nurses arising from the regrading exercise.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: None, except that appeals should not be heard from staff who are not working normally so long as they continue their industrial action.

Ms. Harman: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) if he will specify for each region how many nurses have registered a formal appeal within the regional health authority since June:

(2) if he will specify for each of the last three years how many nurses lodged formal appeals within each region.

Mr. Mellor: We do not hold this information centrally.

Mr. Bernie Grant: To ask the Secretary of State for Health whether his Department is monitoring the regrading exercise for nurses, on the basis of racial or ethnic origins; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Mellor: No.

Mr. Bernie Grant: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many complaints of racism on the reallocation of the grades for nurses his Department has received; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Mellor: None.

Ms. Harman: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will make it his policy to meet staff side representatives to discuss the negotiations over nurses and midwives and to accept their requests for binding arbitration.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: I am meeting representatives of the Royal College of Nursing today and representatives of the Royal College of Midwives on 7 December. I am not prepared to meet representatives of those trades unions whose members are taking part in industrial action over the current regrading exercise while that industrial action continues.

I should also make it clear that negotiations over the terms and conditions of nurses' and midwives' employment are a matter for the relevant Whitley council. I cannot take over the role of the Whitley council management side and direct meetings between me and trade union leaders should not be seen as a substitute for Whitley council discussions. In any event, I see no scope for arbitration over the details of a regrading exercise which has now been satisfactorily completed after years of negotiation with trades unions which wanted a new grading structure.

HIV-2

Mr. Bermingham: To ask the Secretary of State for Health when it is expected that a permanent scheme for testing for the presence of HIV-2 antibodies in blood samples will be introduced.

Mr. Mellor: I refer the hon. Member to my reply to him on 2 December.

Cook-chill Catering

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) what charge the public health laboratory service laboratory at Seacroft, Leeds, is proposing to make to the Wakefield health authority for monitoring its cook-chill catering;

(2) if he will list those members of staff of the Leeds public health laboratory service who advised the Yorkshire regional health authority on the safety of cook-chill catering.

Mrs. Currie: We do not hold the information requested. I suggest that the hon. Member writes to the chairman of the public health laboratory service board.

Listeria Monocytogenes (Conference)

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if any representative of Her Majesty's Government or the public health laboratory service attended the major conference on listeria monocytogenes at Rohnert Park, California, between 2 and 5 October.

Mrs. Currie: No. However, representatives have attended other relevant international conferences.

Committee on Safety of Medicines

Mr. Wareing: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many of the reports of suspected adverse reactions received by the Committee on Safety of Medicines during 1986 and 1987 were submitted by pharmaceutical companies.

Mr. Mellor: In 1986 around 1,700 and in 1987, 1,778.

Mr. Wareing: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will give a breakdown of the £460,000 spent by the Committee on Safety of Medicines during 1987-88.

Mr. Mellor: The expenditure was as follows:

	£
Members' fees and expenses	95,000
Communications with doctors: "Current Problems"	85,000

	£
Viewdata	34,000
Follow-up of yellow cards	15,000
Other means	9,000
Other administrative expenses	25,000
Contingency Reserve—not spent	197,000
	460,000

Note: £29,000 of the reserve originally earmarked for the production costs of a video, "Help Make Medicines Safer"—to encourage doctors to report adverse reactions—was met from another DHSS budget. Reserves were also held in case an urgent safety warning to doctors had been needed.

Mr. Wareing: To ask the Secretary of State for Health on which dates during 1986 and 1987 the Committee on Safety of Medicines met; and how many members were present on each occasion.

Mr. Mellor: The committee met on the following dates in 1986 and 1987.

Date	[1] *Members present*
1986	
30 January	20 (3)
27 February	15 (1)
26 March	17 (2)
30 April	16
29-30 May	20 (2)
26 June	16
24 July	19 (4)
25-26 September	18 (3)
23 October	15
20 November	16
18 December	17 (1)
1987	
29 January	18
26-27 February	23 (4)
26 March	20
30 April	17
27-28 May	23 (3)
25 June	18
23 July	17
24 September	17 (2)
29-30 October	19 (2)
26 November	20
17 December	20

[1] For all or part of proceedings.
Note: The number in brackets is the number of those present who were appointed as temporary members for the meeting in question.

Mr. Wareing: To ask the Secretary of State for Health who is the present chairman of the Committee on Safety of Medicines; who is responsible for the appointment; what is the term of office of the chairman; and if it is renewable.

Mr. Mellor: Professor William Asscher BSc, MD, FRCP, dean of St. George's hospital medical school, London. The appointment was made by Health Ministers for a renewable period of three years which expires on 31 December 1989.

Mr. Wareing: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many of the current members of the Committee on Safety of Medicines are women; whether he has any plans to increase the number of women members; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Mellor: One. Officials have invited a number of medical, pharmaceutical and other bodies including the Medical Women's Federation, the Women into Public Life Campaign and the Women's National Commission, to make suggestions for membership appointments to the committee, as well as to the Medicines Commission, Committee on Review of Medicines and Committee on Dental and Surgical Materials, to serve from January 1990. We will appoint the members we consider best qualified to carry out the committee's statutory functions. The letter inviting names for nomination includes the following:

"Ministers would be pleased to increase the proportion of women members on these bodies, so women with appropriate expertise and experience would be particularly welcome."

A copy of the letter has been placed in the Library.

Mr. Wareing: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will provide an attendance record for each of the members of the Committee on Safety of Medicines during 1986 and 1987.

Mr. Mellor: The names of the members of the Committee on Safety of Medicines in 1986 and 1987 (a new term of appointment began on 1 January 1987) and their attendance record are given in the table.

Name of Member	*Meetings Attended*	*Possible Attendance*
Professor A. W. Asscher	21	22
Professor T. G. Booth	8	[2]11
Professor A. M. Breckenridge	21	22
Professor C. M. Castleden	7	[1]11
Professor J. G. Collee	11	[2]11
Mr. W. M. Darling	9	[1]11
Professor J. W. Dundee	9	[1]11
Professor P. H. Elworthy	22	22
Professor A. T. Florence	16	22
Professor Sir Abraham Goldberg	11	[1]11
Professor D. G. Grahame-Smith	10	[2]11
Professor M. W. Greaves	16	22
Dr. J. M. Holt	10	[1]11
Professor David Hull	7	[1]11
Professor H. S. Jacobs	16	22
Dr. W. A. Jerrett	11	[2]11
Professor M. J. S. Langman	9	[3]12
Professor D. H. Lawson	9	[2]11
Mr. F. E. Loeffler	11	[2]11
Dr. E. Mayne	10	[2]11
Professor J. O'D McGee	10	[2]11
Professor A. E. M. McLean	11	[3]12
Professor S. R. Meadow	10	[2]11
Dr. S. A. Montgomery	11	[2]11
Professor G. Nuki	10	[2]11
Dr. B. L. Pentecost	18	22
Professor M. D. Rawlins	19	22
Dr. J. W. G. Smith	6	[1]11
Professor M. P. Vessey	19	22
Dr. D. M. B. Ward	8	[1]11
Professor H. K. Weinbren	10	[1]11

[1] 1986 only.
[2] 1987 only.
[3] Member in 1987; appointed for only one meeting in 1986.

Mr. Wareing: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he has any plans to increase the budget of the Committee on Safety of Medicines.

Mr. Mellor: Budget allocations for 1988-89 are still under consideration.

Tranquilliser Addiction

Mr. Wareing: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will introduce legislation to enable him to fund local groups formed to combat tranquilliser addiction.

Mr. Mellor: My right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State has powers under section 64 of the Health Services and Public Health Act 1968 to make grants to voluntary organisations. These grants are usually made to national organisations for their headquarters costs rather than to local bodies.

Health authorities also have powers to make grants to voluntary organisations. They are responsible for the development of services locally, which may include funding voluntary organisations. We have allocated £9·5 million in the current financial year to regional health authorities specifically for the development of services for those experiencing problems with drugs, including prescribed drugs such as tranquillisers.

Hypothermia

Mr. Nigel Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will give the estimated numbers of people dying from hypothermia and the number of other cold-related deaths for each year since 1980; and if he will outline the steps being taken by his Department to reduce the numbers of such deaths.

Mrs. Currie: The numbers of deaths where hypothermia is recorded on the death certificate, either as primary or secondary cause of death, for England and Wales, are as follows:

Year	*Number of Deaths*
1980	596
1981	685
1982	664
1983	538
1984	555
1985	827
1986	837
1987	[1]559
1988	[2]363

[1] Provisional.
[2] Provisional figure, to end of November.

Many causes of death are cold-related, in that the number of deaths from them increases in winter. However, hypothermia is the only cause that can be directly identified as a cold-related disease from mortality statistics.

We have again this winter launched the "Keep Warm Keep Well" campaign, in co-operation with Age Concern, Help the Aged and Neighbourhood Energy Action to offer advice on sensible self-help and the help available from statutory and voluntary services. I have sent a copy of the campaign booklet to the hon. Member and placed copies in the Library. Further copies can be obtained by telephoning the winter warmth helpline on 0800 289404.

Midwives

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will meet representatives of midwives working in the Merseyside regional health authority's area to discuss their grievances concerning regrading.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: I shall be meeting national representatives of the Royal College of Midwives, including the president and the general secretary, on Wednesday 7 December. I cannot intervene directly in individual grievances which can be resolved by employing authorities following the agreed appeal process. I suspect that much of the sense of grievance felt by some midwives in Merseyside is caused by misunderstanding of the basis of the grading exercise which the Royal College of Midwives and other trades unions agreed to.

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for Health whether any account was taken of length of service or clinical experience when regrading midwives by the Mersey regional health authority.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: The Health Service trades unions and management agreed that the grading of midwifery posts should be determined on the basis of the duties and responsibilities of postholders at 1 April 1988. The grading definitions reflect the different levels of clinical experience and responsibility called for in different posts and the grades allocated to midwives therefore take account of their clinical skills. Because the agreement entered into by the Royal College of Midwives and the other parties specified that posts and not individuals were being graded, length of service was not taken into account in determining grading.

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many deliveries were carried out by midwives in each of the last five years; and what percentage this is of the total number of deliveries.

Mr. Mellor: We do not hold this information centrally.

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what account is taken when regrading midwives of the training and completion of a certificate in midwifery by practitioners.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: All holders of midwifery posts are required to possess the qualification of registered midwife (RM) and this is the only registrable qualification which is needed to practise as a midwife. Possession of this qualification entitles the holder of a midwifery post to be placed at least as grade D in the new grading structure —agreed by Health Service trade unions and management.

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many years' experience a midwife needs before she achieves grade G.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: Health Service trades unions and management have agreed that grading should be determined by the duties and responsibilities of the post held by the individual not by the number of years he or she may have spent in midwifery practice. Therefore the grading definitions do not prescribe periods of experience.

Organ Transplants

Sir Michael McNair-Wilson: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what are the latest figures for organ transplants in the United Kingdom, organ by organ; and what has been the variation in availability of organs over the past five years.

Mrs. Currie: The latest figures provided by the United Kingdom Transplant Service of organ transplants in the United Kingdom from 1 January 1988 to 25 November 1988 are as follows:

	Organs
Kidneys	1,500
Hearts	255
Heart/Lung	93

	Organs
Lungs	16
Livers	219
Corneas	[1]1,336

[1] Estimated figure.

It is not possible to give precise figures for the variation in availability of organs. However, the number of kidney transplants roughly reflect the variation in donor organ availability. The full-year figures for kidney transplants for the last five years were:

Year	*Kidneys*
1983	1,144
1984	1,443
1985	1,336
1986	1,493
1987	1,485

From January 1989, health authorities will be asked to audit all deaths in intensive care in order to assess the number of potential organ donors.

Foreign Patients (Treatment)

Mr. Bernie Grant: To ask the Secretary of State for Health, pursuant to his answer to the hon. Member for Tottenham, *Official Report,* 30 November, which countries have arrangements which enable them to refer patients for free treatment in the United Kingdom under the National Health Service; what these arrangements are; and why these arrangements do not apply to British dependencies in the Caribbean.

Mr. Mellor: There are bilateral health agreements between the United Kingdom and 25 other signatories. Generally these provide only for immediately necessary treatment for conditions arising during the course of a visit. However, seven of these agreements allow for patients to be referred to the United Kingdom specifically for treatment free of charge. The grounds for allowing this vary:

for the Channel Islands, the Isle of Man, Malta and Gibraltar, the referral provision aims to achieve a balance of costs of providing health care to visitors on each side; similar considerations apply in the agreement with Yugoslavia;

for the USSR, the provision is to enable patients from both countries to benefit from certain highly specialised care;

for the Falkland Islands, the provision was made to take account of the particular difficulties faced by the islanders in obtaining specialist care following the conflict with Argentina.

We are not aware of similar considerations applying in the case of residents of the British territories in the Caribbean.

Mental Illness

Mr. Goodlad: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will list by health regions the mental hospitals which are scheduled to *(a)* open and *(b)* close in (i) the current and (ii) the next year.

Mrs. Currie *[holding answer 28 November]:* The table lists the mental illness hospitals which are, so far as we are currently aware, scheduled to open or close in (i) 1988-89 and (ii) 1989-90.

Regional Health Authority	*Open*	*Close*
Yorkshire	—	Broadgate (ii)
Trent	—	St. John's Lincoln (ii)
North-East Thames	East Ham Memorial (ii)	—
South Western	Glenside (i)	Horton Road (i)
West Midlands	—	Powick (i)
Oxford	Campbell (ii)	—

(i) 1988-89.
(ii) 1989-90.

CIVIL SERVICE

Agency System

56. **Mr. Rowe:** To ask the Minister for the Civil Service whether he can announce any further progress on the setting-up of the agency system.

Mr. Luce: Two agencies have been set up, about 30 more have been announced and more are in the pipeline. I shall be making a progress report to the House before too long.

Written Answers to Questions

Tuesday 6 December 1988

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Human Rights (China)

Mr. Mullin: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, pursuant to his answer to the hon. Member for Sunderland, South of 28 November, *Official Report*, column *108*, what cases of human rights in China were discussed with the Chinese Foreign Minister during his visit to the United Kingdom in March.

Mrs. Chalker: The question of human rights arose in the context of discussion on Tibet. Specific cases were not mentioned.

Health Services Review

Mr. Alfred Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what are the terms of reference of the desk review of health services in the dependent territories; when he expects it to be completed; and if the House will be informed of the action to be taken in consequence of the review.

Mr. Chris Patten: The terms of reference of the desk review of health services in the Caribbean dependent territories are:

1. Assemble existing information including the current health plans and any readily available related statistical information from each of the four territories, WHO/PAHO reports, and reports by ODA medical advisers during 1983 to 1988, and other relevant information from ODA files. ODA medical advisers will provide guidance on the material to be examined and will provide oral briefing on the situation in the territories;
2. Write a preliminary report covering
   a. the evidence on the state of health of the population establishing and ranking the main health problems which need to be addressed and their main causes (nutrition, sanitation, health care services, etc);
   b. the extent to which these health problems are being addressed by current policies and programmes of health services, public and environmental health, and nutrition;
   c. the costs of providing the health and environmental services identified under b. and assessing their cost effectiveness and value for money; examining how the provision of these services is financed and identifying implications for quantity and quality of services supplied and demanded and for other factors relevant to the study;
   d. recommendations for future health and environmental services, and measures to improve nutrition, which optimally address the main health problems identified under a. These recommendations should cover:
      (i) appropriate levels of health care and other services;
      (ii) division of services between those provided on island and those provided off island;
      (iii) sources of finance for services;
      (iv) the means of delivering health and other services;
      (v) levels of staffing and equipment for on island services taking account of financial, medical, physical, institutional and manpower constraints in a manner which makes optimum use of the available resources; and where relevant to identify options where choices can be made.
   e. recommendations for future ODA-funded assistance, with particular attention to manpower, training and advisory services; an analysis of alternatives and recommendations for the administration of ODA programmes with particular attention to professional monitoring and supervision to the extent that existing information so permits.
3. Identify the main gaps in information;
4. Prepare a work plan and timetable for gathering the missing information and completing the work required by i. to v., with attention to the order of priority between countries, specify the inputs required for this work from the main professional disciplines;
5. Prepare an outline for the final report, covering the main chapter and section headings with notes on what is to be covered by each.

This desk study was completed last August. It was the first step, preliminary to a field study, in each of the Caribbean dependencies, for which consultants are at present being engaged. Their report should be available by about next spring; I shall keep the right hon. Member informed.

Nigeria

Mr. Page: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement about financial relations with Nigeria.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: The Nigerian Government's efforts to overcome the country's economic difficulties have been severely affected for some time by the fall in the oil price and its heavy debt burden. Foreign exchange earnings have fallen sharply. This has made it increasingly hard for Nigeria to meet its commitments and to rebuild its economy.

Nigeria is now embarking on a series of important adjustment measures. It has reached agreement with the managing director of the IMF on a new standby arrangement and is negotiating for new loans from the World Bank.

It will be seeking a further restructuring of its official debt in the Paris Club, to supplement the agreement already being negotiated with the commercial banks.

In addition to this, it is clear that Nigeria will require further bilateral assistance in 1989. This will require a concerted effort on the part of the international financial community. I have therefore decided, in consultation with my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer, to offer a grant of US$100 million in 1989, on condition that the standby is approved and that other donors are prepared to make a substantial contribution.

Over two thirds of the cost of the United Kingdom share will come from the reserve and the balance from the existing agreed aid programme.

These arrangements demonstrate the strength of the United Kingdom's interest in the health of the Nigerian economy and our willingness to assist the Nigerian adjustment programme.

WALES

Elderly Initiative

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how much money has been allocated by his Department to the elderly initiative; and what projects have been financed by the elderly initiative in Wales, listing each project and the amount allocated thereto on a county basis.

Mr. Grist: £2,625,000 during the first two years. The projects funded so far, together with the amounts allocated to date, are:

	£
Clwyd	
Rhuddlan Elderly Mentally Ill Team	141,158
Special Project Workers: Community Care for Elderly People	22,500
Dyfed	
Integrated Care Relief Scheme, Llanelli	27,878
Care Cross Foundation Community House Project	39,740
Night Hospital for Elderly Mentally Ill	47,286
Gwent	
Bridges Community Centre Project	76,190
Practical Case Finding and Surveillance of Elderly People at Home	6,736
Demonstration model for the Discharge and Aftercare of Elderly Patients	22,165
Home from Home Short Term Fostering for the Elderly	35,250
The Way Home, Islwyn	9,300
Gwynedd	
Hybrid Domicilliary Care Worker	38,250
Mid Glamorgan	
Diabetic Liaison Nurse	9,000
Merthyr and Cynon Valley Community Services Elderly Support Team, Rhymney Valley	92,760
Social Care Worker Scheme for Elderly Mentally Infirm and their Carers, Ogwr	125,408
Powys	
Powys Initiative for the Care of the Elderly in Rural Wales	58,542
South Glamorgan	
Community Memory Project	73,468
Development Team for Elderly Mentally Infirm Services	58,275
Practical Case Finding and Surveillance of Elderly People at Home	9,446
Elderly Persons' Support Unit, Grand Avenue	113,988
Retired and Senior Volunteer Programme	15,262
Carers Information and Support Officer	15,695
Daybreak Homecare and Companion Service	35,048
Alzheimers Disease Society: Community Support Project	22,860
West Glamorgan	
Staying at Home Initiative	515,448
Good Care Campaign	20,948

Business Headquarters

Mr. Geraint Howells: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what steps he proposes to take to encourage the presence of business headquarters in Wales in advance of the single European market; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Walker: Since I became Secretary of State I have increased the Welsh Development Agency's provision by more than 50 per cent. so enabling WINvest to intensify its efforts in attracting new business, including headquarter operations, to Wales.

Health Authorities

Mr. Geraint Howells: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he has any plans to increase the funding allocations to the health authorities in Wales; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Grist: We will be making an announcement about the resources available to the NHS in Wales in 1989-90 very shortly. An announcement of the allocations to individual health authorities will be made early in the new year.

Free Food Scheme

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what percentage of foodstuffs distributed in the United Kingdom under the free food scheme is being made available to eligible applicants in Wales.

Mr. Peter Walker: Designated organisations based in Wales have been authorised to withdraw 176 tonnes of butter and 332 tonnes of beef from intervention stores in 1988. These amounts represent 7·15 per cent. and 18·74 per cent., respectively, of the total withdrawals authorised in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what steps he is taking to see that foodstuffs available free under the European Economic Community free food scheme are available to all eligible people in Wales.

Mr. Peter Walker: Produce is being distributed within the rules of the scheme to eligible recipients in Wales by the organisations designated to carry out the distribution. Given the voluntary nature of the scheme it is not possible to ensure that foodstuffs are available to all eligible people.

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will identify the distribution centres for free food in Wales; and how much of each product is being made available per centre.

Mr. Peter Walker: Local distribution arrangements are a matter for the designated organisations to determine within the rules of the scheme.

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list those voluntary organisations participating in the free food scheme.

Mr. Peter Walker: My right hon. Friend the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food announced to the House on 21 April that 127 organisations had been designated to distribute surplus produce to the most needy. A list of those organisations was placed in the Library on that day.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Bleaches

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster (1) whether he has plans to restrict the use of chlorine bleached pulp in disposable nappies;

(2) whether he has plans to restrict the use of coffee filters treated with dioxin producing bleaches.

Mr. Forth: I refer the hon. Member to the answer given by the Parliamentary Secretary to the Ministry of

Agriculture, Fisheries and Food on 28 November, at column 96. I understand that the quantities of dioxin which may occur in these products are very small. I will consider the matter further when the expert advice from the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food and the committee on toxicity at the Department of Health is available.

Manufacturing Industry

Mr. Andrew Smith: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what are the present and projected levels of investment in manufacturing industry; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Atkins: Investment in manufacturing industry, including leased assets, in the first three quarters of 1988 is provisionally estimated to have been £8,232 million in 1985 prices and seasonally adjusted. In his Autumn Statement, my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer forecast that the volume of manufacturing investment in 1988 would be 18 per cent. higher than in 1987 and would rise by a further 10 per cent. in 1989.

VAT

Mr. Heddle: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what assessments he has made as to the likely effect on *(a)* his Department's capital building programme and *(b)* the rent the Department will pay under occupational leases of implementation of the European Court of Justice's judgment on value added tax on non-domestic buildings.

Mr. Forth: Implementation of the European Court of Justice's judgment on VAT will have no effect on my Department's capital building programme since compensating adjustments have been made to the relevant expenditure provisions. At this stage, before landlords have decided whether to exercise their option to tax rents, it is not possible to offer meaningful estimates of the effects of the judgment on rental costs.

Society of British Aerospace Manufacturers

Mr. Ian Taylor: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster when he last met representatives of the Society of British Aerospace Manufacturers.

Mr. Atkins: I last met the president and representatives of the Society of British Aerospace Manufacturers in September 1988 during the Farnborough air show.

Elstree Film Studios

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what assurances he has *(a)* sought and *(b)* received in relation to the continued use of Elstree film studios for film production following the recent deal for the disposal of the studio properties.

Mr. Atkins: No such assurances have been sought or received. It is the Government's view that the future use of the site is a matter for the new owners to determine, subject to any consents which may be required from the planning authorities.

Design Initiative

Mr. Fisher: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster whether he will publish a table showing the design initiatives which have benefited from the design initiative and the amount of money committed to each initiative.

Mr. Forth: Reasons of commercial confidentiality preclude giving details of the assistance offered to individual companies. However, since 13 January 1988 over 700 assisted design consultancies have been completed, over 700 are in progress and about 600 are subject to agreement of terms of reference before proceeding. The average contribution made by the Department towards the cost of completed consultancies is currently £2,387.

Mr. Fisher: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster how many staff are employed on the design initiative.

Mr. Forth: Administration of the design initiative is contracted out to the Design Council. Within the Department, policy on and management of the design initiative forms part of the duties of five full-time staff. DTI regional office staff both help promote and receive applications for enterprise initiative consultancies, including the design initiative.

British Steel (Privatisation)

Mr. Fisher: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what has been the cost of advertising *(a)* in the press, *(b)* on television, *(c)* on radio, *(d)* on posters and *(e)* by other means in relation to the privatisation of British Steel.

Mr. Atkins: The marketing costs of the British Steel flotation will be reported in due course in the usual way together with the other costs of the flotation.

EC Research Council

Mr. Curry: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what progress was made at the meeting of the Research Council of European Community Ministers on 17 November, and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Newton: I represented Her Majesty's Government at the meeting of the Community's Council of Ministers (Research) in Brussels on 17 November.

The Council agreed common positions on three programmes within the overall provisions of the Community's 1987-91 framework programme for R and D:

ECLAIR, a programme covering agro-industrial technologies which is aimed at improving links between agriculture and industry with Community funding of 80 mecu (£53 million) over five years; SPES, a programme with Community funding of 6 mecu (£4 million) over four years, which is intended to promote European collaboration in economic science by improving the training, communications and mobility of economists within the Community and stimulate economics research networks at the European level; and the large facilities programme designed to facilitate wider access by European researchers to large-scale European scientific facilities.

The programme will provide Community funding of 30 mecu (£20 million) over four years for contributions to the operating costs of selected facilities, and, if necessary, to the costs of adaptations or enhancements needed to increase access together with expenditure incurred by visiting scientists.

The Council discussed a presidency paper on the technological gap between the developed and less developed regions of the Community. There was agreement that although Community R and D policy should take account of the need to strengthen the cohesion of the Community, the need for European industrial competitiveness and technical excellence should be the priority for EC R and D programmes.

The Council also received a Commission presentation on proposed Community involvement in European space development.

TRANSPORT

Motorway Maintenance

Mr. Greg Knight: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what steps he is currently taking effectively to monitor the way that maintenance repair work is carried out on motorways so as to avoid unnecessary inconvenience being caused to motorists.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: We avoid unnecessary inconvenience by the programming of essential maintenance work so as to minimise traffic disruption, by giving wide publicity to motorway lane closures, and by special measures such as lane rental schemes and mobile lane closures.

M69 (Roadworks)

Mr. Greg Knight: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what temporary road signs were erected prior to and including 5 November informing motorists approaching the M69 of the total closure of the south-west-bound carriageway on 5 November.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Temporary road signs were displayed on all approaches to the M69/M1 junction on 5 and 6 November advising motorists of the closure and to follow the diversion route indicated by a circle symbol. No signs were displayed prior to 5 November.

Mr. Greg Knight: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what advance warning or notice was given to motorists advising them of the intention to close the whole of the south-west-bound carriageway of the M69 on 5 November.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The Department issued a press notice on 1 November giving full details of the proposed closures between the M1 near Leicester and the A5 at Hinckley.

Mr. Greg Knight: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport why the policy of phasing motorway repair work was not followed on 5 November in respect of the south-west-bound carriageway of the M69 so that at least one lane was kept open to vehicular traffic.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The main works were being carried out on the two-lane section of the M69 near its junction with the M1. There was insufficient space to allow the safe passage of vehicles and provide a safe working environment for the workmen in accordance with the requirements of the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974. As the works were of short duration and there was a reasonable alternative route for the traffic volume involved, expensive contraflow traffic management could not be justified.

Mr. Greg Knight: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport why the whole of the south-west-bound carriageway of the M69 was closed on 5 November.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: It was closed to enable the removal and replacement of a cracked running surface close to the M1 junction. During the closure other routine maintenance works were carried out along the full length of the motorway between Leicester and Hinckley.

The resurfacing work required the removal and replacement of the wearing course to both traffic lanes close to the M1/M69 roundabout. Due to physical constraints it was not possible to use the hard shoulder as a running lane. The joint report by the Department of Transport and County Surveyors Society provides notes for guidance about the requirements of the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974 as they affect personnel required to undertake work on motorways and trunk roads (revised 1985). It requires that a safety zone is provided between the works and live traffic. On motorways this is normally 1·2 m wide.

On the two-lane section of the M69 it was not possible to carry out resurfacing works and provide a safety zone and therefore the decision was taken to close the motorway under a temporary traffic regulation order. The alternative of installing contraflow traffic management was not very practicable and would have been very expensive. Traffic flows on M69 are not as high as on other motorways, such as the M1, and therefore delays caused by diverting the traffic were not expected to be serious. The opportunity was taken to make the most of the closure by carrying out other works such as safety fence repairs, joint sealing, replacement of road studs and replacement of vehicle counting loops. Because there is limited access at junction 2 (A5070 at Hinckley) it was also necessary to close the section of motorway between junction 2 and junction 1 (A5 at Hinckley).

Manchester Airport (Singapore Flights)

Mr. Thurnham: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what representations he has received about the availability of adequate capacity for north-western travellers wishing to fly to Singapore and about being able to fly direct from Manchester airport; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: I have received a number of representations this year about the level of capacity being mounted on the route between Manchester and Singapore.

United Kingdom and Singapore aviation officials will be meeting early next year to review the possibilities for liberalising air services arrangements between our two countries. This will include arrangements on the Manchester-Singapore route.

M20

Mrs. Maureen Hicks: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport whether he plans to make an examination of the capacity of the M20 to the west of Ashford to determine if it has sufficient reserve capacity to accommodate future growth beyond the opening of the Channel tunnel in 1993.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: This will be done in the context of the current regular review of the national trunk road programme.

Mrs. Maureen Hicks: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what is the proposed starting date for the contracts to be placed late this year and in the spring of next year for the construction of the M20 between Hollingbourne and Ashford; and how long this will take.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The first contract is expected to start in January, the second about one month after the contract is let next spring. The contract periods are 27 and 24 months, respectively.

Rating Reform

Mr. Alan Williams: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a statement on the use of the driver and vehicle licensing centre facilities at Swansea for the preparation of Scottish poll tax forms; and if he will give details of what consultations were undertaken with the driver and vehicle licensing centre unions and of who provided the manpower to operate the machinery and to load and transport the forms.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The supplier of DVLC's paper handling equipment asked to use one of the machines for 10 days to process community charge forms. The request was agreed as the machine was not needed for DVLC work at the time. The forms were processed by company staff, so that there was no reason to consult the DVLC trade unions.

Maritime Law

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will seek to change maritime law to provide for adequate compensation to structures damaged by ships.

Mr. Portillo: Under an international convention agreed in 1976, which came into operation under United Kingdom law on 1 December 1986, shipowners can limit their liability in respect of damage caused by ships. The International Maritime Organisation is to review the limits in the 1976 convention, and as part of that review we will be pressing for a significant increase in the present limits. Parliament decided on the liability regime to be applied to pilots and pilotage authorities as recently as 1987 with the passage of the Pilotage Act 1987.

M4 (Barrier Replacement)

Mr. Simon Coombs: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what is the current progress on the programme of barrier replacement on the M4; and what information he has on the standard and quality of the original installations.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: In Wiltshire, the support posts for 10.6 km of safety barrier have already been replaced. A further 5.2 km is programmed for this financial year, and 3.4 km for next year. The remaining 26.8 km will be dealt with in subsequent years.

Inspections have shown the original safety fence nowhere to be below the standard current at the time it was installed.

Ports

Mr. Devlin: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what measures the Government intend to introduce to ensure fair competition between British and foreign ports in 1992.

Mr. Portillo: We are pursuing the need for open and fair financial relations between public authorities and port undertakings within the European Community. The completion of the single European market will not worsen the competitive position of our ports.

Railways (Deaths)

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list by year from 1979 to date, including the total so far this year, the number of deaths that have occurred on the railways in Yorkshire in *(a)* accidents, *(b)* suicides and *(c)* trespassing; and, of that total, how many were railway staff.

Mr. Portillo: Information on a county basis is not readily available.

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list by year from 1979 to date the number of deaths that occurred on the United Kingdom railways in *(a)* accidents, *(b)* suicides and *(c)* trespassing incidents; how many have occurred to date in 1988; of the above totals, how many were railway staff; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Portillo: The table gives the information requested in respect of railways in Great Britain. Details of accidents on Northern Ireland railways are not reported to the Department of Transport.

Deaths occurring on the railways of Great Britain—1979 to 1988:

	Accidents (Staff, included in total shown, in brackets)	*Suicides*	*Trespassers*
1979	107 (43)	180	134
1980	69 (32)	220	140
1981	76 (27)	222	147
1982	57 (27)	166	130
1983	69 (28)	212	146
1984	76 (25)	193	146
1985	74 (25)	168	150
1986	72 (16)	163	162
1987	104 (16)	173	144
1988	55 (16)	97	[1]185

[1] Some may transfer to the suicides category when a coroner's verdict is received.

M25 (Traffic Growth)

Mr. Speed: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list the steps he is taking, apart from the construction of a Dartford bridge crossing and the current widening of the western sector of the M25, to ensure that there is sufficient capacity on the M25 and other orbital roads around London to cater for expected traffic growth over the next decade.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The construction of the new Dartford-Thurrock bridge and the widening of the south-western sector of the M25 will relieve those sections of the motorway where congestion regularly occurs. A study into ways of widening the length between junctions 15 and 16 is under way.

Consultants are due to report on their review of the whole motorway early next year. Improvements to other London orbital routes are included in the national road programme.

A study is to begin shortly into orbital movements in the south-west quadrant of London.

Lancaster Canal

Mr. Jopling: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will estimate the current cost of restoring navigation to the northern stretch of the Lancaster canal between Tewitfield and Kendal by constructing the creeps in the M6 motorway bridges as referred to during the Second Reading debate of the British Waterways Bill on 22 February 1965, *Official Report*, volume 707, columns 106 to 134, together with any other necessary expenses.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Several million pounds in construction and traffic disruption costs.

Plutonium

Mr. Foulkes: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport (1) what consultations he has had with British Nuclear Fuels Limited concerning the proposal to fly plutonium to and from Prestwick airport; and what action he is taking;

(2) what representations he has received from British Nuclear Fuels Limited concerning the proposal to fly plutonium fuel to and from Prestwick airport.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: No decision has yet been made on whether to return reprocessed plutonium to Japan by air.

BNFL is developing a suitable container. When it is satisfied that this will meet all the regulatory provisions, the design will be submitted to the Department for assessment and approval.

NATIONAL FINANCE

Ex-President Marcos (Assets)

Mr. Allen: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will request the United Kingdom banks to open private safe deposit boxes in order to facilitate the identification of assets fraudulently obtained by ex-President Marcos and his family.

Mr. Lilley: Well-established procedures are available to the courts to enable United Kingdom banks to provide assistance in appropriate circumstances.

Indirect Taxes (Harmonisation)

Mr. Leighton: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what effect he estimates the harmonisation of indirect taxes, as proposed by the European Economic Community Commissioners, would have on *(a)* the poorest and *(b)* the richest 10 per cent. of households.

Mr. Lilley: Insufficient detailed information is available for assessing reliably the effect of these proposals on expenditure patterns across income groups.

The Government have made it clear that they do not consider tax approximation to be necessary for the completion of the single market.

Public Expenditure

Mr. Butterfill: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the current ratio of public expenditure to gross domestic product: and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Major: The Autumn Statement gave a forecast of 39¼ per cent. for the ratio of general Government expenditure (excluding privatisation proceeds) to gross domestic product in 1988-89. This ratio has declined from a peak of nearly 47 per cent. in 1982-83 and is now at its lowest level since 1966-67. It is expected to decline further to just under 39 per cent. in 1991-92.

Cash Limits

Mr. Allen: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what was the difference between his forecast for cash-limited vote expenditure for the first half of 1988-89 and the outturn; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Major: Table 1.8 of the Winter Supplementary Estimates (HC 690) shows Departments' estimates of outturn for cash-limited vote expenditure in the first six months of 1988-89. The table also shows Departments' forecasts of expenditure in the first six months, prepared earlier in the year.

"Government Purchasing"

Mr. Tim Smith: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what progress is being made in implementing the report, "Government Purchasing", of December 1984.

Mr. Brooke: A report by the central unit on purchasing on progress in 1987-88 is published today. It records that in 1987-88 central Government Departments (excluding the Ministry of Defence) reported value-for-money improvements in their purchasing totalling £252 million, equivalent to just under 4 per cent. of total purchasing expenditure and an increase of £84 million on the previous year. For 1988-89 Departments have set targets for value-for-money improvements totalling £337 million, equivalent to 5 per cent. of expenditure and an increase on 1987-88 of £85 million. Taking into account that in 1985-86, the first full year after the purchasing initiative was launched, Departments reported value-for-money improvements of only £70 million, these successive increases in the savings reported by Departments are encouraging. Nevertheless, the report emphasises the need for continuing action by Departments to further improve their organisation, systems and staffing for purchasing and supply, so that efficient procurement becomes a standard part of good management practice. A copy of the report has been placed in the Library of the House.

Employee Share Ownership

Mr. Ian Taylor: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what plans he has to encourage wider share ownership through employee share ownership plans.

Mr. Norman Lamont: The Government remain firmly committed to supporting employee share ownership, as our record of legislation in nine out of the last 10 Budgets testifies. We shall continue to examine sympathetically the wide variety of proposals made for new initiatives or improvements in this area, to see how far they are capable of building on the impressive progress already achieved.

Income Tax

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer (1) what percentage from income tax will be

paid by the top *(a)* 1 per cent. and *(b)* 5 per cent. of incomes in the current financial year compared to 1978-79; and what are the corresponding figures for income before tax;

(2) what percentage of the revenue from income tax will be paid by the top *(a)* 1 per cent. and *(b)* 5 per cent. of incomes in the current financial year compared to 1978-79; and what are the corresponding figures for income before tax.

Mr. Norman Lamont *[holding answer 28 November 1988]:* I refer the hon. Member to my reply to the hon. Member for Birkenhead (Mr. Field) on 28 July at columns *488-92.*

Inflation and Exchange Rates

Mr. Wray: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is, for each year since 1978, the average *(a)* rate of inflation in Japan, West Germany, the United States of America and the United Kingdom and *(b)* the average rate of exchange in £ sterling of the yen, the mark and the dollar.

Mr. Lilley *[holding answer 5 December 1988]:* "OECD Economic Outlook", June 1988, (table R11), gives the average annual inflation rates on a non-standardised basis for all the countries in question. *Economic Trends,* monthly, gives annual averages of the sterling exchange rate against the yen, mark, and the dollar.

EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

Grant Maintained Schools

Ms. Armstrong: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science (1) whether grant maintained schools will be allocated the same amount of money per pupil as locally financially managed schools within the same authority;

(2) whether a grant maintained school will have its annual year-on-year budget altered in line with other schools which have local financial management in the same local education authority.

Mr. Butcher: The Department's circular 10/88 made clear that the maintenance grant for a grant-maintained school would be based on the funding which my right hon. Friend is satisfied fairly represents what the LEA would have been likely to have provided for the school had it continued to maintain it, including expenditure on services provided centrally by the LEA. Once formula funding is in operation for the authority as part of an approved scheme of local management, the formula will be applied to grant-maintained schools in the area in the same way as to LEA-maintained schools. The amounts will reflect the authority's decisions on funding of its schools, but will also include an allowance for centrally provided services which in the case of LEA-maintained schools will be excluded from the delegated budget determined by the formula.

Capital Building Projects

Ms. Armstrong: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what criteria will be used to assess applications for capital building projects in *(a)* grant maintained schools and *(b)* local education authority schools under local financial management within the same authority.

Mr. Butcher: Applications for capital building projects in grant-maintained schools will be judged in the light of the total resources available for capital building in all maintained schools; my right hon. Friend has made clear his intention to treat grant-maintained schools no more favourably than LEA-maintained schools. Initially this will be done on a case by case basis, but once numbers are large enough a national bidding system is expected to be introduced similar to that which now operates for voluntary-aided schools. Local authorities' allocations for prescribed expenditure are unhypothecated—that is, authorities are free to spend them on whatever projects they wish. The size of an authority's allocation in respect of county and controlled schools depends on the extents to which its overall plans coincide with my right hon. Friend's priorities which are currently:

i. committed expenditure up to a level previously indicated to the authority.
ii. basic need for additional school places in areas of population growth;
iii. the removal of surplus places as school rolls fall;
iv. the improvement or replacement of existing school buildings.

Allocations for major projects at aided and special arrangement schools relate to specific schemes and are determined according to the same priorities.

Retraining

Ms. Armstrong: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what plans he has to encourage mid-career retraining for those who wish to become teachers; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Butcher: Courses of initial teacher training are available for all potential entrants to the profession—regardless of age and previous experience. We have encouraged the development of new courses to meet a range of needs, including those of people who want to switch to teaching in mid career. This year nearly 6,000 people aged 26 and over entered courses of initial teacher training—30 per cent. of the total. One of the main aims of our teacher recruitment activity through the teaching as a career unit (TASC) is to attract more older people from other careers into teaching.

Solvent Abuse

Mr. Trotter: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what steps he is taking to promote the education of children, teachers and parents as to the dangers of solvent abuse.

Mr. Butcher: The Department currently funds annual expenditure by local education authorities of £4·1 million for the in-service training of teachers in drugs issues (including solvent misuse) and for the employment of drugs education co-ordinators in every local authority in England. The Department is also funding research at Newcastle university into the role of parents and families in the treatment and rehabilitation of young people with substance misuse problems.

Teachers

Mr. Bernie Grant: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science (1) how many teachers have been

recruited from the following countries, within the last year, to fill vacancies in schools in London; *(a)* Ireland, *(b)* Australia, *(c)* Canada, *(d)* New Zealand and *(e)* South Africa; and if he will make a statement;

(2) how many applications for qualified teacher status were considered under paragraph 2(b) of Schedule 5 to the Education (Teachers) Regulations 1982 (S.I., 1982 No. 106) between 1 October 1987 and 30 September 1988 in respect of teachers who had trained in Australia, New Zealand and South Africa; and how many were accepted.

Mr. Butcher *[holding answer 25 November 1988]:* The information is not available in the form requested. Between 1 October 1987 and 30 September 1988 applications for qualified teacher status from teachers with qualifications gained in the countries referred to by the hon. Member were received as follows:

Country	*Total number of applications*	*Number accepted*	*Number rejected*
Republic of Ireland	327	13	314
Australia	585	155	430
Canada	52	4	48
New Zealand	359	230	129
South Africa	120	33	87

Violence in Schools

Mr. Evennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science whether his Department is currently conducting any studies on violence in schools; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Butcher: An independent committee of inquiry into discipline in schools, under the chairmanship of Lord Elton, is currently considering what action might be taken to secure an orderly atmosphere in schools. Problems of violence form a part of the committee's remit. It aims to report around the end of this year.

ENERGY

Nuclear Material Exports

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what quantities of nuclear material produced from uranium have been exported to the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics in the last five years; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Spicer: In the five-year period ending 31 March 1988 some 3,000 tonnes of uranium in the form of natural uranium hexafluoride has been sent to the USSR for enrichment. The material exported was the property of the United Kingdom generating boards and various overseas utilities. It is all returned as product (enriched uranium) or tails (depleted uranium) to either the United Kingdom, or, in the case of overseas customers, a destination of their choice. All the material is subject to international safeguards.

Berkeley Power Station

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what was the tonnage of fuel *(a)* loaded into and *(b)* withdrawn from, reactor 1 at Berkeley power station between 4 April and 17 July; and what was the average burn-up per tonne of irradiated fuel withdrawn at this time.

Mr. Michael Spicer: I have asked the chairman of the CEGB to write to the hon. Member with the information requested.

Coal and Electricity Industries (Privatisation)

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he will shelve plans to proceed with the privatisation of the coal and electricity industries until the environmental problems of sulphur and carbon dioxide emissions have been satisfactorily dealt with and legislation is in place which will avoid further environmental consequences such as the greenhouse effect.

Mr. Michael Spicer: No. Privatisation will make no difference to the Government's commitment to improving the environment. Environmental controls apply to private sector companies as they do to those in the public sector and will be strongly enforced when the electricity industry is privatised.

Nuclear Materials (Transport)

Mr. Home Robertson: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what international safeguard arrangements exist to cover the shipping of spent nuclear fuel and other material from *(a)* Torness, *(b)* Hunterston, *(c)* Dounreay and *(d)* Chapelcross, to reprocessing plants.

Mr. Michael Spicer: All nuclear material from Torness, Hunterston and Dounreay is subject to Euratom safeguards and the terms of the United Kingdom—Euratom—IAEA safeguards agreement. Nuclear fuel irradiated in Chapelcross is not subject to safeguards.

Nuclear Reactor Safety

Mr. Home Robertson: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what international safeguard arrangements exist to cover the nuclear reactors at Torness and spent nuclear fuel from the Torness reactors; and what facility attachments and particular safeguard provisions exist for Torness.

Mr. Michael Spicer: Nuclear material in the reactors at Torness, and spent nuclear fuel from the reactors, is subject to Euratom safeguards and the terms of the United Kingdom—Euratom—IAEA safeguards agreement. The particular safeguard provisions for Torness are not yet in force with Euratom. There is no facility attachment in place for Torness since the IAEA has not designated the facility for routine inspection.

Mining Industry (Statistics)

Mr. Illsley: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy how many men are employed in the mining industry, categorised in terms of *(a)* British Coal employees and *(b)* other contract companies.

Mr. Michael Spicer: I understand that British Coal employed 86,760 men on colliery books on 12 November 1988. The other information requested is not available.

Heysham II

Mr. Mullin: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he will list, on a year-by-year basis, the construction costs of Heysham II nuclear power station.

Mr. Michael Spicer: This is an operational matter for the CEGB and I have asked the chairman to write to the hon. Member.

Power Stations (Costs)

Mr. Mullin: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he will give the operating costs for nuclear and fossil fuelled power stations in England and Wales for 1983 to 1987 on a year-by-year basis and in the same form as set out in the Central Electricity Generating Board's statistical year book for 1982-83.

Mr. Michael Spicer: This is an operational matter for the CEGB and I have asked the chairman to write to the hon. Member.

DEFENCE

Procurement

Mr. Menzies Campbell: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what percentage of the expenditure incurred by the procurement division of his Department is split *(a)* within the United Kingdom and *(b)* abroad.

Mr. Sainsbury: I refer the hon. Member to the statement on the Defence Estimates 1988, Cmnd. 344-1, volume 1, page 37 paragraph 402, and page 49 figure 11.

Army Scholarship Scheme

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence (1) what has been the total cost in grants and tuition paid in respect of *(a)* boys and *(b)* girls receiving both grants and tuition in each year from 1979 to the present in respect of the Army scholarship scheme for children aged 15 and 16 years;

(2) if he will list the schools in respect of which tuition fees were paid and from whose headteachers, endorsements of candidatures were received and the numbers of *(a)* boys and *(b)* girls from each school who have received awards under the Army scholarship scheme for pupils aged 15 and 16 years in each of the years from 1979 to the present.

Mr. Freeman: The information is not available in the form requested. While references are obtained from headteachers, eligibility for the award of any Army scholarship does not rest on the headteacher's endorsement alone. Applicants are required to pass a test set by the Army, an interview and obtain good grades in seven GCSEs (or equivalents) including mathematics, English language and either a science or modern language. Girls have been eligible to apply for an award only since 1986.

Currently there are 91 scholars, including 10 girls. Since September 1983 a flat rate grant of £750 a year has been made to parents of scholars, irrespective of the school which the scholar attends.

Educational Allowances

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what was the total sum paid to *(a)* officers and *(b)* other ranks in education allowances in the year 1986-87; what were the numbers of individuals receiving allowances in categories *(a)* and *(b)* above; and what is the average grossed up value of an allowance in each category.

Mr. Freeman: The information requested is as follows:

	Total Sum Paid In Educational Allowances	*Numbers of Individuals In Receipt of Allowances*	*Average Allowance Per Child*
	£ million		*£[1] per annum*
(a) Officers	58·840	8,071	4,701
(b) Other Ranks	34·761	6,357	3,964

Note [1]: This is the average allowance paid *per child* and takes into account the higher allowance paid for third and subsequent children and is inclusive of grossing up for income tax.

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is the approximate cost of a holiday visit passages paid in respect of children of defence service personnel in receipt of education allowances, for the latest year available.

Mr. Freeman: The information available does not allow the costs of school children's visits to be identified separately from the costs of other types of travel.

Burghfield Arms Factory

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement about the explosion on 2 December at Burghfield arms factory; and if he will state its proximity to the materials held for the polaris warheads.

Mr. Sainsbury: A minor explosion occurred at AWE Burghfield in the early hours of 2 December during routine burning of surplus conventional explosive. There was no personal injury and no danger to the work force or public at any time and, to the best of our knowledge, no damage was caused outside the establishment. It is not our policy to disclose the nature or location of nuclear weapons; however no radioactive material was involved in this incident.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Social Fund

Mr. Chapman: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will announce the total sum available for payments from the discretionary part of the social fund in 1989-90.

Mr. Needham: The total sum available for payments in Northern Ireland for 1989-90 will be the same as for 1988-89. The budget for community care grants will be £7·2 million and the gross budget for loans will be £13·9 million.

Emission Controls (Crown Immunity)

Mr. Ashley: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will be seeking Crown immunity from prosecution for the institutions which are the responsibility of his Department when the anticipated new controls on emissions come into operation.

Mr. Needham *[holding answer 30 November 1988]:* I refer the right hon. Member to the reply given by my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister on 29 November 1988 at column *178*.

Mr. John D. Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how he proposes to finance the additional funds required for those nurses who will be regraded after appeal.

Mr. Needham: The funds allocated to boards which include £32 million as the assessed cost of the clinical grading review, are intended to cover all pay costs arising in the current financial year, including any costs arising from successful appeals about pay or grading.

Housing Associations

Rev. Martin Smyth: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how much new capital expenditure has been authorised to be undertaken by housing associations in Northern Ireland in each of August, September and October; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Needham: The information is as follows:

	£
August	456,325
September	894,224
October	660,222

The total of approximately £2·01 million compares with £2·34 million in the same period last year.

Rev. Martin Smyth: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what sums remained unspent in the budgeted expenditure for housing associations in Northern Ireland at 31 October.

Mr. Needham: Of the £31·47 million available for capital expenditure by housing associations in Northern Ireland in 1988-89, £12·7 million was unspent at 31 October.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Women's Issues

Ms. Richardson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether he will publish the minutes of the meetings of the ministerial group on women's issues, from May 1986 to date; and whether he will place a copy of the equal opportunities proofing system and proofing checklist in the library.

Mr. John Patten: It is not the practice to publish the internal record of meetings of Ministers. A press release was made following the last meeting of the group. On the second part of her question, I refer the hon. Member to the reply to her question on 7 November at columns 10-11.

Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis

Mr. Evennett: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he last met the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis; and what was discussed.

Mr. Hurd: I last met the Commissioner on 20 October at a lunch at New Scotland yard organised by the community involvement branch. It was an informal occasion, during which we discussed the work of the branch, and a number of other policing issues.

Prisoners (Condoms)

Mr. Key: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what representations he has received from medical organisations on prisoners' access to condoms.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: We have received one letter from the British Medical Association on this subject.

Homosexuality and Drugs (Prisons)

Mr. Key: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department why he refused an application for a research project, proposed by the prison department's AIDS advisory committee, into homosexuality and drug use in prison.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Because we considered that the methodology proposed was unlikely to lead to reliable results.

AIDS (Prisons)

Mr. Key: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what steps his Department is taking to assess the risks of contracting HIV in prisons.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The risk in prison, as elsewhere, is determined by personal behaviour. This is stressed in the educational material available to prisoners. No research to assess the rate of HIV infection, or spread of infection, in the prison population is currently being undertaken by the Department; but prisoners will, where appropriate, be included in future approved research programmes based on anonymous blood testing. A central record is kept for statistical and monitoring purposes of prisoners identified as HIV antibody positive in the course of the careful screening undertaken by Medical Officers.

Mr. Key: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he has considered the World Health Organisation's recommendation that consideration should be given to allow prisoners access to condoms; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: We have, as the World Health Organisation recommended, considered whether condoms should be made available to prisoners, but have concluded that we would not be justified in changing our policy that prisoners should not be allowed access to condoms.

Prisoners (Health Education)

Mr. Key: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what health education material is in preparation for prisoners; and when this will be available.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: An AIDS resource pack comprising a video film, a user's guide and a companion leaflet is in an advanced state of development. A second leaflet for more general use is also in preparation. It is expected that these will be ready for use very early next year to supplement the material which is already available.

Personal Freedom

Mr. Ashley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will take steps to require all organisations, which maintain the names of people on lists

without their knowledge and circulate the lists for a fee to others for employment and other purposes, to register with his Department; if he will investigate the procedure and role of such organisations; and if he will take steps to seek to ban those which interfere with personal freedom.

Mr. Renton: The Data Protection Act 1984 provides that data users holding personal data processed automatically shall register the fact and, interalia, the purpose for which the data are held and to whom they may be disclosed. My right hon. Friend has no plans to extend the registration requirement to manual files.

Prison Officers (London Weighting)

Mr. Latham: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) what is the number of prison officers who have been transferred from London prisons to other prisons outside London who are still in receipt of London weighting under the mark-time proposals of the fresh start arrangements; how many are currently serving in Her Majesty's prison, Ashwell; and what is the total cost to public funds on an annual basis of this arrangement;

(2) what is the number of prison officers who have been transferred from London prisons to other prisons outside London who are not still receiving London weighting under the mark-time proposals because their previous prison in London had not accepted fresh start; how many are currently serving in Her Majesty's prison, Ashwell; and what would be the total cost to public funds of extending the London weighting to those currently denied it.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: To provide the information in the form requested would require disproportionate cost because of the large number of variable factors in individual cases and the calculations involved in mark-time pay. Between July 1987 and November 1988, 187 prison officers were transferred from London prisons to other prisons outside London and retained London weighting on a mark-time basis. Of these four are serving at Her Majesty's prison, Ashwell.

In the same period, 145 prison officers were transferred from London prisons to prisons outside London and did not receive London weighting under the mark-time rules because the London prison from which they were transferred had not moved to fresh start pay. Of these four are in post at Her Majesty's prison, Ashwell.

Derbyshire County Council

Mr. Oppenheim: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how much section 11 grant, under the Local Government Act 1966, Derbyshire county council received in each of the last five financial years for which figures are available; and on what schemes this money was spent.

Mr. John Patten: The amount of grant paid to Derbyshire county council under section 11 of the Local Government Act 1966, in respect of each of the last five years is shown in the table. The grant represents 75 per cent. of the eligible expenditure by the authority on posts addressing the special needs of ethnic minorities of Commonwealth origin.

		£	Posts
1983-84			
Education		592,859	161
Social Workers		11,171	8
Other Staff		55,911	10
Grant paid on formula basis in respect of:			
(a) Children in care		24,791	
(b) Day Nurseries		39,204	
	Total	723,936	
(Payment of section 11 grant on a formula basis ceased at the end of 1983-84)			
1984-85			
Education		714,537	163
Social Workers		40,362	9
Other Staff		73,181	10
	Total	828,080	
1985-86			
Education		735,429	168
Social Workers		39,684	8
Other Staff		95,577	15
	Total	870,690	
1986-87			
Education		876,520	163·5
Social Workers		76,028	18
Other Staff		114,737	17
	Total	1,067,285	
1987-88			
Education		967,533	116·5
Social Workers		96,833	18
Other Staff		151,188	17
	Total	1,215,554	

Solvent Abuse

Mr. Trotter: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) what information he has to the effect of the Intoxicating Substances (Supply) Act 1985 on the supply of such substances to children; and what measures are being taken by his Department to inform shopkeepers as to the law and to educate the public as to the dangers of solvent abuse;

(2) what information he has as to the action being taken by the police to enforce the provisions of the Intoxicating Substances (Supply) Act 1985.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: In 1987 there were 11 successful prosecutions under the Intoxicating Substances (Supply) Act 1985.

As regards publicity and prevention, the lead is taken by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Health, to whom my hon. Friend has addressed a similar question.

New Prison (Merseyside)

Mr. George Howarth: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what steps he is taking to measure public reaction to any proposals for the construction of a new prison in the Field lane area of Merseyside.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Any proposal to build a prison in the Field lane area would be subject to the normal planning procedures which require local publicity and the assessment by the planning authority of local opinion.

Broadcasting

Mr. Fisher: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if, following his White Paper, "Broadcasting in the '90s," it is his intention to require applicants for Channel 3 franchises to make specific commitments about the production and broadcasting of religious programmes.

Mr. Renton: No.

Mr. Fisher: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what estimates he has of the market for *(a)* video rental and *(b)* pre-recorded video tapes referred to in paragraph 2.4 of his White Paper, "Broadcasting in the '90s," Cm. 517.

Mr. Renton: According to a study on subscription television commissioned by the Home Office from Communications Studies and Planning International Limited, published in May 1987, a total of between £550 million and £600 million was spent on video software in 1986. Two thirds of the expenditure was on pre-recorded software, while the remainder was spent on blank cassettes. This is the equivalent of each household with a VCR buying or renting about one cassette a week. The study estimated that the market for pre-recorded VCR software would expand from £470 million in 1987 to £625 million in 1990. The equivalent estimates for expenditure on VCR rentals were £667 million in 1987 and £772 million in 1990.

Mr. Fisher: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what discussions he has had with manufacturers about the development of technology for pay-per-view subscription referred to in paragraph 2.4 of his White Paper, "Broadcasting in the '90s," Cm. 517; and whether those manufacturers are British.

Mr. Renton: The subject of pay-per-view technology is one of a number of issues which has been discussed in the Government's day-to-day contact with the electronics industry. The choice of manufacturers for reception equipment is one for the broadcasters themselves to make.

A variety of subscription and pay-per-view payment methods are being developed in Europe and the United States. Some satellite television services are expected to be subscription based, and British Satellite Broadcasting plans to introduce a pay-per-view system.

Mr. Fisher: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether he has commissioned any research into the production costs of *(a)* news, *(b)* current affairs, *(c)* dramas, *(d)* documentaries, *(e)* children's programmes, *(f)* religious programmes and *(g)* educational programmes in (i) BBC, (ii) ITV, (iii) independent production and (iv) other countries.

Mr. Renton: The study of subscription television prepared for the Home Office by Booz Allen and Hamilton and published in May 1987 contains information about production costs. Such information is also available to the Home Office from other sources.

Television Licences

Mr. Fisher: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what proportion of those owning a television pay for *(a)* a colour licence and *(b)* a black and white licence.

Mr. Renton: It is estimated that about 92 per cent. of television owners obtain a television licence. About 82 per cent. pay for a colour licence, and about 10 per cent. pay for a black and white licence.

Mr. Fisher: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many people have been *(a)* detected and *(b)* prosecuted for not having a television licence in each of the last 10 years; and at what cost.

Mr. Renton: The available data which have been supplied by the national television licence records office are given in the following table. Corresponding information on costs is not available.

Detections and prosecutions for TV licence evasion in the United Kingdom

thousands

Year ending 31 March	*Detected*	*Prosecuted*
1978-79	73·8	55·4
1979-80	78·7	49·9
1980-81	93·3	65·8
1981-82	101·7	70·5
1982-83	125·3	85·4
1983-84	152·8	97·4
1984-85	149·0	110·0
1985-86	235·4	123·1
1986-87	258·4	174·5
1987-88	288·9	158·2

Mr. Fisher: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what he estimates will be *(a)* the cost and *(b)* the staffing implications of transferring responsibility for the collection of the British Broadcasting Corporation licence fee on to the British Broadcasting Corporation.

Mr. Renton: There should be no increase in the cost of collecting licence revenue, and the BBC will clearly have a strong incentive to reduce costs so far as is practicable consistent with the maximisation of licence revenue. It is likely that the transfer of responsibility will save in the order of two central Government staff posts.

Mr. Fisher: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many people are employed in collecting the BBC licence fee.

Mr. Renton: About 1,300, excluding Post Office counter staff who issue television licences and sell television licence savings stamps as part of their general duties.

Mr. Fisher: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the present administrative cost of collecting the BBC licence fee.

Mr. Renton: A total of £59·6 million for the year 1987-88.

Animal Procedures Committee (Report)

Mr. David Porter: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he received the first annual report of the Animal Procedures Committee; and when he intends to lay copies of the report before Parliament.

Mr. Hurd: I have now laid before Parliament copies of the report, which is published today by Her Majesty's Stationery Office as House of Commons Paper 36.

This report reflects the significant contribution which the Animal Procedures Committee has made in the first

year of operation of the Animal (Scientific Procedures) Act 1986. I am sure that it will continue its work for the protection of animals used in experimental or other scientific procedures.

I particularly welcome the report's conclusion that "the emerging system of control will match the high expectations of Parliament and the public".

Pub Bombings

Mr. Stern: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what progress has been made in considering representations about the case of the four persons convicted of offences arising from the bombing of public houses in Guildford and Woolwich in 1974.

Mr. Hurd: In April I received a report from the Chief Constable of the Avon and Somerset police on the results of inquiries made into certain matters raised with me since my statement of 20 January 1987 at columns 735-38. Since then, and in particular during October and November, I have received further representations about the case, both from the Cardinal Archbishop of Westminster, and from firms of solicitors acting for the four persons convicted, some of which purport to disclose new evidence. I have been asked to take these further matters into account in reaching my decision on whether to refer the case to the Court of Appeal, in the exercise of my power under section 17 of the Criminal Appeal Act 1968. I have agreed to do so. My decision should obviously be based on the fullest available information. Further inquiries are now being carried out by the police into some of the new matters which have been raised and I intend to reach a decision in January.

THE ARTS

Tax

Mr. Soames: To ask the Minister for the Arts if there have been any items accepted in lieu of tax or allocated since he last made an announcement on the subject to the House.

Mr. Luce: Since my announcement on 12 July, at column *101*, I am pleased to announce that two items have been accepted in lieu of tax; a flower painting by Jacob Marrel and a print by William Blake, Frontispiece to the Book of Ahania. The tax liability satisfied was £61,369 and £19,658, respectively. The Blake print will go to the Fitzwilliam museum but a decision over the allocation of the Marrel painting has not yet been taken.

SCOTLAND

YTS

Mr. McKelvey: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if there are enough training places available under YTS for 16 to 17-year-olds in Scotland.

Mr. Lang: Yes. There were 13,000 unfilled YTS places in Scotland on 5 December 1988.

"Curriculum and Assessment"

Mrs. Margaret Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list in the *Official Report* the total number of responses he has received to the document, "Curriculum and Assessment", indicating the source in each case; and if he will make such responses available through publication.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Over 1,000 responses were received from a wide range of sources. All the responses were available for public inspection at West Register house, Edinburgh, between 4 October and 5 December.

Special Schools

Mrs. Margaret Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many special schools in each region and division recorded no head teacher in the schools census of 1987.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The numbers of education authority special schools and the numbers with no head teacher at September 1987 are as follows:

(1)	*(2) Total*	*(3) Number without a head teacher*
Borders	1	1
Central	11	3
Dumfries and Galloway	1	0
Fife	12	1
Grampian	19	0
Highland	7	1
Lothian	22	1
Strathclyde	118	37
Tayside	8	2
Orkney	1	0
Shetland	0	0
Western Isles	0	0
Scotland	200	46
Argyll and Bute	4	1
Ayr	25	13
Dunbarton	16	5
Glasgow (City)	45	12
Lanark	18	3
Renfrew	10	3

In some cases recorded in column (3) above the post of head teacher will have been vacant at the time of the census; in others there will be no such post because of small size or because oversight is provided by an associated mainstream school. Responsibility for determining the complement of head teachers and for filling vacancies rests with regional and islands authorities.

TVEI

Mrs. Margaret Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list in the *Official Report* those schools in each region and division which are currently involved in TVEI schemes.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The schools within each region and division of Strathclyde currently participating in TVEI are as follows:

Region/Division	*Schools involved in TVEI Schemes*
Borders	All schools
Central	Bannockburn High School Graeme High School St. Mungo's Academy St. Modan's High School Lornshill Academy

Region/Division	Schools involved in TVEI Schemes
Dumfries and Galloway	All Schools
Fife	Glenwood High School
	Glenrothes High School
	Auchmuty High School
	Bell Baxter High School
	Kirkcaldy High School
	Beath High School
	Lochgelly High School
	Woodmill High School
	Buchhaven High School
Grampian	Buckie High School
	Elgin Academy
	Elgin High School
	Forrest Academy
	Milnes High School
Highland	Farr Secondary School
	Golspie High School
	Thurso High School
	Wick High School
Lothian	Tynecastle High School
	St. Augustine's High School
	Armadale Academy
	Blackburn Academy
	St. Kentigern's Academy
	St. Mary's Academy
	Whitburn Academy
	Craigmount High School
	Queensferry High School
	Royal High School
	Boroughmuir High School
	Firrhill High School
	James Gillespie High School
	St. Thomas of Aquins High School
	Cairnpark Special School
	Graysmill Special School
	Ainslie Park High School
	Forrester High School
	Wester Hailes Education Centre
	Bathgate Academy
	Broughton High School
	Craighroyston High School
	Drummond High School
	Leith Academy
	Trinity Academy
	Canonmills Special School
	Pilrig Park Special School
	Lugton Special School
	St. David's High School
	Newbattle High School
	Lasswade High School
	Dalkeith High School
	Greenhill High School
Orkney	All schools
Shetland	Anderson High School
	Brae Junior High School
	Sandwick Junior High School
	Scalloway Junior High School
Strathclyde	
Argyll and Bute	Campbeltown Grammar School
	Lochgilphead High School
	Oban High School
	Islay High School
Ayr	Grange Academy
	James Hamilton Academy
	Kilmarnock Academy
	Part Special School
	St. Joseph's Academy
Dumbarton	Dumbarton Academy
	Auchentoshan Special School
	St. Patrick's High School
	Notre Dame High School
	Vale of Leven Academy
Glasgow	Lochend Secondary School
	St. Leonard's Secondary School
	Westwood Secondary School
Lanark	Airdrie Academy
	Caldervale High School
	St. Margaret's High School
Renfrew	Gourock High School
	Port Glasgow High School
	St. Stephen's High School
	Greenock Academy
	Grovepark High School
	Eastwood High School
	Woodfarm High School
	Renfrew High School
	The Mary Russell Special School
	Hunterhill Tutorial Centre Special School
	Kersland Special School
	Greenock High School
	St. Columba's High School
	Lilybank Special School
	Cowdenknowes High School
	Notre Dame High School
	Mearns Castle High School
	St. Ninian's High School
	Linwood High School
	Clippens Special School
	Isobel Mair Special School
	Gateside Special School
Tayside	Craigie High School
	Linlathen High School
	St. Saviour's High School
	Whitfield High School
Western Isles	Lews Castle Day School
	Nicolson Institute

Forestry

Mrs. Margaret Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what representations he has had from landowners, foresters and individuals engaged in wood processing industries about the Government's forestry policy; and if he will make a statement.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 5 December 1988]:* In the past two months, my right hon. and learned Friend has received nine letters from organisations and individuals about various aspects of the Government's forestry policy, including the support arrangements and the prospects for forestry. He has taken the opportunity to emphasise the Government's commitment to the continuing expansion of forestry.

PRIME MINISTER

Right Hon and Learned Member for Richmond, Yorks

Q47. **Mr. Dalyell:** To ask the Prime Minister why and in what particular respects experience of the Home Office was a factor in the nomination of the right hon. and learned Member for Richmond, Yorks (Mr. Brittan) as a European Commissioner.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave on 1 December 1988, at column 345.

Barnsley

Q159. **Mr. Nicholas Baker:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will pay an official visit to Barnsley, Dorset.

The Prime Minister: I have at present no plans to do so.

Engagements

Mr. Andrew Smith: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 6 December.

Mr. Pike: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 6 December.

Mr. Teddy Taylor: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 6 December.

Mr. Macdonald: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 6 December.

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 6 December.

Mr. Michael: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 6 December.

Mr. Mullin: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 6 December.

The Prime Minister: This morning I had meetings with ministerial colleagues and others. In addition to my duties in the House, I shall be having further meetings later today, including one with the Prime Minister of Iceland. This evening I hope to have an audience of Her Majesty the Queen.

President Gorbachev (Visit)

Mr. Maxwell-Hyslop: To ask the Prime Minister whether she will request President Gorbachev, during his forthcoming visit, to return to the national treasuries of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania the gold reserves deposited by those countries with the Bank of England for safe keeping when still independent, which national reserves were handed over to the country which had invaded them by the United Kingdom Government in 1969.

The Prime Minister *[holding answer 5 December 1988]:* The gold of the former central banks of Latvia, Lithuania and Estonia held in the Bank of England was not transferred to the USSR but its value was taken into account in the practical settlement of claims arising from the incorporation of these states into the USSR, under the Anglo-Soviet claims agreement of 5 January 1968. The proceeds of the subsequent sale of gold were used to meet the compensation claims of British property holders and investors whose assets had been seized or became worthless. The Anglo-Soviet claims agreement did not, of course, affect our continued non-recognition de jure of the forcible incorporation of the Baltic states into the USSR.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Grain

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what was the cost to the European Economic Community for export restitution and other costs of the export of grain for the latest year for which figures are available.

Mr. Ryder: In the 1987 calendar year the European Community's expenditure on exports of whole and processed cereals other than rice, including food aid but excluding monetary compensatory amounts, was 3,673 million ecu (£2,642 million).

Hedgerows

Mr. Malcolm Bruce: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will publish the total loss of hedgerows in each year since 1983.

Mr. Ryder: I refer the hon. Member to the reply given on 1 December to the hon. Member for Wentworth (Mr. Hardy) at columns *1859-60*.

Export Refund System

Mr. Allen: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what European Economic Community revisions to the export refund system have become operative since 1 January; and what effect this has had in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Ryder: A new integrated Community customs tariff known as the combined nomenclature and based upon the international standard harmonised system came into force on 1 January. At the same time use for customs' purposes of the Community single administrative document started.

The effect of these two changes was to require traders and official bodies to modify databases and systems based on customs tariff nomenclature and to provide and use data in a different format. While the changes applied to all international trade, food and agriculture were particularly affected since a number of nomenclature-based systems, including the export refund system, are utilised under the CAP.

Free Food Scheme

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will estimate the total cost of the European Economic Community free food scheme in the United Kingdom in terms of *(a)* the cost of foodstuffs, *(b)* the administration and distribution costs incurred by the voluntary sector and *(c)* any other costs.

Mr. Ryder: A total of £10·4 million was allocated to the United Kingdom to operate the free food scheme in 1988. The figure of 2½ per cent. has been set aside to cover distribution costs and to reimburse the administration costs of designated organisations. The remainder has been released or will have been made available by the end of the year to designated organisations in the form of butter and beef. Other costs such as packing and canning will be met by payment in kind arrangements.

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (1) if he will estimate the number of people receiving food stuffs under the European Economic Community free food scheme;

(2) if he will estimate the number of people eligible in the United Kingdom to receive foodstuffs under the free food scheme.

Mr. Ryder: The Government have estimated that about 6 million people in the United Kingdom are eligible to

receive food under the scheme. The designated organisations are responsible for the distribution arrangements, and they estimated early this year that about 1½ million people would benefit.

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how much of each of the surplus European Economic Community food products is being made available for distribution in Britain as part of the free food scheme.

Mr. Ryder: In the United Kingdom the designated organisations have been authorised to withdraw 2,463 tonnes of butter and 1,772 tonnes of beef.

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what are the criteria for eligibility to the European Economic Community free food scheme.

Mr. Ryder: The Community legislation enables food from intervention stocks to be distributed to the most deprived persons in the Community. The Government have defined such persons as those in receipt of income support or family credit, and those of no fixed abode or living in welfare hostels.

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will list those voluntary organisations participating in the free food scheme.

Mr. Ryder: There are 127 organisations designated to operate the scheme in the United Kingdom. A list of the organisations was deposited in the Library of the House on 21 April 1988.

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what information he has as to in what respect the British scheme of free food distribution differs from that in other European Economic Community countries.

Mr. Ryder: No detailed up-to-date information is available but according to information gathered in March 1988, the various member states intended to operate the scheme as shown in the attached table.

	Belgium	*Luxembourg*	*Netherlands*	*France*	*Spain*	*Portugal*	*Greece*	*Italy*	*United Kingdom*	*Denmark*	*Germany*	*Ireland*
By issue of voucher	×	—	—	—	—	×	—	—	—	—	—	×
Through soup kitchen	—	—	×	—	×	—	—	—	—	—	—	×
Through hospitals, orphanages, old people's homes etc.	—	—	—	—	—	—	×	—	—	—	—	—
Via charity networks	—	×	—	×	×	—	—	×	×	×	×	—
Attempts to define the "most needy"	×	×	—	—	×	—	—	—	×	—	×	×

Bovine Spongiform Encephalopathy

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (1) what information he has concerning the incidence of BSE in other European Economic Community countries or other countries with trade in animal production with Britain;

(2) what steps he is taking to ensure that animal products entering the United Kingdom for human consumption do not originate from BSE infected animals.

Mr. Donald Thompson: BSE has not been reported in other member states of the European Community or any other country with which the United Kingdom trades.

Dairy Quotas

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many United Kingdom dairy farmers who participated in the milk non-marketing scheme or the dairy herd conversion scheme subsequently made an application for quotas to his Department between 31 March 1984 and 31 July 1988.

Mr. Donald Thompson: For the vast majority of producers, the dairy produce quotas regulations provided for applications for quota to be made between 24 July and 28 August 1984. In England and Wales, well over 20,000 valid applications were received. It would be disproportionately expensive to estimate the number of these which were received from farmers who had participated in the non-marketing or dairy herd conversion schemes.

Bovine Somatotropin

Mr. Evennett: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what representations he has received concerning the use of bovine somatotropin; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Donald Thompson: I have received a considerable number of letters from individuals and organisations expressing concern about the current field tests of bovine somatotropin.

Food Hygiene

Mr. Boswell: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what action he will take to increase public awareness of the importance of sound food hygiene and handling practices.

Mr. Ryder: My Department in collaboration with the Department of Health, the Health Education Authority, The Institution of Environmental Health Officers and the public health laboratory service, has been preparing a major nationwide public food hygiene education campaign to be launched early in 1989. We commissioned a consumer survey in January 1988 which demonstrated a general lack of awareness of elementary food hygiene precautions in the home. As a result of this survey we decided to test an education leaflet in a pilot launch at five locations (Shrewsbury, Hull, Taunton, Maidstone and the London Borough of Wandsworth) between July and October 1988. The results have now been evaluated and, together with the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Health, I shall be launching a nationwide campaign early next year.

SOCIAL SECURITY

Young Share Fishermen

99. **Mr. Beith:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will bring forward proposals to restore the payment of unemployment benefit to share fishermen between the ages of 16 and 18 years who are prevented from working by adverse weather or sea conditions.

Mr. Scott: We have no plans to make special arrangements for this group.

Unemployment Benefit

98. **Mr. Marlow:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will strengthen the requirements for potential unemployment pay beneficiaries to seek work.

Mr. Scott: I refer my hon. Friend to the announcement by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State in the debate on the Loyal Address on 24 November at column 245. We propose to introduce a requirement that those claiming unemployment benefits must take active steps to find work.

Mrs. Beckett: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what information he has regarding the proportion of unemployment benefit disqualification cases in which disqualification was imposed for the maximum period *(a)* when the maximum was six weeks, *(b)* when it was 13 weeks and *(c)* since it was increased to 26 weeks.

Mr. Scott: There is no information available on the proportion of cases in which the maximum unemployment benefit disqualification period was imposed when that maximum was six weeks.

A very limited survey undertaken after the change in October 1986 showed that a maximum period of disqualification—13 weeks—was imposed in about 75 per cent. of cases. A copy of this survey was placed in the Library on 4 March 1988.

The effect of the increase in the maximum period to 26 weeks in April 1988 is being monitored and results should be available next year. An early examination by the chief adjudication officer of a small sample of decisions indicates that the maximum period of disqualification is now imposed in about 50 per cent. of cases.

Students

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what is his policy towards the future provision of *(a)* free dental treatment, *(b)* free prescriptions, *(c)* free eye checks and *(d)* assistance with the community charge, for students in full-time education in receipt of loans under Her Majesty's Government's recent proposals; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Nicholas Scott: I refer the hon. Member to paragraph 3.27 of the White Paper "Top-up Loans for Students" (Cm. 520). People receiving full-time education under 19 will continue to be exempt from dental and prescription charges and entitled to free NHS sight tests. Others on a low income will be able to get free prescriptions and full or partial help with the cost of dental treatment and sight tests depending on their circumstances. Students who are shown in the community charge register as undertaking a full-time course of education will continue to be liable to pay only one fifth of the personal community charge for which they would otherwise be liable.

Family Credit and Housing Benefit

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security (1) if he will publish a table showing the cut-off points in net and gross terms for families with children claiming family credit and housing benefit based on average rent and rates for families with one, two and three children aged under 11 years, broken down into one and two parent families;

(2) if he will publish a table showing the cut-off points in net and gross terms for families with children claiming family credit for families with one, two and three children aged under 11 years.

Mr. Scott: The information is set out in the table.

Family Type	*Family credit ceilings (£pw)*		*Housing benefit ceiling (£pw)*			
			Rates		*Rent*	
	Gross earnings	*Net earnings*	*Gross earnings*	*Net earnings*	*Gross earnings*	*Net earnings*
Single parent, one child under 11	130	105·49	56	53·20	55	52·25
Single parent, two children under 11	143	114·07	55	52·25	54	51·30
Single parent, three children under 11	156	122·65	52	49·40	51	48·45
Married couple, one child under 11	130	105·49	95	84·29	93	82·93
Married couple, two children under 11	143	114·07	93	82·93	90	80·89
Married couple, three children under 11	156	122·65	80	74·09	78	72·54

Notes: Average local authority rent and rate figures for 1988 are:
For one child family: rent £18·60 per week; rates £7·70 per week
For two child family: rent £19·90 per week; rates £8·20 per week

Housing Benefit

Mr. Robin Cook: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will publish a table showing the numbers receiving housing benefit in each local authority.

Mr. Scott: The closing date for submission of statistical returns by local authorities was 16 November 1988. Some returns are still awaited and those received to date are being validated. The information will be made available when checking of all local authority returns is complete.

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security whether he has any plans to review the cut in housing benefit experienced by hospital patients after six weeks in hospital; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Scott: The downrating of housing benefit after six weeks in hospital was introduced as part of the reforms in April to achieve common rules for the treatment of patients in the main social security benefits. The system ensures that, after downrating, all claimants will have sufficient income to meet their eligible housing costs over and above the basic income support level.

We have undertaken to continue monitoring the effects of the reforms.

Benefits

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what has been the budget for publicity and associated costs to increase the take-up of benefits, for each year since 1979.

Mr. Scott: Total Social Security expenditure on publicity and associated costs for each year since 1979 is as follows:

Year	*£ million*
1979-80	1·9
1980-81	1·7
1981-82	1·6
1982-83	2·6
1983-84	2·5
1984-85	4·3
1985-86	4·5
1986-87	12·6
1987-88	12·4
1988-89	[1]12·8

[1] Projected expenditure.

Students (Benefits)

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what estimated savings will be made by his Department by the proposed withdrawal of students' rights to income support, unemployment and housing benefits.

Mr. Scott: I refer the hon. Member to annex E of the White Paper "Top-up Loans For Students" (Cm. 520) which estimates the saving at £65 million in the academic year 1990-91.

Attendance Allowance

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many persons, aged between the years of two and five, are in receipt of attendance allowance; and if he will provide figures for the number of claimants aged two, three, four and five for the last year for which figures are available.

Mr. Scott: Information is not available in the form requested. The information which is available is in the table.

Attendance allowance

	Number
Estimated number of allowances in payment for children aged 2 to 5 years at 31 March 1987	19,800
Number of claims decided in the year to September 1988 for children aged	
2 to 4 years	8,666
5 to 9 years	4,637

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what is the average length of time from the lodging of an appeal against the refusal of attendance allowance to the appeal decision, for the years 1985 to 1988.

Mr. Scott: Information is not available in the precise form requested. The available information, which relates to applications for review made where a claim has been disallowed, where a lower-rate rather than a higher-rate allowance has been awarded or where the claimant believes the attendance allowance board should issue a certificate of attendance needs for a longer period, is in the table.

Attendance allowance: Average processing times of applications for review of attendance allowance board decisions 1985-1988

Year	*Average processing time (weeks)*
1988	19·0
1987	18·5
1986	14·0
1985	13·0

Family Credit

Mr. Colin Shepherd: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what has been the average lapse of time between applications being made for family credit and the determination thereof.

Mr. Scott: Just under 23 working days in respect of all cases cleared during November. Of this, less than seven working days was for work within the family credit branch. The other 16 days were taken up by waiting for responses to inquiries.

Mr. Colin Shepherd: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many local offices of the Department of Social Security have no staff or officials trained to answer questions from applicants for family credit; and if he will make it his intention to ensure that there is at least one in each local office.

Mr. Scott: All local offices have staff trained to answer inquiries about social security benefits, including family credit.

Christmas Bonus

Mr. Andrew Bowden: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what is the change in the real-terms value of the pensioners' Christmas bonus for each year since 1972.

Mr. Scott: I refer my hon. Friend to my reply to him on 21 July at columns *839-40*.

Income Support

Mr. Ralph Howell: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security (1) if he will give, on the same basis as the tax/benefit tables, the total income support of an employed married man with children aged four and six, in December 1987, whose income was *(a)* £70 per week, *(b)* £120 per week and *(c)* £140 per week.

(2) if he will state, on the same basis as the tax/benefit model tables, the total income support of an employed married man with children aged three, eight and eleven, in December 1987, whose income was *(a)* £70 per week, *(b)* £120 per week and *(c)* £140 per week.

Mr. Scott: I refer my hon. Friend to the April 1987 tax benefit model tables, copies of which are held in the Library.

Tax/Benefit Model Tables

Mr. Lester: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how soon he expects to publish tax/benefit model tables for 1988.

Mr. Scott: We expect to publish these tables shortly.

HEALTH

Civil Defence

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what specific progress has been made during the last three years by his Department in establishing methods for stockpiling medical supplies in the event of a nuclear war.

Mrs. Currie: We have reviewed peacetime storage arrangements to make greater use of direct supply systems, and introduced large regional distribution systems backed by more local satellite stores. New control systems are being introduced which would facilitate rapid exchange and borrowing between health authorities, the NHS and industry, where required. This is preferable to tying up resources in large contingency stocks for emergency use. Further, more detailed planning is still in progress, and guidance will be issued once that work is completed.

Health Authorities

Mr. Lamond: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will make a statement on the level of funding available to the North Western regional health authority.

Mr. Mellor: Health authorities summarised accounts show that gross revenue expenditure in the North Western regional health authority has increased from £383 million in 1978-79 to some £1,003 million in 1987-88, an increase of 162 per cent. in cash and 28 per cent. in real terms. The region has received further increases this year totalling over 9 per cent. in cash or 3 per cent. in real terms.

We shall be announcing allocations for 1989-90 shortly.

Community Care

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) if he will make a statement on the proposed primary care authorities in the light of the Griffiths report on community care; and if he will make a statement;

(2) if he will make a statement regarding his Department's proposals to set up primary care authorities.

Mr. Mellor: I refer the hon. Member to my reply to my hon. Friend the Member for Brentwood and Ongar (Mr. McCrindle) on 29 November at column *198*.

Prescriptions

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will list for the last three financial years *(a)* the number and value of prescriptions in each National Health Service region and express these figures on a per thousand of population basis and *(b)* the number and value of prescriptions by the source of the prescription in each National Health Service region.

Mr. Mellor: The information requested can be provided only for calendar years and is set out in the following table:

	Number of prescriptions (million)	*of which: dispensed by dispensing doctors (million)*	*Total number of prescriptions per population*	*Net ingredient cost (NIC) (£ million)*	*of which: dispensed by dispensing doctors (£ million)*	*NIC per thousand population (£)*
1985						
Northern	24·0	1·1	7,780	98·0	3·9	31,772
Yorkshire	27·5	2·4	7,641	105·4	8·8	29,284
Trent	33·7	2·8	7,296	128·8	10·5	27,851
East Anglia	13·3	3·7	6,754	54·1	13·8	27,543
North West Thames	22·8	0·5	6,537	92·0	1·8	26,413
North East Thames	25·9	1·1	6,912	98·2	3·7	26,168
South East Thames	25·1	1·1	6,980	99·2	3·9	27,535
South West Thames	19·0	0·6	6,421	78·0	2·3	26,323
Wessex	19·0	1·5	6,671	78·8	5·5	27,621
Oxford	14·6	1·6	5,990	61·0	6·2	25,036
South Western	22·8	2·6	7,250	91·0	9·6	28,874
West Midlands	38·5	1·8	7,426	146·7	6·8	28,301
Mersey	19·8	0·3	8,173	72·4	11·0	29,864
North Western	33·8	0·3	8,460	125·6	1·1	31,450
Total	339·9	21·3	7,215	1,329·1	79·1	28,211
1986						
Northern	24·2	1·1	7,864	105·5	4·3	34,250
Yorkshire	28·3	2·5	7,862	115·2	9·7	31,992
Trent	34·3	2·9	7,404	141·2	11·6	30,473
East Anglia	13·5	3·8	6,760	59·3	15·2	29,757

	Number of prescriptions (million)	of which: dispensed by dispensing doctors (million)	Total number of prescriptions per population	Net ingredient cost (NIC) (£ million)	of which: dispensed by dispensing doctors (£ million)	NIC per thousand population (£)
North West Thames	22·7	0·5	6,511	99·4	2·0	28,493
North East Thames	26·1	1·1	6,927	107·0	4·6	28,460
South East Thames	25·5	1·1	7,042	108·6	4·3	30,009
South West Thames	19·1	0·7	6,458	85·2	2·6	28,735
Wessex	19·4	1·5	6,753	86·6	6·0	30,124
Oxford	14·9	1·7	5,998	67·0	6·8	27,055
South Western	23·4	2·7	7,375	100·4	10·7	31,600
West Midlands	39·2	1·9	7,569	161·1	1·6	31,098
Mersey	19·9	0·3	8,248	79·4	1·2	32,902
North Western	34·2	0·3	8,563	137·2	1·2	34,376
Total	344·4	21·9	7,289	1,453·1	87·1	30,751
1987						
Northern	25·2	1·1	8,202	117·9	4·9	38,312
Yorkshire	29·1	2·6	8,085	129·1	10·9	35,810
Trent	35·9	3·1	7,730	159·5	13·3	34,318
East Anglia	14·2	4·0	7,028	67·0	17·1	33,261
North West Thames	23·4	0·5	6,711	110·8	2·5	31,759
North East Thames	26·9	1·1	7,139	120·3	4·7	31,900
South East Thames	26·4	1·2	7,265	121·7	4·9	33,490
South West Thames	19·6	0·7	6,612	94·9	2·9	32,061
Wessex	20·2	1·5	6,948	97·7	6·8	33,634
Oxford	15·4	1·8	6,175	75·5	7·7	30,180
South Western	24·3	2·9	7,591	113·6	12·3	35,424
West Midlands	41·1	2·0	7,912	182·7	8·8	35,154
Mersey	21·0	0·3	8,701	89·9	1·3	37,315
North Western	35·7	0·3	8,939	155·6	1·4	38,990
Total	358·5	23·2	7,562	1,636·1	99·5	34,514

Note: These figures relate to prescriptions dispensed by community pharmacists and dispensing doctors within the family practitioner service but do not include items personally administered by prescribing doctors. The vast majority of prescriptions dispensed by community pharmacies are written by prescribing general medical practitioners but they also include a small number of prescriptions written by dentists, hospital doctors for outpatients, service doctors and doctors on board ship. Prescribing by hospital doctors (except as specified above) is not included as this information is not available centrally.

Nurses (Grading)

Mr. Devlin: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what are the percentages of nurses in each grade at the theatre department at North Tees general hospital; and what are the comparable surgical gradings at other similar establishments in the region.

Mr. Mellor: We do not hold this information centrally. My hon. Friend may wish to consider requesting the information from the health authorities concerned.

Private Companies

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) what contractual constraints exist to prevent National Health Service financial officers who negotiate contracts with private companies from subsequently joining these firms;

(2) if he will make it his policy to prevent by contract Health Service employees from leaving the service and taking immediate employment with private concerns with whom they were previously negotiating; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Mellor: It is for health authorities locally to determine such aspects in individual contracts of employment. We have no current plans to alter that position.

Waiting Lists

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many people are currently on National Health Service waiting lists for general surgery *(a)* in the Crewe and Nantwich district health authority and *(b)* nationally.

Mr. Mellor: The latest figures show that, at 31 March 1988, there were 1,157 patients on the inpatient waiting list for general surgery in Crewe district health authority. The corresponding figure for England was 133,079.

Mr. Patnick: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what were the in-patient waiting list figures in March for the Trent regional health authority; and what were the figures for the previous year and 1979.

Mr. Mellor: The information is given in the table.

In-patient waiting lists, Trent regional health authority

	Total of all cases
March 1979	72,864
March 1987	57,111
[1]March 1988	54,894

[1]on a comparable basis with previous statistics.

Cook-chill Catering

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is the total number of National Health Service establishments currently using cook-chill catering; and if he will name each of the hospitals concerned.

Mrs. Currie: I regret that information on those hospitals which provide cook-chill catering is not held centrally.

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) what is the total public sector National Health Service investment in cook-chill catering to date;

(2) what is the total private sector National Health Service investment in cook-chill catering to date.

Mrs. Currie: I regret that we do not hold this information centrally.

Nurses' Pay

Mr. Evennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health by how much nurses' pay has increased in real terms since 1979; and what was the comparable increase in the period from 1974 to 1979.

Mr. Mellor: The average pay of nurses and midwives has increased by 45 per cent. in real terms since 1979 compared with a fall of 21 per cent. between 1974 and 1979.

Cyclists and Motor Cyclists (Casualties)

Mr. David Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what number and proportion of admissions to casualty units in London are *(a)* cyclists and *(b)* motor cyclists.

Mrs. Currie: We do not hold this information centrally.

Unleaded Petrol (Vehicle Conversion)

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he has had any discussions for all district health authorities concerning the conversion of their vehicles to the use of lead-free petrol; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Currie: Departmental officials have had preliminary discussions with appropriate staff in the National Health Service.

Lead-free petrol offers benefits in terms of running costs, better health and a cleaner environment. We will shortly be inviting health authorities to follow the example already set by Mersey regional health authority and introduce a programme for progressively switching over to running on lead-free petrol. Steps are being taken to secure favourable terms for conversion and purchase from major manufacturers and distributors and we shall be issuing an information pack to all authorities early in the new year.

Committee on Safety of Medicines

Mr. Wareing: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will list those medical journals which are scanned by the Committee on Safety of Medicines and by his Department for reports on adverse reactions to medicines.

Mr. Mellor *[holding answer 5 December 1988]:* Officials of the Department monitor reports of adverse drug reactions in the published literature by regularly scanning over 200 medical and scientific journals as well as using secondary abstracting sources to monitor other international publications. Regular searches of published literature are also carried out for reports relating to specific drugs. The Department also receives reports of adverse reactions in international scientific journals from pharmaceutical companies, from overseas regulatory authorities and from the World Health Organisation.

A wide range of sources of published information is available to the Committee on Safety of Medicines. It is not possible to produce a definitive list.

Mr. Wareing: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will list the members of the Committee on Safety of Medicines indicating *(a)* their professional background, *(b)* whether their appointments are full-time or part-time and *(c)* their remuneration in each case.

Mr. Mellor *[pursuant to his reply, 28 November 1988, c. 149-50]:* The entry for Professor M. J. S. Langman, BSc, MD, FRCP should read "—Professor of Medicine, University of Birmingham."

Midwives

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many midwives in the Mersey regional health authority have been graded as D, E, F, G, H or I; how many of these midwives have appealed against their grade; and if he will list the number of years experience of each midwife at each grade.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke *[holding answer 5 December 1988]:* The numbers of midwives in the Mersey regional health authority transferred to each new clinical grade are given in the table. We do not hold centrally information on the number of appeals and on the length of service of individual midwives.

Clinical grades of midwives in Mersey regional health authority

Grade	*Number in each grade (whole time equivalents)*
D	44
E	320
F	201
G	390
H	16
I	48

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what information can be taken into account by the appeal machinery considering appeals for midwives in respect of their allocated grades other than shown on the assessment forms as submitted.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: Appeals panels can take account of any information which they consider relevant.

Cancer Screening

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he has any plans to licence mobile cancer screening units; and if he will list those regulations which currently govern their operation.

Mrs. Currie *[holding answer 25 November 1988]:* The Department has asked health authorities to establish a breast cancer screening programme. It is for health authorities to decide whether this service would be provided most effectively by static centres, mobile units or a combination of the two. We do not propose to distinguish between these two types of NHS unit by requiring mobile units to be specially licensed.

The statutory regulations which govern the operation of mobile screening units are:

Health and Safety at Work etc Act 1974

The Ionising Radiation Regulations 1985 (SI 1985 No. 1333)

The Ionising Radiation (Protection of Persons Undergoing Medical Examination or Treatment) Regulations 1988 (SI 1988 No. 778)

The Department's NHS procurement directorate has also issued guidance notes for health authorities on equipment requirements for breast cancer screening which includes comprehensive guidance on mobile breast cancer screening units including the constructional requirements of the trailer and its equipment.

Solvent Abuse

Mr. Trotter: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what steps he is taking to combat the problems of solvent abuse among young people.

Mr. Mellor: We have taken a number of steps to make solvent-based products harder to obtain by young people for the purpose of misuse; to educate young people about the dangers of misuse; and to help parents and those who work with young people to respond to the problem. Recent initiatives taken by the Department include funding a series of training seminars for residential care workers; contributing to the issue of advice to retailers, and the production of a video for parents; and funding an information officer post at the National Children's bureau.

Hospital Buildings

Mr. Nellist: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is the latest information he has as to the average age of hospital buildings.

Mrs. Currie: We are now collecting information about the age of hospital buildings as a part of the Körner requirement. This information should be available to health authorities from May 1989.

Teenage Pregnancies

Mr. Evennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health whether his Department plans to introduce a campaign aimed at reducing unwanted teenage pregnancies.

Mrs. Currie: We are currently funding three local projects on family planning and pregnancy counselling specifically aimed at young people under 25 in three health districts. The projects began last year, are being centrally evaluated, and will continue until March next year. We hope to use the projects to identify principles of good practice which can be commended to the Health Service as a whole.

Nurses

Mr. Robin Cook: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) if he will give the latest estimates of the nurses who return to nursing each year;

(2) what schemes his Department is currently operating to encourage nurses to return to nursing.

Mr. Mellor: We estimate that in the last year about 7,200 nurses and midwives returned to practice in the NHS in England.

Employing authorities locally are best placed to judge the opportunity and need for return to nursing campaigns. At national level we have helped by part-funding the Department of Health/*Nursing Times* "Recruit and Retain" campaign which has covered good practice on return to nursing and by analysing the professional register to identify inactive nurses by place of residence so that properly targeted local campaigns can be run. Next year, we plan to produce publicity and other material for use locally and are currently conducting a survey to identify the most useful types of material.

Mr. Robin Cook: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will list those district health authorities and Scottish health authorities which charge for a refresher course for those nurses wishing to return to nursing and those authorities which run free courses.

Mr. Mellor: We do not collect this information for England. This is a matter for individual health authorities.

Information for Scotland is a matter for my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland.

Eye Tests

Mr. Robin Cook: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many eye tests were paid for by the National Health Service in England and Wales for each year since 1979.

Mr. Mellor: The number of sight tests has been as follows:

	Millions
1979	8·6
1980	8·8
1981	8·9
1982	9·2
1983	9·6
1984	10·3
1985	10·8
1986	11·1
1987	11·7

Dental Checks

Mr. Robin Cook: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many dental checks were paid for by the National Health Service in England and Wales for each year since 1979.

Mrs. Currie: The information requested is set out in the table, by calendar year up to 1985 and by financial year thereafter.

General dental services England and Wales
Dental examinations

Year	*Number*
1979	26,025,290
1980	27,428,770
1981	27,881,370
1982	28,838,890
1983	29,336,490
1984	29,798,070
1985	30,120,720
1986-87	30,606,430
1987-88	30,651,820

Hospital Beds

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Health when it was decided to stop collecting available bed figures broken down by specialty.

Mrs. Currie: This decision was announced in April 1984 by health circular HC(84)10, which set out the agreement between Ministers and regional chairmen on the implementation of the first report of the steering group on Health Services information (Körner).

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) when the available bed figures for 1987 will be published;

(2) if he will make it his practice in future to publish available bed figures within six months of their collection.

Mrs. Currie: We publish information about beds in the National Health Service as soon as thorough validation on returns from all authorities has been completed. The available figures for 1987-88 will be published during January.

EMPLOYMENT

Self-employed People

13. **Mr. Maples:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many people in the United Kingdom are currently self-employed; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Cope: In June 1988, the latest date for which estimates are available, there were 2,985,000 self-employed people in the United Kingdom.

VAT

14. **Mr. Fishburn:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will make a statement on the number of new registrations for value added tax in 1987-88.

Mr. Cope: In 1987, the latest year for which figures have been published, the number of VAT-registered businesses in the United Kingdom increased by 45,000, or nearly 900 a week on average. The indications are that the rate of increase during 1988 has been faster.

Child Care Facilities

15. **Mr. Kirkwood:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what plans he has to introduce child care facilities for participants in Government training schemes.

Mr. Nicholls: Assistance with child care costs of up to £50 per week per child is already available to help all lone parents participating in employment training, the new programme for unemployed adults.

Labour Statistics

16. **Mr. Yeo:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what has been the increase in the numbers of those employed in service industries in the last five years.

Mr. Lee: Between June 1983 and June 1988, there was a net increase of 2,205,000 in employment in the service industries in Great Britain.

17. **Mr. Hayward:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will make a statement on the current level of unemployment in the south-west of England.

Mr. Nicholls: In October 1988 seasonally adjusted unemployment in the south-west region was 123,100, a fall of 36,600 over the last 12 months.

19. **Mrs. Roe:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will make a statement on the current unemployment levels in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Fowler: In October 1988 the level of seasonally adjusted unemployment in the United Kingdom was 2,160,200, the lowest for more than seven years. Unemployment has now fallen by 973,000 since July 1986, the longest and largest sustained fall on record.

20. **Dr. Twinn:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will make a statement on the current level of employment.

Mr. Fowler: Between March 1983 and June 1988 the work force in employment in Great Britain increased by 2,177,000 to 25,174,000, the highest level on record. Employment has now been on a rising trend for more than five years.

21. **Mr. Batiste:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will make a statement on the current trend of unemployment in Yorkshire and Humberside.

Mr. Lee: In October 1988, seasonally adjusted unemployment in the Yorkshire and Humberside region was 214,800, a fall of 41,400 over the last 12 months.

22. **Mr. Bowis:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will make a statement on the level of unemployment in the London region.

Mr. Lee: In October 1988, the level of seasonally adjusted unemployment in the London region was 267,100, a fall of 66,700 over the last 12 months. We know from the surveys carried out during the summer that there are also around 150,000 vacancies in London.

24. **Miss Lestor:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many people under the age of 21 years are currently unemployed in Eccles.

Mr. Lee: Unemployment figures are not available for the requested age group. However, in October 1988 the number of unemployed claimants aged under 20 in the Eccles parliamentary constituency was 335.

41. **Mr. Wigley:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many local employment offices have unemployment under 4 per cent.; and in which standard planning regions these offices are located.

Mr. Lee: The information is not available in the form requested. The smallest area for which unemployment rates are calculated are travel-to-work areas. In October 1988, 27 of these had rates of unemployment of less than 4 per cent., expressed as a percentage of employees in employment plus the unemployed (south-east 19 travel-to-work areas, East Anglia, four, north two, south-west one and east midlands one).

43. **Mr. David Nicholson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will make a statement on the current levels of employment in the United Kingdom and other European Economic Community countries.

Mr. Lee: Increases in the level of employment in the United Kingdom compare most favourably with those in the European Community. Since 1983 our level of civilian employment has grown by well over 2 million. Between

1983 and 1987 the increase in employment in the United Kingdom was greater than that for any other European Community member and was in fact approximately equal to that in the rest of the Community combined. Comparisons of the percentage of working age population in employment show that the United Kingdom is well ahead of our major European partners and second only to Denmark in the whole Community.

52. **Mr. Ashby:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will make a statement on the current level of unemployment in the east midlands.

Mr. Lee: In October 1988 seasonally adjusted unemployment in the east midlands region was 134,800, a fall of 30,900 over the last 12 months.

54. **Mr. Andrew Mitchell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will make a statement on the number of long-term unemployed in June 1983 and September 1988.

Mr. Lee: Unemployment figures are analysed by duration quarterly. In October 1988 the number of unemployed claimants who had been unemployed for one year or more in the United Kingdom was 885,504, compared with 1,050,487 in July 1983, a fall of 64,983 over the period. This comparison is slightly affected by changes in the coverage of the count as well as seasonal influences.

55. **Mr. Harry Barnes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he has any plans to revise the basis for collecting unemployment statistics.

Mr. Lee: No.

61. **Mr. Kenneth Hargreaves:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will make a statement on the current levels of unemployment in Lancashire.

Mr. Lee: In October 1988 the number of unemployed claimants in the county of Lancashire was 48,347, or 9 per cent. of employees in employment plus the unemployed.

73. **Mr. Holt:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will make a statement on the current levels of unemployment in the north of England.

Mr. Lee: In October 1988 seasonally adjusted unemployment in the northern region was 165,700, a fall of 25,000 over the last 12 months.

77. **Mr. Dunn:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will make a statement on the number of people currently in employment in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Lee: Between March 1983 and June 1988 the work force in employment in the United Kingdom increased by 2,178,000 to 25,739,000, the highest level on record. This rising trend has now continued for more than five years. The figures have been adjusted for the effects of seasonal variations. The work force in employment is the sum of employees in employment, the self-employed, Her Majesty's forces, and participants in work-related Government training programmes.

93. **Mr. Leigh:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment by how many, and as a percentage of those registered as unemployed, the unemployment figures have fallen for Lincolnshire over the past three years.

Mr. Lee: In October 1988, the number of unemployed claimants in the county of Lincolnshire was 17,775 compared with 26,964 in October 1985, a fall of 9,189 or 34 per cent. over the three-year period. The figures are affected by the change in the compilation of the count in March 1986 to reduce over-recording and by the change in the coverage from September 1988 due to new benefit regulations for young people aged under 18.

95. **Mr. Cox:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what is the number of *(a)* men and *(b)* women, over the age of 50 years who are at present unemployed in the Greater London area.

Mr. Lee: On 13 October 1988, there were 39,695 male and 14,178 female unemployed claimants, aged 50 or over, in Greater London.

ACAS

18. **Mr. Madel:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment whether he plans to meet the chairman of the Advisory, Conciliation and Arbitration Service before 31 December; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Nicholls: My right hon. Friend has no such plans. Ministers of the Department meet the chairman of ACAS from time to time to discuss matters of mutual interest.

Training

23. **Mr. Paice:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will make a statement on the progress of the employment training scheme.

Mr. Nicholls: Employment training is making very good progress indeed and interest amongst long-term unemployed people remains high. By 25 November there were already 91,500 people training with training managers.

34. **Mr. Riddick:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if any individual trade unions have expressed an interest in co-operating with employment training; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Nicholls: A number of trade unions and many individual trade unionists are helping to make employment training successful. I welcome this positive co-operation in helping longer-term unemployed people back into work.

40. **Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will give the number of places taken up on the employment training programme.

Mr. Nicholls: At 25 November there were 91,500 people training on employment training.

79. **Mr. Summerson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he has any plans to meet the general secretary of the trades union council to discuss adult training; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Nicholls: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply given earlier to my hon. Friends the Members for Sheffield, Hallam (Mr. Patnick) and for Thurrock (Mr. Janman).

89. **Mr. Harris:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many inquiries the Training

Commission has received from the public about the employment training scheme; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Nicholls: The Training Agency has received a large number of inquiries about employment training. There has been considerable interest in the programme by unemployed people, and by 25 November 91,500 people were already training with training managers.

Loan Guarantee Scheme

26. **Mr. Tim Smith:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will make a statement about the future of the loan guarantee scheme.

Mr. Cope: The loan guarantee scheme is currently due to run to 31 March 1989. An announcement about the future of the scheme will be made as soon as possible.

Industry (Productivity)

27. **Mr. Cash:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will make a statement on his Department's report on productivity in British industry up to July.

Mr. Cope: I will write to my hon. Friend.

Small Businesses

28. **Mr. Carrington:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he has any plans to meet the chairman of the British Venture Capital Association to discuss investment in small businesses.

Mr. Cope: I met Mr. John Nash, chairman of the British Venture Capital Association, when I opened the British Venture Capital Association financial forum on 1 December.

32. **Mr. Bright:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will make a statement on his proposals to improve the skills of entrepreneurs running small businesses.

Mr. Cope: The White Paper "Employment for the 1990s" published by my right hon. Friend describes new arrangements for delivering training, including that for entrepreneurs, and for the small firms service. This will lead to closer co-ordination of counselling and training for small firms. They are closely related activities and both will benefit.

38. **Mr. Boswell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will make a statement on the new registrations for value added tax by small businesses in 1980 and 1987.

Mr. Cope: The figures for numbers of VAT-registered businesses, new registrations and deregistrations are as follows:

Business registrations, deregistrations and stocks in the United Kingdom: 1980-87

Thousand

	1980
Stock at start of year	1,289
Registrations	158
Deregistrations	142
Net change	16
Stock at end of year	1,305

Note: The pattern of registrations and deregistrations may have been affected by disturbances in the regular processing of register amendments because of industrial action in 1979.

51. **Mr. French:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many small firms were registered for value added tax on 31 December 1987; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Cope: It is estimated that approximately 1,513,000 businesses were registered for VAT on 31 December 1987, and that some 96 per cent. of these firms are small.

91. **Mr. Bellingham:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he has any plans to meet the director-general of the Institute of Directors to discuss the development of small businesses.

Mr. Cope: Both my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State and I meet the director-general of the Institute of Directors frequently.

Older Workers

29. **Mr. Couchman:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he has any plans to encourage employers to recruit older workers into jobs; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Nicholls: My right hon. Friend and I have emphasised through public media the need for employers to recognise fully the potential contribution of older workers, particularly in view of the declining numbers of young people, and we will continue to do so. Jobcentres, where appropriate, raise with employers the need for age restrictions in vacancies they notify. We will keep under review how best to put the message across.

Enterprise Agencies

30. **Mr. Colin Shepherd:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many enterprise agencies are currently operating in the United Kingdom; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Cope: We know of 427 local enterprise agencies operating in the United Kingdom. Of these, 387 are approved under provisions of the Income and Corporation Taxes Act 1988 (previously under provisions of the Finance Act 1982), which allow business sector sponsors tax relief on their contributions to such bodies.

Long-term Unemployment (London)

31. **Mr. Nicholas Bennett:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many representations he has received following the publication of his Department's survey on long-term unemployed in London; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lee: I have not received any representations following the publication of the surveys of vacancies and longer-term unemployed people in London. The surveys reveal that although there are nearly 300,000 people unemployed in the capital there are also 150,000 vacancies and there is scope for a substantial reduction in unemployment.

At least a third of the vacancies on offer require no special qualifications or experience. But in any case many of London's longer-term unemployed have academic or vocational qualifications, including nearly one in 10 who have degrees. Many of them also have experience in management or skilled jobs. They therefore already have the background which employers are seeking.

A quarter of the longer-term unemployed people interviewed had not looked for work in the last week. Furthermore, many of those who said they were actively looking for a job did not do so using the methods which employers use to fill vacancies.

Some unemployed people in London clearly need the opportunity to retrain in up-to-date skills, and we now have employment training for them. But others need to look more intensively for the available jobs for which they are already well suited. The surveys also underline the importance of the measures the Government are taking to ensure that benefit is drawn only by those who are genuinely unemployed.

Trade Union Officials

33. **Dr. Goodson-Wickes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will make a statement on the number of hours taken off work by trade union officials for union business in 1987-88.

Mr. Nicholls: Statistics on this subject are not collected. These matters are determined between employers and union officials within the legal framework provided.

Portsmouth

35. **Mr. David Martin:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he has any plans to visit Portsmouth in the near future.

Mr. Fowler: I have no plans to visit Portsmouth in the immediate future.

Young People (Working Hours)

36. **Mr. Blunkett:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if his Department has conducted research into the possible effects on the physical and mental health of 16-year-olds of working hours considerably in excess of 48 per week without properly regulated rest periods.

Mr. Nicholls: The Department has not conducted any such research as there is no medical evidence to suggest that young people are less capable of working extended hours than adults.

Tourism (Far East and Japan)

37. **Mr. Harry Greenway:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will make a statement on the Government's proposals to encourage visitors to the United Kingdom from the far east and Japan.

Mr. Lee: The far east and Japan are increasingly important tourism markets, and the British Tourist Authority has developed a number of marketing initiatives specifically to increase visitor numbers from these areas. There were some 320,000 visitors to the United Kingdom from the region in the first six months of 1988, an increase of 24 per cent. over the same period in 1987.

Self-employment (Report)

39. **Mr. Richard Page:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many representations he has received following the publication of the Training Commission's report on the self-employed; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Cope: I will write to my hon. Friend.

Women

42. **Mrs. Clwyd:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what steps he takes to ensure that current Government policies will enable women in sufficient numbers to join the work force in the next decade.

Mr. Nicholls: My right hon. Friend has taken, and will continue to take, steps to enable women to join the work force through deregulatory measures which free women to compete equally with men for jobs; and positive action to help women obtain the necessary training for employment.

Nearly 1·5 million more women joined the labour force in the five years to March 1988.

In addition, all Government policies are now equal opportunity-proofed so that their effect on women can be assessed. My own Department has equal opportunity-proofed new policies and programmes since 1985.

87. **Mr. Amess:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many representations he has received on the increase of employment of women following the publication of the Training Commission report 1987-88; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Nicholls: The Government place great importance on the contribution that women can make to meeting skill needs in the Labour market. In developing its training programmes the Government has listened carefully to the advice it has received from numerous organisations with an interest in the economic development of women.

Disabled People

44. **Mr. Ashley:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what percentage of disabled people of working age are employed; and what action he is taking to increase job opportunities for disabled people.

Mr. Lee: The latest information relating to disability and employment is that provided by the Office of Population Censuses and Surveys in the recently published report on the financial circumstances of disabled adults living in private households, based on a survey in 1985. The survey estimated that 31 per cent. of all people of working age, who met the definition of disability used in that survey, were in employment. However, the survey information published to date does not make it possible to establish the proportion of those not in employment who would have been available for work.

For answer to the second part of the question I refer the right hon. Member to the reply given earlier to my hon. Friend the Member for Mid-Kent (Mr. Rowe).

59. **Mr. Rowe:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will make a statement on his proposals to further improve the employment opportunities for the disabled.

Mr. Lee: My Department maintains a comprehensive network of services to help people with disabilities find and

retain jobs through advice, assessment, rehabilitation and training; and in the case of people with severe disabilities, support in the form of sheltered employment. My officers are continuing to give all possible help through the application of these services and are doing so against a background of increasing employment opportunities. The range of services and help supported by my Department are the subject of an internal review, set up in March, work on which is now well advanced.

Small Firms (Report)

45. **Mr. Moss:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many representations has he received following the publication of the report by the Comptroller and Auditor General on the Department of Employment and Training Commission report on small firms; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Cope: I am not aware of any representations following the representations following the report. The Public Accounts Committee took evidence on it on 14 November.

Job Clubs

46. **Sir George Young:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will make a further statement on the progress of job clubs.

Mr. Lee: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply given to my hon. Friend the Member for Portsmouth, South (Mr. Martin) on Wednesday 30 November, at column *274*.

British Tourist Board (Annual Report)

47. **Mr. Alexander:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many representations he has received in response to the publication of the 1987 British Tourist Board's annual report; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lee: My right hon. Friend has not received any representations in response to the British Tourist Authority's annual report for 1987-88.

Tourism

48. **Miss Widdecombe:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will make a statement on the United Kingdom's proportion of the world tourist market.

Mr. Lee: It is provisionally estimated that in 1987 receipts from international tourism in the United Kingdom accounted for about 7 per cent. of the world total.

62. **Mr. Robert Hicks:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment whether he has taken steps to assess the efficiency of the operation of the section 4 financial assistance for tourist projects of the Development of Tourism Act 1969; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lee: The efficiency and effectivemess of the section 4 scheme is being examined as part of the review of tourism policy announced by my right hon. Friend on 18 July.

64. **Mr. Brandon-Bravo:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will make a statement on the contribution of overseas tourists to invisible earnings in 1987.

Mr. Lee: Overseas tourists contributed £6·2 billion (8 per cent.) to total invisible earnings of £80 billion in 1987.

80. **Sir Trevor Skeet:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many tourists visited the United Kingdom in 1987; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lee: Overseas residents made an estimated 15·4 million visits to the United Kingdom in 1987.

School Leavers (Statistics)

49. **Mr. Wallace:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many summer 1988 school leavers have yet to find either employment or a place on the YTS.

Mr. Cope: This information is not available.

Textile Operatives (Skill Levels)

50. **Mr. Nicholas Winterton:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what progress he is making in improving the level of skill of textile operatives; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Cope: Textile employers have the responsibility for determining and meeting the skill and training needs of operatives in their industry. The training agency has a close working relationship with the textile industry training organisations and is supporting projects run by them to develop standards of competence and to improve the level of skill of textile operatives. It is also currently funding over 900 YTS places in textile manufacturing.

I hope that employers will seize the opportunity which the Government's employment training programme affords them to improve recruitment and training in the industry.

Training Commission.

53. **Mr. Brazier:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will make a statement on his plans for the Training Commission.

Mr. Cope: I refer my hon. Friend to the statement my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State made to the House yesterday in which he announced the publication of the White Paper "Employment for the 1990s"; and to the Employment Bill.

Skill Shortages

56. **Mrs. Gorman:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will make a further statement about proposals to deal with skill shortages.

Mr. Cope: I refer my hon. Friend to the chapter on training in the White Paper "Employment in the 1990s," published by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State yesterday.

TVEI

57. **Mr. Wood:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will make a statement on the progress of the technical and vocational education initiative.

Mr. Cope: All education authorities in Great Britain are now participating in the technical and vocation initiative and 48 of them have begun to extend the

initiative to all their secondary schools and colleges. Students in some 1,400 schools and colleges are benefiting from the enriched curriculum provided by TVEI, and the education of virtually all 14 to 18-year-olds in Great Britain will become more relevant to working life as the extension programme develops within the overall framework of the Government's education policies.

Dock Labour Scheme

58. **Mr. Moate:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will make a statement about the future of the national dock labour scheme.

Mr. Nicholls: The Government are fully aware of views expressed about the drawbacks of the scheme. However, as was made clear in the previous parliamentary Session there are no current plans to change its operation.

Health and Safety Executive

60. **Mr. Strang:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will provide additional resources for the Health and Safety Executive.

Mr. Nicholls: Yes. The gross supply provision for 1988-89 is £109 million and the previously planned provision for 1989-90 is £112 million. This will now be increased following the outcome of PES discussions, and consideration is being given as to the amount.

YTS

63. **Mr. Mans:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will make a further statement on the progress of two-year YTS.

Mr. Cope: At the end of October 1988 there were 435,200 young people training on YTS and, since the launch of YTS in 1983, 2 million young people have joined the scheme.

66. **Ms. Armstrong:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what steps he is taking to improve the level of safety for YTS trainees; and if he will make a statement.

74. **Mr. Battle:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what steps he is taking to improve the level of safety for YTS trainees; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Cope: Health and safety remain of paramount importance in YTS. YTS is fully covered by health and safety legislation. There is a contractual requirement on all managing agents to comply with the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act both in work placements and off-the-job training. In addition, positive commitment to health and safety is one of 10 criteria a training organisation now has to satisfy before achieving approved training organisation status.

We have in hand improved safety training packages both for young people and trainers.

75. **Mr. McAllion:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many 16 and 17-year-olds have accepted training places in YTS.

Mr. Cope: At the end of October 1988 YTS records show 435,000 young people in training on YTS. A total of 252,000 young people entered YTS for the first time between 1 April 1988 and 31 October 1988—the majority of these entrants were 16 and 17-year-olds.

Ms. Armstrong: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will publish in the *Official Report* figures to show the categories of training and numbers of trainees on each, undertaken by females on YTS schemes *(a)* nationally and *(b)* in Durham, North-West constituency.

Mr. Cope: At the end of October 1988 there were 169,500 females in training on YTS nationally. The occupational breakdown of these trainees is shown in the following table.

Information is not available for trainees in Durham, North-West constituency. However information on the numbers of females in training by training occupation for the Training Agency Durham area is available, but not immediately to hand. I will write to the hon. Member shortly and place a copy of the letter in the Library.

Occupational breakdown of females on YTS schemes, 31 October 1988

Occupations	*Number of females in training*
Administrative and clerical occupations	56,500
Creative and educational and recreational service occupations	3,700
Health, community and personal service occupations	44,600
Selling and storage occupations	27,900
Scientific occupations	700
Catering and food preparation and processing occupations	8,400
Agricultural and related occupations	5,100
Fishing occupations	[1]
Transport operating occupations	500
Construction and civil engineering occupations	1,600
Mining, oil extraction and quarrying occupations	[1]
Electrical and electronic engineering occupations	700
Mechanical engineering and metal production and processing occupations	1,400
Motor vehicle repair and maintenance occupations	800
Non-metal processing occupations	900
Printing occupations	700
Clothing and textiles manufacturing occupations	10,200
Security service occupations	[1]
Others	5,700
TOTAL	169,500

[1] Less than 50 trainees.

Ms. Armstrong: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what is the vacancy factor on YTS schemes *(a)* nationally, *(b)* in the northern region and *(c)* in the Durham, North-West constituency.

Mr. Cope: At 31 October there were around 120,000 YTS places unfilled nationally, about 7,000 in the northern region and 395 in the local authority districts of Derwentside and Wear valley. It is not possible to provide separate figures for the constituency of north-west Durham.

Ms. Armstrong: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what is the number and proportion of YTS trainees who are of black or Asian origin.

Mr. Cope: Of the 396,100 young people in training on YTS at 31 March 1988, the latest available date, the number of young people who identified themselves as of black or Asian origin was 10,966 (2·8 per cent.). Number and participant rates for ethnic minority trainees on employment training is not yet available.

Ms. Armstrong: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what is the number and proportion of YTS trainees who are female.

Mr. Cope: Of the 435,200 young people in training on YTS at 31 October, 169,500 (39 per cent.) were female.

Ms. Armstrong: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many and what percentage of YTS participants in *(a)* the northern region, *(b)* Durham, North-West constituency and *(c)* nationally moved into full-time employment at the conclusion of their training for each of the last available five years.

Mr. Cope: The information is not available in the form requested. Results for leavers from the northern region, the county of Durham and Great Britain, where available, are shown in the attached table. A substantial number of the remainder go into full-time education or training (16 per cent. in the northern region 1987-88).

Percentage of YTS leavers in full-time employment—northern region, County Durham and Great Britain figures

	1983-84	*1984-85*	*1985-86*	*1986-87*	*1987-88*
Northern region					
Total number of leavers	n/a	[1]27,000	[1]30,000	[1]25,000	[1]23,000
Percentage of leavers in full-time employment	n/a	[2]42	[2]40	[2]42	[2]46
County Durham					
Total number of leavers	n/a	n/a	[3]	[3]	[3]
Percentage of leavers in full-time employment	n/a	n/a	[2]41	[2]43	[2]47
Great Britain					
Total number of leavers	128,000	368,000	418,000	356,000	324,000
Percentage of leavers in full-time employment	[2]49	[2]55	[2]53	[2]56	[2]57

[1] Estimated.
[2] Information extracted from 100 per cent. follow-up survey.
[3] Information not readily available.
Note: County Durham figures relate to the Training Agency's Darlington Area, the best available approximation.

EC (Labour Statistics)

65. **Mr. Ian Taylor:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he has any plans to meet his European Economic Community counterparts to discuss the levels of unemployment in the Community; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Cope: The next meeting of the Council of Employment Ministers will be on 16 December. The main agenda items are in the area of health and safety at work. We will, of course, be taking every opportunity to raise employment issues and the contribution that the single market can make to employment growth.

Training Opportunities

67. **Ms. Primarolo:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if his Department will undertake a survey of the training opportunities for those who enter employment at the age of 16 years.

96. **Mr. Andrew F. Bennett:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if his Department will undertake a survey of the training opportunities for those who enter employment at the age of 16 years.

Mr. Cope: This Department already collects information from a variety of sources on the training opportunities for young people who enter employment at 16. The principal sources at national level are the surveys undertaken through the youth cohort study and specifically commissioned research into vocational training standards in particular occupations.

The best local source of information is from the local authority careers service.

Apprenticeships

68. **Mr. Patchett:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment whether he has any plans to increase the number of apprenticeships; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Cope: It is for employers primarily to ensure the level of apprenticeship training that their industry needs. The Government encourage them to adopt cost-effective practices, in particular training to standards instead of wasteful timeserving, and also make a substantial contribution to support apprenticeship training through YTS.

The extension of YTS to a two-year scheme has increased the opportunities for all 16 and 17-year-old school leavers to benefit from the structured training and work experience previously only available to those undertaking formal apprenticeships.

European Social Fund

69. **Mr. Tony Banks:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what arrangements his Department is making for applications to the European social fund as part of the reformed European structural funds; and what action he proposes to take in regard to consultations with local authorities in drawing up the plans to be submitted to Brussels by 30 June 1989.

Mr. Cope: The European Commission is currently consulting member states about how best to implement the objectives of the reformed structural funds, including the European social fund. In the light of these consultations my Department is considering the arrangements which will need to be made and guidance will be issued as soon as possible to all the parties concerned, including local authorities.

Women (Technical Training Courses)

70. **Mrs. Mahon:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment whether he has any proposals to increase the number of women school leavers who enter technical training courses; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Cope: The Government give priority to ensuring that school-leavers have equal opportunities to enter

technician training or other training courses in Technical or Information technology subjects. The training agency policies reflect this, including YTS special women-only courses, reserved place schemes, Local action plans and new initial training arrangements to help young women to enter training which is unconventional to their gender.

The technical and vocational education initiative which is not being extended across all education authorities will also enable girls aged 14 to 18 to experience technology, and encourage them to obtain skills and qualifications of more direct relevance to working life, while still at school or college.

Short-stay and Tourist Breaks

71. **Mr. Gerald Bowden:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what plans he has to encourage English cities to promote short-stay and tourist breaks; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lee: As part of the Government's action for cities campaign, my Department is supporting the English Tourist Board's inner city initiative, whose aim is to encourage the development of inner-city tourism potential. The board has also supported the great English city breaks promotion, which has so far led to the sale of 75,700 bed-nights in the 14 cities involved.

Strikes (Lost Days)

72. **Mr. Roger King:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many work days were lost through strikes in October 1978 and October 1988; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lee: The number of working days lost through stoppages of work due to industrial disputes in October 1978 was 1,857,000. The most recently available figure relates to September 1988, for which it is provisionally estimated that 1,210,000 working days were lost; the October 1988 figure will be published on Thursday 15 December in the labour market statistics press notice.

Tourism and Hospitality Projects

76. **Mr. David Shaw:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will make a statement on the current capital investment in new tourism and hospitality projects.

Mr. Lee: The English Tourist Board's tourism investment report shows total investment in construction projects with a capital value of over £500,000 for the period January to June 1988 amounted to £1,984 million. This represents an increase of 60 per cent. over the same period in 1987.

Manufacturing (North-West)

78. **Mr. Pike:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many people were employed in 1979 in manufacturing industry in the north west; and what is the comparable figure for the latest date available.

Mr. Lee: In September 1979 there were 970,000 employees in employment in manufacturing industry in the north-west region. In September 1988 the latest date for which regional figures are available, there were 601,000.

Job Vacancies (London)

81. **Mr. Evennett:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what is the current number of job vacancies in the Greater London area.

Mr. Lee: In October 1988 the number of unfilled vacancies registered at jobcentres in the Greater London region, seasonally adjusted, was 29,000. This figure does not include all vacancies in the economy. A survey conducted in June 1988 showed that there were around 150,000 vacancies in total in Greater London, around four and a half times the level of vacancies recorded at the jobcentres at that time.

Redundancy Fund

82. **Mr. Simon Coombs:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what plans he has to enable employees of an insolvent business to obtain payments from the redundancy fund without first obtaining a certificate from the receiver or liquidator; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Nicholls: My right hon. Friend has it in mind to amend the provisions so as to clarify the circumstances in which the Department may pay an employee direct without being obliged to seek first a statement of the amount due from the relevant officer. The proposal will be included in the forthcoming Employment Bill.

Restart Interviews

83. **Mr. Fraser:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what information has been sought by Peat Marwick McClintock, as advisers to the Department of Environment on housing action trusts in Lambeth, about facts disclosed in job restart interviews.

Mr. Lee: Peat Marwick McClintock sought general statistical information from the employment service about unemployed people living in proposed housing action trust areas. No individual details disclosed at restart interviews have been retained by the consultants.

92. **Mr. Skinner:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many people have been interviewed for the restart scheme at the latest available date.

Mr. Lee: Between 1 July 1986 and 28 October 1988, 4,814,000 restart interviews have taken place.

Youth Training Allowance

84. **Mr. Mullin:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will consider increasing the youth training allowance.

Mr. Cope: The weekly allowance for first-year YTS trainees was increased to £29·50 in July 1988. There are no plans at present to further increase YTS allowances.

Tourism (Review)

85. **Mr. Bevan:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what progress he has made on his tourism review; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lee: The review team has seen a wide range of people in the tourism industry and received many written representations. I expect to receive its report at the end of the year.

National Community Service

86. **Mr. Nicholas Baker:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will introduce a programme of national community service.

Mr. Cope: We have no plans to introduce a programme of national community service. Community benefit is taken into account, where appropriate, in the choice of training projects under employment training.

Training Commission

88. **Mr. Oppenheim:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment when he last met the chairman of the Training Commission; and what subjects they discussed.

Mr. Nicholls: Ministers of this Department meet the chairman regularly to discuss the performance of the Training Agency's (formerly Training Commission) functions.

Regional Cost of Living (Survey)

90. **Mrs. Ann Winterton:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he has received any representations following the publication of the Reward group's September survey on cost of living in the regions; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lee: My right hon. Friend has received no representations.

Disabled Workers

94. **Sir David Price:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what measures he intends to take to improve the job opportunities for registered disabled workers, following the recent report of the Office of Population Censuses and Surveys.

Mr. Lee: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply given earlier today to my hon. Friend the Member for Mid-Kent (Mr. Rowe).

The recently published information in the report by the Office of Population Censuses and Surveys, on the financial circumstances of disabled adults living in private households, does not provide sufficiently precise information about the employment needs of people with disabilities. My Department has recently commissioned a survey to provide such information, the results of which will be available in the second half of next year.

Mr. Martin Davies (Compensation Claim)

97. **Mr. Nellist:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will review the case of Mr. Martin Davies, of 14 March way, Coventry, and his claims for compensation against the Training Commission, then the Manpower Services Commission.

Mr. Lee: No. A full investigation into Mr. Davies's case was held by the Parliamentary Commissioner for Administration in 1980. I am not aware of any developments since then which would warrant a further review of Mr. Davies's claims.

Youth Statistics

Ms. Armstrong: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what is the total number and proportion of 16 and 17-year-olds in *(a)* northern region and *(b)* Durham, North-West constituency who are currently (i) in full-time employment, (ii) on recognised training schemes and (iii) unemployed.

Mr. Cope: The number of young people in training on YTS in the northern region on 31 October, the latest available date, was 33,200 and in Derwentside and Wear valley (the nearest approximation to north-west Durham constituency) 952. Comparable information at that date for 16 and 17-year-olds in full-time employment is not available.

There are now hardly any under 18-year-olds recorded as unemployed.

Industry-linked Schemes

Ms. Armstrong: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what is his estimate of the numbers of school students currently participating in school industry-linked compact schemes.

Mr. Cope: My Department is currently assisting partnerships of employers and education authorities in 30 inner-city areas to develop plans to establish compacts in 1989. Applications for operational funding are due to be submitted early in the new year. Until then it will not be possible to provide any estimate of the numbers of young people who will be participating.

Household Income

Ms. Armstrong: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what was the average weekly household income for *(a)* the United Kingdom as a whole, *(b)* the northern region and *(c)* Durham, North-West constituency for each of the last available five years.

Mr. Lee: Information on average weekly household income is available from the family expenditure survey, but estimates are not available below regional level. Also, because of the relatively small sample size, estimates for some regions, including the northern region, are based on two years' data.

The figures for 1984-85 and 1985-86 are as follows:

Gross normal average weekly household income

	1984-85 £	*1985-86* £
United Kingdom	207·06	225·37
Northern Region	170·78	187·72

Because of the introduction of the housing benefit scheme in November 1982, figures for earlier years are not available on a comparable basis.

West Midlands

Mrs. Maureen Hicks: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will make a statement on the current levels of unemployment in the west midlands.

Mr. Lee: In October 1988 seasonally adjusted unemployment in the west midlands region was 212,200, a fall of 61,400 over the last 12 months.

Training Programme

Mr. Nigel Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will give the estimated number of people

who have been transferred from the community programme to the employment training programme in *(a)* Great Britain, *(b)* Scotland, *(c)* the Lothian region and *(d)* Edinburgh.

Mr. Nicholls *[holding answer 5 December]:* No community programme participants have been transferred to employment training. However, most community programme participants are eligible to join employment training and many have chosen to take up the worthwhile training opportunities that are available.

Young People (Derbyshire)

Mr. Harry Barnes: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many young people in Derbyshire are currently employed, unemployed and on YTS schemes.

Mr. Cope: The number of young people in training on YTS in Derbyshire on 2 December 1988, the latest available date, was 8,280. Comparable information at that date for the number of young people in full-time employment is not available.

With the guarantee of the offer of a YTS place to all 16 and 17-year-olds who apply for one and who are not in full-time education or employment, there are now hardly any under 18-year-olds recorded as unemployed.

ENVIRONMENT

Charitable Housing Associations

Mr. Fraser: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he has consulted the Charity Commission about the vires of charitable housing associations entering into mixed funding schemes and taking over council housing under the provisions of the Housing Act 1988.

Mr. Trippier: My Department is in regular contact with the Charity Commission. The precise form in which the objects of charitable housing associations are expressed varies, and the compatibility of any particular proposed action with those objects will depend on all the circumstances of the case.

Council Houses (Devon)

Mr. Speller: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how much cash received by district councils from the sale of council housing is at present frozen *(a)* in total and *(b)* within each district council of Devon.

Mr. Trippier: Under the Local Government, Planning and Land Act 1980, a local authority may in any year use 20 per cent. of its accumulated and in-year receipts from the sale of council houses for prescribed expenditure as defined by schedule 12 to the Act and regulations made under it. It may also at its discretion use receipts to redeem debt or to finance expenditure which is not prescribed expenditure but which is properly chargeable to capital account.

Disabled People

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) how much has been allocated by the Housing Corporation to individual Merseyside housing associations for adaptations to properties tenanted by disabled people; if he will list the associations' bids; and what were the comparable figures for 1987-88;

(2) how much the Housing Corporation has allocated throughout the United Kingdom for adaptations for the disabled; and what were the comparable figures for 1987-88.

Mr. Trippier: This information is not held by the Department. The Housing Corporation is responsible for allocating its capital programme for grants and loans to individual housing associations and types of scheme within the broad framework agreed annually with Ministers. I have therefore asked the chairman of the corporation to provide the information requested to the hon. Member direct.

House of Commons (Lighting)

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what level of illumination was recorded from the pre-1941 lighting in the Chamber of the House; and what are the current levels.

Mr. Chope: I have no information pre-1941.

For details of the current levels I refer the hon. Member to the answer to his question of 1 December at column *362*.

Mortgages

Mr. Rooker: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what representations he has received regarding the effects on PRC house reinstatements of the move to disallow for tax relief interest payments on mortgages required for loans to carry out reinstatements.

Mr. Trippier: We have received very few representations urging the removal of mortgage tax relief on loans where designated PRC houses are being reinstated. Decisions on changes to the tax system are a matter for my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer.

Housing Subsidies

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what was the total cost to the Treasury of housing subsidies to local authorities in each of the last nine years.

Mr. Trippier: The annual cost of housing subsidies from 1979-80 onwards can be found in successive White Papers beginning with "The Government's Expenditure Plans, 1985-86 to 1987-88".

Housing Co-operatives (Review)

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how far the review of housing co-operatives has progressed; whether in this review, he is taking special notice of the needs of ethnic minorities; and whether he will be initiating legislation to give recognition to co-operative tenure.

Mr. Trippier: The co-ops review is making good progress. Its remit is to look at all aspects of co-op promotion and support, and it is currently addressing the many issues raised in the written responses received from co-ops and other interested parties, including those mentioned by the hon. Member.

English House Conditions Survey

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what were the reasons for the delay in the publication of the 1986 English house conditions survey; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Trippier: The report was produced as soon as the analysis was complete.

Vacant Council Houses

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) if his figure for national council house vacancies included the number of houses vacant due to major repairs and modernisation;

(2) how he calculates the length of time council house vacancies exist; and how average figures for this are calculated.

Mr. Trippier: Local authorities report the number of council-owned dwellings empty at 1 April in their annual housing investment programme returns. They also provide a breakdown of this total according to the length of time that the dwellings have been empty (six months or less, over six months up to one year, over one year up to two years, and over two years) and the reasons why, including the number which are awaiting or undergoing major works of repair or modernisation.

The Department is currently undertaking a more detailed survey of empty local authority dwellings at 1 October 1988, which will also include information about the types of dwellings which are empty, and the average time dwellings let between 1 April and 30 September 1988 were empty.

Council of Environment Ministers

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment on how many occasions he has personally attended the European Economic Community Council of Environment Ministers.

Mr. Ridley: I have delegated the leadership of the United Kingdom delegation to this Council to the Minister responsible for the environment, currently my noble Friend the Minister for Housing, Environment and Countryside and previously my noble Friend the Minister for the Environment, Countryside and Water, and the Minister for the Environment, Countryside and Planning. They have all performed with outstanding success.

Planning Application, Torquay

Mr. Allason: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether English Heritage has been informed of the planning application for housing development at Steps Cross Field, Torquay (SX9167).

Mr. Chope: Yes. This is not a matter before the Secretary of State but I understand that Devon county council notified English Heritage of this application.

VAT

Mr. Heddle: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what assessment he has made as to the likely effect on *(a)* his Department's capital building programme and *(b)* the rent the Department will pay under occupational leases, of implementation of the European Court of Justice's judgment on value added tax on non domestic buildings.

Mr. Ridley: Implementation of the European Court of Justice's judgment on VAT will have no effect on my Department's capital building programme, since compensating adjustments have been made to the relevant expenditure provisions. At this stage, before landlords have decided whether to exercise their option to tax rents, it is not possible to offer meaningful estimates of the effects of the judgment on rental costs.

Rating Reform

Mr. Allen Mckay: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he has any proposals to bring in regulations to provide for his Department or any other Government Department to deliver to each household an estimate of the amount of poll tax to be paid by that household.

Mr. Gummer: No. But there will of course be regulations to enable the charging authority to provide each person liable to pay the community charge with details of the amount due and the payment arrangements.

Calderdale (Homelessness)

Mrs. Mahon: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what measures he intends to take to avoid further homelessness in Calderdale; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Trippier *[holding answer 1 December 1988]:* A review of legislation relating to the subject of homelessness is under way. It is not possible to say when the review will be complete, but efforts are being made to bring it to a speedy conclusion. The Secretary of State has no plans to make a statement at present.

Urban Programme

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment under what circumstances a local authority withholds any moneys approved by him under the urban programme; and what action he will take to ensure that moneys approved by him under the urban programme are paid within a reasonable period.

Mr. Trippier *[holding answer 28 November 1988]:* Urban programme grant from my Department reimburses a local authority for expenditure it has incurred on approved urban programme projects. It is therefore the authority's decision whether to fund a new urban programme project, once it has been approved by my Department. I would normally expect a local authority to continue to pay urban programme moneys for an ongoing approved project provided it was satisfied that the moneys are being properly spent.

Right to Buy

Mr. Cartwright: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will set out the number of appeals against right-to-buy valuations made in each London borough during the current financial year, indicating the numbers upheld by the district valuer.

Mr. Trippier *[holding answer 5 December 1988]:* The latest available information (at 1 December 1988) is as follows:

	Appeals made to the district valuer	*Valuations provided to date by the district valuer*	*Original valuations upheld*
Barking and Dagenham	53	24	6
Barnet	39	18	12
Bexley	3	Nil	Nil
Brent	27	19	5
Camden	197	167	19
Croydon	29	18	8
Ealing	1	1	1
Enfield	4	4	1
Greenwich	216	169	2
Hackney	30	12	5
Hammersmith and Fulham	26	24	6
Haringey	22	20	4
Harrow	4	3	3
Havering	31	12	3
Hillingdon	17	14	6
Hounslow	54	44	10
Islington	190	169	95
Kensington and Chelsea	8	7	4
Kingston	3	2	1
Lambeth	34	21	3
Lewisham	42	21	3
Merton	10	11	9
Newham	15	12	8
Redbridge	12	6	Nil
Richmond	42	28	19
Southwark	86	77	1
Sutton	16	15	Nil
Tower Hamlets	140	120	42
Waltham Forest	37	26	4
Wandsworth	61	43	22
Westminster	64	35	18
City of London	7	6	Nil

Note: The figures for Lewisham include those for Bromley.

Water Privatisation

Mr. Allen McKay: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is to happen to sewage agency agreements between local authorities and present water authorities following privatisation of the water industry.

Mr. Moynihan: Paragraph 15 of schedule 23 to the Water Bill provides that existing sewerage agency agreements between water authorities and local authorities will continue to have effect after the privatisation of the water authorities. The agreements will be terminable by either party giving reasonable notice to the other. However, sewerage undertakers will not be able to give notice which expires before 1 April 1992. If agencies are terminated then local authority staff engaged on the sewerage work will be protected by the termination provisions in existing agreements.

CFCs

Mr. Thurnham: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he has any plans to change the arrangements for recovering CFCs from scrap refrigeration equipment: and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: Officials of the Department of the Environment and of the Department of Trade and Industry are discussing with representatives of the refrigeration and rigid foam industries and of the CFC manufacturers possibilities for recovery of CFCs from scrap refrigeration equipment and their subsequent recycling or destruction with a view to developing advice on the matter. There are at present a number of economic, technical and logistical problems to overcome.

Written Answers to Questions

Wednesday 7 December 1988

DEFENCE

United States Chemical Munitions

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what United States chemical munitions or components of chemical munitions are *(a)* stored, *(b)* transported or *(c)* deployed within the United Kingdom.

Mr. Freeman: None.

Argentina

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many United Kingdom defence contracts have been concluded with Argentina since June 1982; and when export sales organisations of his Department resumed their efforts to promote the sale of military equipment to Argentina.

Mr. Sainsbury: No United Kingdom defence contracts have been concluded with Argentina since June 1982, and currently there continues to be no promotion of defence equipment sales to that country by my Department.

Nuclear Tests

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether there have been any British nuclear tests in 1988; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Sainsbury: No.

Procurement

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is his estimate of the annual procurement costs within his Department; and what proportion of this is obtained from *(a)* Wales and *(b)* south-east England.

Mr. Sainsbury: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave him on Tuesday 29 November at columns 570-71 and the answer I gave to the hon. Member for Meirionnydd Nant Conwy (Dr. Thomas) on 18 April at column *334*.

Mr. Menzies Campbell: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many persons are employed in the procurement division of his Department who are legally qualified.

Mr. Sainsbury: I will write to the hon. Member.

Staff Dispersal

Mr. Pawsey: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what consideration is being given to the relocation of Ministry of Defence procurement staff away from central London.

Mr. Sainsbury: Studies are already in hand into how best to rationalise the location of staff in the sea systems controllerate of the Procurement Executive, most of whom already work at sites in the south-west. Initial studies are now being launched into the feasibility of relocating the work of the land and air systems controllerates, which together employ over 3,000 people, the bulk of them in central London. As has already been said, Ministers are currently considering the results of an investment appraisal concerning the future location of the directorate general of defence quality assurance.

VAT

Mr. Heddle: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what assessments he has made as to the likely effect on *(a)* his Department's capital building programme and *(b)* the rent the Department will pay under occupational leases, of implementation of the European Court of Justice's judgment on value added tax on non-domestic buildings.

Mr. Freeman: Implementation of the European Court of Justice's judgment on VAT will have no effect on my Department's capital building programme, since compensating adjustments have been made to the relevant expenditure provisions. At this stage, before landlords have decided whether to exercise their option to tax rents, it is not possible to offer meaningful estimates of the effects of the judgment on rental costs.

Aldermaston and Burghfield

Mr. O'Neill: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many projects were examined in the independent programme audit of the capital works programme at Aldermaston and Burghfield carried out by British Nuclear Fuels; what was the number of staff engaged to carry out this audit; and what was the total cost of the audit.

Mr. Sainsbury: The BNFL programme audit reviewed four major projects and was carried out by a seven-man team representing 218 man days' effort. It is not the practice to reveal the details of individual contract costs for reasons of commercial confidentiality.

Trident

Mr. O'Neill: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how long a delay in a Trident-related programme must be before it is considered significant enough to report to the Defence Committee in the course of its annual examination of the Trident programme.

Mr. Sainsbury: It is the MOD's aim to provide the Select Committee on Defence with information concerning the progress of all significant aspects of the project. In reaching a judgment as to the significance of a projected delay in a part of the programme the MOD will consider aspects such as prospects for recovery and possible consequences of any overruns. Judgments are then made on a case-by-case basis.

Mr. O'Neill: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence where those elements of the Trident warheads that are purchased from the United States will be serviced and maintained.

Mr. Sainsbury: Servicing and maintenance of the British warhead for Trident will be undertaken in this country, regardless of the source of any particular elements.

Mr. O'Neill: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is the proportion of non-fissile elements in the Trident warhead that will be produced in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Sainsbury: It has been the policy of successive Governments not to reveal detailed information of this nature, for security reasons. I would, however, refer the hon. Member to the broad indications given in the recent report of the Defence Committee (third report, Session 1987-88, page 22, Q26).

Non-nuclear Defence Research Establishments

Mr. O'Neill: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when he expects to finish his considerations of the conclusions and recommendations of the report of the defence research study team into the feasibility of establishing the non-nuclear defence research establishments as an executive agency.

Mr. Sainsbury: Shortly.

Defence Statistics Organisation

Mr. O'Neill: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether he intends to order a feasibility study into the potential for using the private sector in the work of the Defence Statistics Organisation.

Mr. Sainsbury: I am still considering what action should be taken on the report on the potential for using the private sector in the Defence Statistics Organisation.

Contractors

Mr. Menzies-Campbell: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what contractual arrangements his Department makes when placing orders with defence contractors to ensure that deliveries are made on time and up to specification.

Mr. Sainsbury *[holding answer 6 December 1988]:* The Ministry's policy is to negotiate taut contract terms and conditions which define the requirements in terms of specification and delivery and which enable redress to be sought where appropriate.

TRANSPORT

Lorries

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will introduce regulations to control the shedding of stones and gravel from lorries; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Effective legislation for enforcement already exists in the Road Vehicles (Construction and Use) Regulations, as supplemented by the Department's code of practice on the safety of loads on vehicles.

Road Accident Statistics

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many children under the age of five years have been killed in traffic accidents in which the vehicle driver was found to be intoxicated with alcohol.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: In 1986, two children under the age of five years were killed in accidents where at least one of the drivers involved had a blood or breath alcohol content above the legal limit. In 1987, three children under five years were killed in accidents where a driver involved failed a roadside breath test. The accidents where a driver was killed and found to have a high blood alcohol content have not yet been completely indentified for 1987.

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many fatalities and serious injuries concerning children under five years travelling in vehicles involved in traffic accidents took place in the years 1980 to 1988; and how many of these children were travelling in car safety seats.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The table shows the numbers of children under five years who suffered fatal or serious injuries in road accidents while they were travelling in cars or other motor vehicles. It also shows the percentage of these child casualties who were recorded as using a child restraint or seat belt.

Casualties (fatal and serious) among children aged 0-4 travelling in motor vehicles: Great Britain: 1980-1987

Year	*Vehicle type*		*Percentage of (a) restrained*
	(a) Cars	*(b) Other motor vehicles*	
1980	329	39	6
1981	306	48	9
1982	330	36	11
1983	310	34	15
1984	381	33	19
1985	357	33	15
1986	390	30	19
1987	403	28	20

It is obvious that the numbers are influenced by the spreading family use of cars and the percentage by the growing installation and use of restraints by child passengers.

Motor Cycles

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many motor cycle accidents there have been in each of the last 10 years.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Too many. The trend is downwards.

The table attached shows the number of motor cycles involved in accidents in Great Britain between 1977 and 1987. The total number of motor cycle accidents is lower, since some accidents involve more than one motor cycle.

Motor cylce involved in accidents: Great Britain: 1977-1987

Year	*All Severities*
1977	73,676
1978	71,382
1979	69,173
1980	73,054
1981	70,949

Year	All Severities
1982	73,033
1983	65,962
1984	65,340
1985	57,822
1986	53,562
1987	47,024

Motor cycles include all two-wheeled motor vehicles.

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he is considering restricting the power of motor cycles bought for road use in the United Kingdom; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: There are existing and proposed limitations on the size of motor cycles that some riders may use. Motor cycle importers follow a voluntary maximum limit of 125 bhp for motor cycles brought into this country for use on the road.

The 1981 Transport Act restricted learner riders to machines of 125cc. Research indicates that this has reduced learner rider casualties by one quarter. The move up from a 125cc motor cycle to a large high performance machine can be too big a step for newly qualified riders. I therefore announced in February that we propose to introduce a new licence category for motor cycles in excess of 400cc. Progress to these larger machines will be linked to two years riding experience on a full licence. This will bring us into line with the relevant European proposals for harmonisation of driving licences. We have no plans to restrict the power of motor cycles sold in this country.

Road Signs

Mr. Jack: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list in the *Official Report* the locations on motorways and trunk roads of variable message signs, the number of signs currently in use on each road, the costs involved in installing them and details of their running costs; and if he will make a statement about his future intentions to extend the use of this type of sign and give details of the roads on which they will be installed.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The detailed information requested is not readily available. I shall write to my hon. Friend.

Roads and Pavements (Reinstatement)

Mr. Bowis: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what steps he is taking to ensure the reinstatement of roads and pavements to their original standard by the utilities following work undertaken by them.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The breaking open and reinstatement of streets by public utilities is regulated by a general code in the Public Utilities Street Works Act 1950. Reinstatement is either carried out entirely by the utility, or the highway authority may elect to do all or certain portions of it themselves. In cases where the highway authority does not elect to reinstate a street, the utility is under an obligation to carry out the reinstatement in accordance with any reasonable requirements of the highway authority and to reinstate openings up to the original surface level.

We accepted in our response to the Horne report on the review of the Public Utilities Street Works Act 1950 that new primary legislation is required. It is proposed that utilities should be made entirely responsible for reinstating the highway following their excavation work. They would have to comply with new national specifications for reinstatement and meet objective standards of performance for the repaired road surface. Work to prepare these specifications and standards is well advanced. Utilities would be required to make good, at their expense, any reinstatements which fell outside these standards during a warranty period.

Legislation will be introduced as soon as a suitable opportunity can be found.

Manchester Airport

Mr. Alfred Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a statement on the progress of the talks, involving representatives of his Department and of the United States Government, on the licence applications for Manchester routes by three United States airlines; and if there is any further action he will be taking.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The two sides explored a number of new ideas from which an appropriate basis for agreement may be found. A further round of negotiations will be held this month or early in January. Precise dates are currently being considered.

ATTORNEY-GENERAL

Patrick Ryan

Mr. Gow: To ask the Attorney-General whether he is satisfied that the request for extradition of Mr. Patrick Ryan from Belgium was accompanied by the appropriate legal documents prepared properly in accordance with Belgium law; what information he has as to the grounds on which that request was refused; and what steps he is taking to secure the extradition of Mr. Ryan from the Irish Republic.

The Attorney-General: I am satisfied that the documents were prepared properly to meet the requirements of Belgian law. The advice of the Belgian prosecuting authorities themselves was sought, given and followed in the preparation of the extradition request.

The request was refused by the Belgium Government on the grounds that:

"it would appear from examination of the case that the imprecise charges contained in arrest warrants delivered by the British legal authorities and retained by executing order of the chamber of indictments and investigation of the Appeal Court do not constitute the necessary elements for the offence of conspiracy in Belgian law, the only grounds on which, according to the executing order, extradition to the United Kingdom could have been agreed by Belgium".

The court of first instance and the Court of Appeal of Brussels had both upheld the extradition request in relation to the conspiracy charges.

As regards the steps taken to secure Ryan's extradition from the Republic of Ireland, I refer my hon. Friend to the answer I gave to the private notice question tabled by the right hon. and learned Member for Aberavon (Mr. Morris) on 1 December. The Irish Attorney-General's Office sent to my Office in the late afternoon of 1 December a letter requesting clarification and further information on certain matters set out in the statements of facts and law sent to him on 25 November. A full response

answering all the questions was transmitted to the Irish Attorney-General's Office during the afternoon of 2 December.

PRIME MINISTER

Ministers (Public Statements)

Mr. Maxwell-Hyslop: To ask the Prime Minister whether she will take action to discourage Ministers from making public statements outside the remit of their own Department.

The Prime Minister: Ministers will continue to speak on Government policy as appropriate.

Mr. Maxwell-Hyslop: To ask the Prime Minister whether the duty of making public statements concerning the safety of agricultural produce for human consumption reposes in Ministers of the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, or in the Department of Health.

The Prime Minister: The safety of foodstuffs consumed in this country is a matter for Health and Agriculture Ministers acting jointly. By arrangement, the Department of Health leads on matters concerning food hygiene and microbiological contamination of food which are likely to pose public health risks whereas Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food leads on all other food issues and associated health risks. In either case there is close liaison between Health and Agriculture Departments and consultation with relevant outside interests.

WALES

Welsh Development Agency

Mr. Geraint Howells: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he has any plans to alter the operation of the Welsh Development Agency; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Walker: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply I gave to the hon. Member for Alyn and Deeside (Mr. Jones) on 26 October 1988, at column *224*.

Hospital Waiting Lists

Mr. Geraint Howells: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what progress he is making in reducing hospital waiting lists in Wales; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Grist: Responsibility for the management of waiting lists in Wales rests with district health authorities within their allocated financial resources which (in terms of recurrent revenue provision and after taking account of inflation) have risen by 34 per cent. in the period 1978-79 to 1988-89. As part of the Department's efforts to reduce waiting times, £1 million of additional moneys have been made available to health authorities in each financial year from 1986-87 to 1988-89 to tackle specific problem lists. In 1988-89 this extra help should generate an estimated additional throughput of 10,300 new out-patients and 1,400 in-patients.

The Welsh Office is keeping the activities of DHAs under close scrutiny. In addition to the annual reviews of health authorities' performance, which include their efforts to tackle waiting lists, officials have recently completed a round of meetings with all authorities to discuss their plans for reducing waiting times.

At March 1988 72 per cent. of urgent in-patient waiting lists 61 per cent. of non-urgent in-patient waiting lists and 46 per cent. of out-patient waiting lists were within the waiting times targets. I am none the less concerned that many patients have to wait over-long for treatment, and the drive to reduce waiting times will continue.

Health Service (Grading)

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will indicate the date on which he first received grading projections from each health authority on the new clinical structure for nurses, midwives and health visitors.

Mr. Grist: Provisional returns for Welsh district health authorities were received by the Department during the first two weeks of September 1988.

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will publish a breakdown of the new grading structure for nurses, midwives and health visitors broken down by grade, type of hospital including psychiatric, geriatric and acute, by district and region.

Mr. Grist: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the replies I gave to my hon. Friend the Member for Vale of Glamorgan (Sir R. Gower) on 30 November, at columns *244-46*, and 1 December at columns *349-50*. Information by area of work is not available centrally.

Cervical Smear Tests

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what is the average time taken by each Welsh health authority to process cervical smear tests and provide the results for the patient and her general practitioner; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Grist: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply I gave him on 14 June 1988, at column *85*, which contains the latest comprehensive information available centrally.

EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

Free School Transport

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he has any plans to review the free transport limits for school pupils; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Butcher: My right hon. Friend has no such plans at present.

Disabled Persons (Staff)

Mr. Sean Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what percentage of his Department's staff are classed as disabled.

Mrs. Rumbold: 2·5 per cent. of the Department's staff are registered disabled persons.

It is the Department's policy to encourage applications from disabled people. All those who apply with the necessary qualifications, or pass the alternative written test, are invited for an interview.

VAT

Mr. Heddle: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what assessments he has made as to

the likely effect on *(a)* his Department's capital building programme and *(b)* the rent the Department will pay under occupational leases, of implementation of the European Court of Justice's judgment on value added tax on non-domestic buildings.

Mrs. Rumbold: Implementation of the European Court of Justice's judgment on VAT will have no effect on my Department's capital building programme, since compensating adjustments have been made to the relevant expenditure provisions. At this stage, before landlords have decided whether to exercise their option to tax rents, it is not possible to offer meaningful estimates of the effects of the judgment on rental costs.

Teachers

Mr. Fatchett: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what information he has as to the salaries of grades of teachers comparable to those in the United Kingdom in each member state of the European Community.

Mrs. Rumbold: Some information on European Community teachers' salaries in 1985 is published in a detailed research report "The Conditions of Service of Teachers in the European Community", published by the European Commission in 1988 (pages 133 to 160). A copy is available in the Library.

Mr. Fatchett: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will take steps to ensure that the pay of supply teachers takes account of their length of service and experience.

Mrs. Rumbold: The schools teachers' pay and conditions document 1988 already provides for local education authorities when determining the pay of a supply teacher to have regard to any qualifications or experience which they consider to be of value in the performance of his duties.

Science and Engineering Research Council

Mr. Dickens: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science whether he has received the annual report of the Science and Engineering Research Council for 1987-88; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: The annual report of the Science and Engineering Research Council for 1987-88 has been submitted to me under the requirements of the Science and Technology Act 1965, and a copy is being laid before the House today.

I was most interested to study the report on what has obviously been an exciting year for the council in fields ranging from fundamental work in astronomy to areas of great potential for future exploitation. I was particularly encouraged to note:

(i) the increase in the proportion of the council's expenditure applied to grants for core sciences and engineering research in higher education institutions—from 30·9 per cent. in 1986-87 to 33·5 per cent. in the year under review;

(ii) the development of the interdisciplinary research centre (IRC) concept, with the announcement of the first four centres during the year, at a cost of £25·7 million over six years;

(iii) the rapid response of the council and its academic and industrial committees to the fast-moving developments in high temperature superconductivity—including the choice of this subject for the first of the council's IRCs and in addition the allocation of some £700,000 in grant awards, with the later commitment of a further £2 million early in the 1988-89 session;

(iv) the council's participation, jointly with the Department of Trade and Industry (DTI), in the first collaborative LINK programmes in molecular electronics; advanced semiconductor devices; eukaryotic genetic engineering; and industrial measurements systems—the total SERC contribution to these programmes totalling £14·3 million over five years; and

(v) the deployment for high quality research by British scientists of sophisticated equipment such as the Liverpool university electron microscope capable of beam control over atomic dimensions; the high brightness lattice on the synchrotron radiation source at the council's Daresbury laboratory; transputer equipment at the national and regional centres, jointly funded with the DTI; and the 4·2 million William Herschel optical telescope on La Palma.

I look forward to seeing what progress has been achieved with these new initiatives and equipment in next year's report.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Inner-city Task Forces

1. **Mr. Knowles:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what further progress has been made in the 16 inner-city task forces.

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will make a statement on the progress achieved by his Department's inner-city task forces.

Mr. Newton: Since the task forces first began their work in 1986, they have supported over 1,000 projects, committing over £33 million of Government funds to stimulate the regeneration of their areas.

At the last count, as I indicated in my answer to my hon. Friend the hon. Member for Lancashire, West (Mr. Hind) on 26 October, task forces projects have been approved that are expected to generate or safeguard at least 4,000 jobs, and to facilitate more than 20,000 training places. Over 400 companies have been involved in the task forces' work.

55. **Mr. Favell:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will make a statement on the progress of the inner-city task forces in the north-west.

Mr. Forth: The inner-city task forces are central to the Government's action for cities programme. Their objectives are to secure more jobs for local people, to improve their employability, to encourage and facilitate local enterprise and to support environmental and crime prevention initiatives which also contribute to these objectives.

All three inner-city task forces in the north-west have made excellent progress towards achieving these aims. To

date, the Moss Side and Hulme (Manchester), Preston and Rochdale task forces have supported 141 projects which, among other things, have helped to create or safeguard 214 jobs and 1,315 training places.

All three have established development funds in co-operation with private sector institutions to help the start-up or strengthening of small businesses. They have sought to improve residents' employability by, for example, sponsoring courses in English as a second language, with particular reference to job-seeking skills. Training courses in skills relevant to industries such as textile and knitting, construction, computing and the banking and finance sectors have also been established.

Takeovers

19. **Mr. Tim Smith:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what was the value of takeovers by overseas companies in the United Kingdom for the latest convenient period; and what was the corresponding figure for overseas takeovers by United Kingdom companies.

Mr. Maude: The value of cross-border acquisition and mergers by overseas companies in the United Kingdom in the 12 months to September 1988 was £5·8 billion. The corresponding figure for cross-border acquisitions and mergers by United Kingdom companies was £11·7 billion.

25. **Mrs. Ray Michie:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster when he next plans to meet the chairman of the Monopolies and Mergers Commission to discuss takeover policy.

Mr. Maude: I have no plans at present to meet the chairman of the Monopolies and Mergers Commission to discuss merger policy. The chairman of the Commission meets my right hon. and noble Friend the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry and myself from time to time to discuss matters relevant to the work of the commission.

29. **Mr. Butterfill:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what action he is taking to ensure a level playing field for takeover bids within the European Economic Community.

Mr. Maude: The Government raised the issue of barriers to takeovers in Europe at the Internal Market Council on 18 November.

60. **Mrs. Mahon:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what is the current level of company spending on takeovers.

Mr. Maude: In the 12 months to September 1988 United Kingdom industrial and commercial companies' expenditure on acquisitions of United Kingdom companies was about £20 billion and their expenditure on acquisitions of overseas companies was about £6 billion. Further information is published in Business Monitor MQ7 "Acquisitions and mergers by industrial and commercial companies".

EC (Trade Balance)

21. **Mr. Ron Brown:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what he expects the impact of 1992 to be on the trade balance with other European Economic Community countries.

Mr. Alan Clark: The single European market will create opportunities for increased trade with the European Community as the barriers are removed. Realising the potential gains to the economy, including improved competitiveness against third countries, will depend on the flexibility of United Kingdom firms in responding to the new opportunities and challenges.

33. **Mr. McAvoy** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what he expects the impact of 1992 to be on the trade balance with other European Economic Community countries.

Mr. Alan Clark: The single European market will create opportunities for increased trade with the European Community as the barriers are removed. Realising the potential gains to the economy, including improved competitiveness against third countries, will depend on the flexibility of United Kingdom firms in responding to the new opportunities and challenges.

Information Technology (Research)

22. **Mr. Ian Bruce:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what he is doing to encourage collaboration between universities and industry in the field of information technology research.

Mr. Forth: The Alvey programme successfully brings together industry and universities in collaborative IT research, and will continue until 1991-92. Support for collaboration between industry and universities will continue through further national and European IT research programmes, particularly Esprit and our new advanced technology programme, launched by my predecessor in July 1988, to which there has already been a most encouraging response.

Civil Research and Development

23. **Mr. Eadie:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will make a statement on the level of expenditure by British industry on civil research and development.

Mr. Forth: Expenditure by United Kingdom industry on industrial research and development amounted to about 1 per cent. of GDP in 1986, just slightly above the proportion for 1985. The economic climate established by Her Majesty's Government should encourage United Kingdom industry to raise its level of R and D expenditure further.

Competitiveness

24. **Mr. Meale:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster which measures of competitiveness have shown an improvement since 1979; and which have shown a deterioration.

Mr. Newton: The two main measures of international competitiveness are relative unit labour costs and share of world trade. Compared with our major competitors United Kingdom relative unit labour costs for manufactured goods fell by 5·8 per cent. between 1979 and 1987. Our share of the volume of world trade in manufactures has been broadly stable since 1981, after many years of decline. The signs are that our non-price competitiveness, which covers factors such as quality, reliability and after-sales service has also improved.

Departmental Official History

26. **Mr. Dalyell:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will commission Sir Brian Hayes to write the official history of his Department for the period 1985 to 1986.

Mr. Newton: "Shoes and Ships and Sealing Wax", a history of the Department published in 1986, covered the period from 1786 to 1986. A copy was placed in the Library.

CBI

27. **Mr. Oppenheim:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster when he last met the Confederation of British Industry; and what matters were discussed.

Mr. Newton: I last met the CBI on 24 November when I spoke at its conference "Business Opportunities in Urban Regeneration".

Company Headquarters

28. **Ms. Mowlam:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster how many of the headquarters of Britain's top 100 companies are outside the south-east; and if he will give comparable figures for 10 and 20 years ago.

Mr. Atkins: I regret that this information is not available.

EC (Trade Deficit)

30. **Mr. John Garrett:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster with which European Economic Community countries Britain is running a trade deficit.

Mr. Alan Clark: In the 12 months to October the United Kingdom had deficits on visible trade with Belgium/Luxembourg, Denmark, Federal Republic of Germany, France, Italy, the Netherlands and Portugal.

EC (Research and Development)

31. **Mr. Worthington:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will make a statement on the future of the European Community framework programme of research and development.

Mr. Forth: There has been welcome progress in implementing specific research programmes within the current framework programme. The Commission is itself conducting a review and is expected to put forward its own ideas for the future of Community research next year. At this stage it is not possible to anticipate what its conclusions may be. The United Kingdom will play an active part in the subsequent discussions. We shall, however, insist that any proposals for revision of existing Community research activity must be fully justified.

Barlow Clowes

32. **Mr. Sedgemore:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster when he last met representatives of Barlow Clowes investors.

65. **Mr. Dunnachie:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster when he last met representatives of the Barlow Clowes investors.

Mr. Maude: I met representatives of the Barlow Clowes Investors Group on 24 November.

58. **Mr. Bellingham:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will make a further statement on the Barlow Clowes affair.

Mr. Maude: Copies of Sir Godfray Le Quesne's report were passed to a number of regulatory and professional bodies. Action being taken by the Securities and Investments Board and the Financial Intermediaries, Managers and Brokers Regulatory Association was set out in my answer of 10 November at column 261. The Institute of Chartered Accountants in England and Wales has set up a team to examine the work of the auditors involved in the case, which has been asked to report by the end of the year.

I understand that the joint liquidators of Barlow Clowes International and Barlow Clowes Gilt Managers continue to make progress on recovery of investors' funds and towards distribution of recovered funds, as described by my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster in his statement on 20 October.

Contract Industrial Research

34. **Dr. Bray:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what estimates he has made of the growth of the contract industrial research market in the United Kingdom and worldwide.

Mr. Forth: Figures published in the 1988 annual review of Government-funded research and development show a rising trend of expenditure on extramural contract research and development by United Kingdom industry. In 1985 the figure was £332 million rising from £464 million in 1986. Independent forecasts suggest that this trend is likely to continue and that contract research and development expenditure is growing faster than intramural expenditure, the latter growing appoximately in line with GDP. There are no published worldwide figures.

Action for Cities Campaign

35. **Dr. Twinn:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster how the private sector is responding to his Department's action for cities campaign; and how he plans to increase its involvement.

Mr. Newton: The private sector response has been excellent. Our series of seven breakfast presentations, completed in the east midlands on 6 December, has already led to over 300 offers of help or expressions of interest in urban regeneration from local business people. Chambers of commerce are becoming increasingly involved in planning the renewal of their cities. At national level the CBI, Business in the Community and Phoenix have joined in a forum to promote and assist the development of local business leadership. Above all, the growth of activity and investment in inner cities shows that the private sector is taking the business opportunities which action for cities is helping to generate.

The £3,000 million that the Government are spending on inner cities this year will do much to encourage more businesses to become involved in the inner cities. We shall also continue to make clear the commercial benefits of doing business in inner cities.

Merger Policy

36. **Mr. Hoyle:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he has any plans to meet Sir Gordon Borrie, Director General of Fair Trading to discuss merger policy.

Mr. Maude: I have no plans at present to meet Sir Gordon Borrie to discuss merger policy. Sir Gordon meets my right hon. and noble Friend the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry, and myself from time to time to discuss matters of mutual interest including mergers policy.

Manufacturing Industry (Output)

37. **Mr. Pike:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what are the figures in constant value of the output in manufacturing industries in the north-west *(a)* in 1979 and *(b)* at the latest date for which figures are available.

Mr. Maude: Gross value added, at constant (1980) prices, for manufacturing industry in the north-west is estimated to have been £9,171 million and £7,453 million in 1979 and 1986 repectively.

43. **Mr. Watts:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what are the latest figures for the output of manufacturing industry; and what was the comparable figure one year ago.

Mr. Maude: In the third quarter of 1988 manufacturing output was at a level of 115·8, based on 1985 equal to 100. This is 7 per cent. higher than the level of 108·3 for third quarter of 1987. Manufacturing output is at its highest ever level.

56. **Mr. Ernie Ross:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what is his forecast for the growth of manufacturing output in 1988.

Mr. Maude: In his Autumn Statement, my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer forecast that manufacturing output would be 7 per cent. higher in 1988 than in 1987.

Single Market

38. **Mr. Win Griffiths:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if any attempt has been made to monitor the effectiveness of the advertising campaign of 1992 and the completion of the single market.

51. **Mr. Andy Stewart:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what monitoring he has undertaken of the level of awareness among business men of the single European market achieved by his Department's Europe Open for Business campaign.

Mr. Maude: DTI has a substantial evaluation exercise to monitor the effectiveness of the campaign and the level of business response. This includes a detailed survey of 100 different companies each week.

59. **Mrs. Gillian Shephard:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what response there has been to his Department's Europe Open for Business campaign.

Mr. Maude: The response has been enormous. DTI has received more than 160,000 requests for information since March, including over 105,000 calls to our 1992 hotline. DTI Ministers and officials are speaking at some 500 conferences and seminars on the single market in the second half of this year.

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what response has been made by firms in *(a)* south Yorkshire and *(b)* the Doncaster area to the campaign on the single European market; what particular action has been taken by his Department to bring this awareness to firms in south Yorkshire so that this area benefits equally as other parts of Britain; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Maude: Since DTI's Europe Open for Business campaign opened in March, we have recorded more than 2,220 individual inquiries from the south Yorkshire area, including 345 from Doncaster. More than 200 senior business representatives attended DTI's regional conference held in Sheffield on 15 November.

DTI's regional office is active throughout the Yorkshire and Humberside region in arranging and supporting conferences and seminars. Staff from the regional office have been involved in 16 such events in south Yorkshire since 1 September.

British Coal (Accounts)

39. **Mr. Harry Barnes:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will use his powers under section 11 of the Competition Act 1980 to order an independent investigation by the Monopolies and Mergers Commission of British Coal's accounts with special reference to payments for coalmining subsidence.

Mr. Maude: The Monopolies and Mergers Commission has recently completed an inquiry under section 11 of the Competition Act 1980 into British Coal's investment programme. I also understand that the recommendations of the Waddilove committee which examined the corporation's subsidence compensation arrangements are still being followed through. I therefore see no present case for a further section 11 inquiry.

EC (Anti-dumping Powers)

40. **Mr. Teddy Taylor:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will make a statement on the recent decisions of the European Economic Community to impose levies under its anti-dumping powers; and what representations he has received from United Kingdom firms on the issue.

Mr. Alan Clark: Since 1 April 1988, six investigations by the European Commission into the alleged injury to Community producers caused by the dumping of goods in the Community have been formally closed with the imposition of definitive anti-dumping duties. Provisional anti-dumping duties have been imposed by the Commission in a further six investigations in the same period.

Ministers receive representations from time to time both from firms supporting dumping complaints and from those likely to be affected by anti-dumping duties on goods they import.

USSR

41. **Mr. Chapman:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will give the latest annual figures of the value of exports to and imports from the USSR.

Mr. Alan Clark: For the 12 months ended December 1987 exports to the USSR were £491·6 million and imports £875·4 million.

Interest Rates

42. **Mr. Turner:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what is the estimated cost to industry of the rise in interest rates since 9 May.

Mr. Newton: Bank base rates fell from 8 per cent. to 7½ per cent. on 18 May and have since risen in stages. The cost to industrial and commercial companies to date compared with the cost if base rates had remained at 8 per cent. since 9 May is estimated at about £700 million. The hon. Member should bear in mind that a 1 per cent. interest rate increase, even if sustained for a full year, costs industrial and commercial companies far less than a one percentage point increase in pay settlements.

Takeovers and Mergers

44. **Mr. Rooker:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he has any proposals to change the criteria upon which takeover bids and mergers are referred to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission.

Mr. Maude: No. As recently as March this year we published the results of a thorough review of mergers policy and we have no plans for a further review. We concluded that the potential effect on competition should remain the chief criterion for referring mergers and proposed mergers to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission.

Hotol

45. **Mr. Wood:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what discussions he has had with the aerospace industry about Hotol.

Mr. Atkins: My Department has continuing contacts with industry on this issue.

Japanese Liquor Tax System

46. **Mrs. Ewing:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will make a statement on progress being made towards the reform of the Japanese liquor tax system as it affects the Scotch whisky industry.

Mr. Alan Clark: The intentions of the Japanese authorities to introduce a single rate of tax for all whiskies is well on course for implementation on 1 April 1989.

Staff Dispersal

47. **Mr. Cyril D. Townsend:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what is his Department's policy on dispersing staff to the regions; and what proportion of his staff now work outside London.

Mr. Newton: The Government's policy is that Civil Service work should be located where it can be done most cost-effectively and provide the best service to the public. The Government's urban and regional policies are taken into account at an early stage when considering each possible relocation, in consultation with territorial departments and my Department's regional offices.

The Department has some 12,550 staff in post and about half of them will be working outside central London when the laboratory of the Government chemist completes the move to Teddington which is currently in hand.

We have taken decisions on moving about a thousand more jobs out of central London. We are also carrying out a thorough review to assess the extent to which other units of the Department may operate more cost-effectively out of London.

Monopolies and Mergers Commission

48. **Mr. Wallace:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster when he last met the chairman of the Monopolies and Mergers Commission; and what subjects were discussed.

Mr. Maude: My right hon. and noble Friend the Secretary of State and I met the chairman of the commission in the course of the year and have discussed matters relevant to the work of the commission.

Miss Widdecombe: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what action he will take to stop companies who make bids which are referred to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission buying further shares in the market.

Mr. Maude: My right hon. and noble Friend has already made clear that in future cases, where mergers are referred to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission and in the past he would have sought undertakings regarding further share purchases, voting or other matters, he proposes to safeguard the conduct of the inquiry by making an appropriate order to come into effect when the reference is announced.

However, this entails making a new order on each occasion. As the prohibition on further purchases of shares by the bidder is to apply in all appropriate cases, it is proposed to put the prohibition on a permanent footing. It is therefore our intention to include such a prohibition among the provisions relating to mergers in the forthcoming companies legislation.

Steel Industry

49. **Mr. Tom Clarke:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster when he next expects to meet the Trades Union Congress to discuss the future of the British steel industry; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Atkins: I have no plans at present for such a meeting.

Latin America and the Caribbean

50. **Miss Lestor:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what steps he has recently taken to promote trade between the United Kingdom and Latin America and the Caribbean; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Alan Clark: We should like to see a substantial increase of trade with the region and my Department's full range of export services is available to help United Kingdom companies to export there. In the past 12

months we have supported 23 outward trade missions to, three inward trade missions from and seven exhibitions in, the area. We also give financial support to the Latin American trade advisory group and the Caribbean trade advisory group, which are two of the Department's area advisory groups and do valuable work in promoting United Kingdom exports to Latin America and the Caribbean.

Small Businesses

52. **Mr. Harry Greenway:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster how many new small businesses have started up in each of the past five years; how many people they employ in *(a)* Ealing and *(b)* in total; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Atkins: The latest available estimates provided by the Department of Employment in respect of the numbers of new businesses first registered for VAT are:

Year	*United Kingdom*	*Ealing*
1983	180,000	929
1984	182,000	1,090
1985	182,000	1,057
1986	191,000	1,131
1987	205,000	1,311

Although most of the new businesses are likely to be small the numbers of people they employ is not recorded. Over the period the total numbers of businesses registered in the United Kingdom increased by 11 per cent., while for those registered in Ealing the increase was 38 per cent.

Consumer Protection

53. **Mrs. Ann Taylor:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he has any plans for seeking to extend consumer protection.

Mr. Forth: Part III of the Consumer Protection Act 1987 comes into force on 1 March 1989 making it an offence to give misleading price indications. We shall be making regulations under part III governing price indications at bureaux de change and the resale of electricity and gas by landlords. An order will be introduced under the Prices Act 1974 to implement EC directives on unit pricing and price marking of food and non-food products.

We plan to amend the law on the sale and supply of goods following the Law Commission's report and to amend the Consumer Credit Act and related legislation as detailed in the recent White Paper "Releasing Enterprise" (Cm 512). We shall also introduce revised regulations on pyramid selling.

In the field of consumer safety, we shall soon be introducing regulations with strict requirements for domestic gas cookers. Regulations on toy safety are being prepared to implement and EC directive. Safety standards for a wide range of consumer products are being updated for the purposes of the general safety requirement in the Consumer Protection Act 1987.

Car Market

54. **Mr. Galloway:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what has been the change in the United Kingdom share of the British car market so far in 1988.

Mr. Atkins: In the first 11 months of 1988 the United Kingdom share of the British car market was 43 per cent., compared with 48 per cent. in the same period of 1987.

North-west (Investment)

57. **Mr. Hind:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will make a statement on the role and extent of foreign investment in the economy of the north-west.

Mr. Alan Clark: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply I gave the hon. Member for Warrington, South (Mr. Butler) in the House on 13 July this year.

Manufacturing Industry

61. **Mr. Nellist:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what is the latest figure for the balance of trade in manufactured goods; and what was the comparable figure in 1979.

Mr. Alan Clark: Figures for trade in manufactures on a balance of payments basis and seasonally adjusted are:

£ billion

	Exports	*Imports*	*Balance*
12 months to October 1988	64·5	78·3	−13·8
1979 Year	30·9	28·3	+2·7

Post Office (Letter Monopoly)

62. **Mr. Gerald Bowden:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what examination has been undertaken of the Post Office monopoly on the delivery of letters; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Newton: The last public review of the future of the Post Office monopoly on the delivery of letters took place in 1980 and resulted in the suspension of the monopoly until 2006 in respect of letters carried for a charge of not less than £1. We naturally keep the issue of the letter monopoly under review but have no present plans for further change.

EC (Merger Directives)

63. **Mr. Grylls:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will make a statement on his policy towards the formulation in the European Economic Community of merger directives.

Mr. Maude: The Government have reserved their position with regard to the EC Commission's proposals for a merger control regulation. The United Kingdom continues to participate constructively in discussions on the proposal.

Overseas Companies

64. **Mr. Maples:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster how many overseas companies have set up operations in Britain; and what is his estimate of how many jobs such overseas investment has created and is sustaining.

Mr. Alan Clark: Since my Department's Invest in Britain Bureau started formally recording individual investment projects in 1979, there have been 2,463. These

include the establishment of a new business, the expansion or acquisition of an existing business, and involvement in joint venture. Altogether, from the information provided by the companies themselves, these have been responsible for the creation of over 185,000 jobs and, since 1983, are known to have safeguarded some 95,000 others.

European Community (Monopolies, Mergers and Restrictive Practices)

66. **Sir David Price:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what progress is being made in the Council of Ministers of the European Community in determining and then implementing a common policy towards monopolies, mergers and restrictive practices.

Mr. Maude: A European policy towards monopolies and restrictive practices is already in place. Discussions on the European Community Commission's proposals for a European merger control regulation were held at the Internal Market Council on 18 November. Some progress was made, but much still remains to be decided. Further discussions will be held at the Internal Market Council on 21 December.

British Petroleum (Kuwait Investment Office)

Sir Peter Hordern: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he has any plan to review his decision that the Kuwait Investment Office should sell its shares in British Petroleum, which amount to more than 9·9 per cent. of the company, within 12 months; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Maude: The report of the Monopolies and Mergers Commission recommended that the Government of Kuwait should be required to reduce their shareholding in British Petroleum over a period of some 12 months. However, in order to promote an orderly disposal of the shareholding, the report also recommended that this period should be subject to some flexibility in the light of market conditions. My right hon. and noble Friend the Secretary of State accordingly asked the Director General of Fair Trading to consult the Kuwait Investment Office on this basis with a view to obtaining undertakings to reduce the shareholding in British Petroleum to not more than 9·9 per cent. and to advise him further on the appropriate time scale for divestment.

Disabled Persons (Staff)

Mr. Sean Hughes: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what percentage of the Department of Trade and Industry's staff are classed as disabled.

Mr. Forth: The percentage of the Department's staff who are known to be disabled is 1·7 per cent. This figure includes both registered and unregistered disabled officers.

Data Protection Act

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster why members of his Department are on the interdepartmental group looking at the workings of the Data Protection Act; and whether he will define the concerns of his Department in respect of the Data Protection Act.

Mr. Forth: The Department of Trade and Industry's several concerns in the Data Protection Act are reflected by including in the group reviewing its working officials from the market division for the information technology industry, the division responsible for the protection of consumer interests in domestic and trade policy, and the enterprise and deregulation unit which co-ordinates action across Government to remove unnecessary burdens on business.

Companies Act 1985

Mr. Campbell-Savours: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what progress has been made on investigations into alleged offences under the Companies Act 1985 in respect of Messrs. Lewis and Tucker of 16 Hanover square, London W1.

Mr. Maude: I am not aware of any Companies Act offences committed by Lewis and Tucker but I shall consider any information the hon. Member may have.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster (1) what progress has been made on investigations into alleged offences under the Companies Act 1985 in respect of Wisland Investment Group Ltd.;

(2) what progress has been made on investigations into alleged offences under the Companies Act 1985 in respect of Bestwood Property Ltd.;

(3) what progress has been made on investigations into alleged offences under the Companies Act 1985 in respect of Chelwood Holdings Ltd.

Mr. Maude: Wisland Property Group Ltd., Bestwood Property Ltd. and Chelwood Holdings Ltd., are overseas registered companies and not subject to United Kingdom company law.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what progress has been made on investigations into alleged offences under the Companies Act 1985 in respect of Royel Investments.

Mr. Maude: When Royel Investments Ltd. was incorporated in the style of Growish Ltd. it used the trading name Royel Investments and I refer the hon. Member to my reply yesterday to his question about Growish Ltd.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what progress has been made on investigations into alleged offences under the Companies Act 1985 in respect of Platemede Ltd.

Mr. Maude: There is no United Kingdom company registered as Platemede Ltd., but I will consider any information the hon. Member may have.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what progress has been made on investigations into alleged offences under the Companies Act 1985 in respect of Cemetery Assets UK.

Mr. Maude: I assume the hon. Member refers to Cemetery Assets UK Ltd. which is currently in default in filing annual accounts and returns. The Registrar of Companies is taking action to strike the company off the register.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what progress has been made on

investigations into alleged offences under the Companies Act 1985 in respect of Clive Warren Lewis of Lewis and Tucker, 16 Hanover square, London W1.

Mr. Maude: I am not aware of any Companies Act offences committed by Mr. Clive Warren Lewis but I shall consider any information the hon. Member may have.

Multi-fibre Arrangement

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what progress is being made in the negotiations to renew the bilateral trade agreement with China under the terms of the multi-fibre arrangement; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Alan Clark: Negotiations were still in progress in Brussels this morning. They may conclude this afternoon.

Nissan Vehicles

Mr. Dykes: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will hold urgent talks with his Spanish counterpart concerning delays at the docks in Spain affecting imports of United Kingdom manufactured Nissan motor vehicles.

Mr. Alan Clark: My right hon. and noble Friend is pursuing this matter vigorously with the European Commission and the Spanish Minister concerned. We are determined to see the rules of the treaty respected.

Shares (Disclosure of Interests)

Mr. Cran: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he proposes any changes to the law on disclosure of interests in shares following the recent consultation by the Government.

Mr. Maude: The Government intend to make two major changes to the law on disclosure of interests in shares, which will be included in this Session's Companies Bill. The level at which interests in shares of companies have to be disclosed will be reduced from 5 per cent. to 3 per cent. The deadline for such disclosure will be shortened from five days to two days.

I believe that the changes we propose to make will significantly improve market transparency, and will in particular give investors an early indication when a potential offeror purchases a large interest in a company. The Government's policy is to leave merger decisions to the market unless they raise overriding issues of public interest. It is, therefore, important that adequate information should be publicly available as a basis for the market's assessments and decisions. The changes will enable the market to make a fully informed assessment, especially during the vital period prior to the launching of a formal offer. The Government believe that relying on the operation of the market mechanism to assess the merits of takeovers is in the best interests of industry. It is no part of our policy to afford extra protection to the management of companies which are the subjects of takeover offers.

A further improvement to disclosure would be a change to certain stock exchange rules. These rules limit the ability of companies to restrict the rights of shares when inquiries into share ownership are frustrated. Our consultation has shown that there is significant support for a relaxation of the constraints in this respect that the stock exchange places upon listed companies. I am in sympathy with that view. I, therefore, welcome the fact that the stock exchange has agreed to consider changing its rules. The exchange has assured me that it will make an announcement as soon as it has completed its own consultations with interested parties.

Pirate Radio

Mr. Evennett: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what representations he has received concerning interference with independent local radio broadcasts by pirate radio operators; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Atkins *[holding answer 6 December 1988]:* Several recent representations have been received concerning interference to one independent local radio broadcast station in London.

My Department's radio investigation service has already acted to remove the source of interference causing a particular problem and it will continue to act vigorously to clear the radio frequencies of unlicensed broadcasters that cause interference, though they always give first priority to dealing with interference to radio systems upon which emergency services depend.

CIVIL SERVICE

Non-departmental Bodies

Mr. Baldry: To ask the Minister for the Civil Service how many non-departmental bodies are currently in existence; and when the annual list of such bodies will be published.

Mr. Luce: On 1 April 1988 there were 1,648 non-departmental public bodies. This represents a net increase of five over the previous year, although there are 519 bodies fewer than in 1979. The bodies are listed in "Public Bodies 1988" published today. A copy has been placed in the Library of the House.

As the Prime Minister announced on 28 January 1988 at column 313-14, the Government will continue to resist proposals for new non-departmental public bodies unless it can be clearly demonstrated that they are the most appropriate and cost-effective solution, and will keep existing bodies under review.

SOCIAL SECURITY

Family Credit

Mr. Colin Shepherd: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many applications for family credit have now been granted since the inception of the scheme; and how many applications are currently awaiting determination.

Mr. Scott: By 2 December, 280,986 claims for family credit had resulted in awards and a further 47,925 claims were awaiting determination. In addition, 206,279 family income supplement recipients were awarded family credit without having to make a claim.

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many individuals claim family credit from each of his Department's offices in Nottingham; and how many individuals are entitled to claim family credit in Nottingham.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Family credit claims are dealt with centrally and information is not available on a local basis.

Mr. French: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what is the average length of time it takes to process a family credit claim from a self-employed applicant.

Mr. Peter Lloyd *[holding answer 2 December]:* Just under 34 working days in respect of self-employed cases cleared during November. Of this, less than 11 working days was for work within the family credit branch. The other 23 days were taken up by waiting for responses to inquiries.

Social Fund Officers

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security (1) how many social fund officers he has nominated under section 32(10) of the Social Security Act 1986; and for what areas;

(2) what matters relating to the social fund he has specified as matters about which the social fund officer nominated for an area may issue general guidance to other social fund officers in the area.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: A total of 454 officers have been nominated under this section. These are the managers or temporary managers of local offices, excluding national insurance offices, who are authorised to issue guidance to other social fund officers on the nature, extent and urgency of the needs in the areas served by their local offices.

Pensions

Mr. Andrew Bowden: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what plans he has to abolish the earnings rule for retirement pensions.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: None.

Mr. Andrew Bowden: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will identify those countries in which annual increments are paid to United Kingdom pensioners without a reciprocal social security agreement existing between the United Kingdom and the country concerned.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Outside the European Community and Sark, pension uprating increases are paid to United Kingdom pensioners only in those countries with which we have a social security agreement that specifically provides for such increases to be paid. Pensions payable to EC nationals living in the Community are uprated by virtue of Community rules. Pensions payable in Sark are increased in line with United Kingdom rates by virtue of a separate provision of the Social Security Benefit (Persons Abroad) Regulations 1975.

Mr. Bowis: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will list the benefits in cash and kind received by pensioners in the United Kingdom and in each country of the European Community.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: I refer my hon. Friend to the tables of social benefit systems in the European Communities, a copy of which is in the Library. The tables set out, for the principal schemes, the rates payable from 1 January 1988. Comparative statistics on benefits in kind are not available.

Allowances and Grants

Mrs. Beckett: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will publish in the *Official Report* the expenditure and number of claimants for each of the years 1978 to 1987 for (i) widow's allowance, (ii) widowed mother's allowance, (iii) death grant and (iv) maternity grant.

Mr. Peter Lloyd *[holding answer 1 December 1988]:* The information requested is as follows:

	1978-79	*1979-80*	*1980-81*	*1981-82*	*1982-83*	*1983-84*	*1984-85*	*1985-86*	*1986-87*
Widow's allowance									
Average number of beneficiaries (thousands)	36	37	34	34	33	32	31	30	30
Expenditure (£ million)	65	75	80	84	80	83	84	84	87
Widowed mother's allowance									
Average number of beneficiaries (thousands)	123	119	117	114	110	105	100	93	88
Expenditure (£ million)	156	165	188	207 (including £1 million AP)[2]	215 (including £3 million AP)[2]	222 (including £5 million AP)[2]	219 (including £8 million AP)[2]	215 (including £11 million AP)[2]	214 (including £13 million AP)[2]
Death grant (by calendar year)									
Awards (thousands)	583	593	593	591	597	600	[1]600	601	[1]600
Expenditure (£ million)	16	16	16	17	17	17	17	18	18
Maternity grant									
Awards (thousands)	622	659	654	[1]640	653	662	[1]700	694	[1]560
Expenditure (£ million)	16	16	16	16	16	17	18	17	14

[1] Estimates.
[2] Records of expenditure on widowed mothers allowance include amounts of additional Pension payable.

Mrs. Beckett: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will publish in the *Official Report (a)* the most recent figures for numbers of claimants and levels of expenditure, *(b)* the anticipated end of the year outturn on numbers of claimants and levels of expenditure and *(c)* the anticipated numbers of claimants and levels of expenditure for 1988-89 for (i) widow's payment, (ii) widowed mother's allowance, (iii) death grant and (iv) maternity grant.

Mr. Peter Lloyd *[holding answer 1 December]:* The information is as follows:

	Most recent figures available, 1987-88		Anticipated end of year 1988-89 figures	
	Number of awards	Levels of expenditure (£ million)	Number of awards	Levels of expenditure (£ million)
Widow's payment	[1]n/a	[1]n/a	55,000	55
Widowed mothers allowance	82,000	210 [2](including £15 million AP)	78,000	210 [2](including £20 million AP)
Death grant (information is given by calendar year)	[3]n/a	[3]3	[4]Nil	[4]Nil
Maternity grant	[4]Nil	[4]Nil	[4]Nil	[4]Nil

[1] Widow's payment was introduced in April 1988.
[2] Records of expenditure on widowed mother's allowance include amounts of additional pension payable.
[3] The expenditure on death grant in 1987-88 represents awards for people who died before then but that were paid in the 1987-88 financial year.
[4] Both maternity grant and death grant were abolished from April 1987.

HEALTH

Pharmaceutical Industry

Mr. Michael Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what was the annual return on the pharmaceutical industry's average historic capital employed on National Health Service business in 1987; and what comparable figures he has for the average for United Kingdom private sector industry.

Mr. Mellor: I have written to my hon. Friend.

Hypothermia

Mr. Andrew Bowden: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will list the number of cases where hypothermia was mentioned on the death certificate for each of the last 10 years for which figures are available; and how many of each annual total were people aged *(a)* 65 years and over and *(b)* 80 years and over.

Mrs. Currie: The table shows the number of death registrations which contained any mention of hypothermia, by year of registration.

Number of death registrations with any mention of hypothermia on the death certificate, all ages, aged 65 and over, and aged 80 and over, 1978 to 30 November 1988 England and Wales

Year	All ages	65 and over	80 and over
1978	708	597	327
1979	863	688	374
1980	596	497	237
1981	685	574	326
1982	664	541	319
1983	538	450	261
1984	555	462	257
1985	827	709	417
1986	837	698	439
[1]1987	559	448	277
[2]1988	363	302	165

[1] Provisional.
[2] Registration 1 January to 30 November 1988.

Congenital Abnormalities

Mr. Cran: To ask the Secretary of State for Health whether he will make available figures comparing the number of babies suffering from congenital abnormalities born to girls under 16 years of age at the date of delivery with those born to women between the ages of 18 and 35 years.

Mrs. Currie: The information is shown in the table for the latest years available. Figures are derived from a voluntary system of notification of congenital malformations observed at birth or up to seven days after birth. They are therefore likely to be an incomplete measure of the total number of affected babies.

Number of babies notified as being born with congenital malformations by age of mother, England and Wales, 1978-87

Year of notification	Number of babies: Age of mother under 16 years	Number of babies: Age of mother 18-35 years
1978	153	11,563
1979	153	12,282
1980	118	12,886
1981	117	12,226
1982	115	11,987
1983	127	12,560
1984	139	12,545
1985	121	11,902
1986	99	11,747
1987	116	12,212

Elderly People (Deaths)

Mr. Andrew Bowden: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what was the number of deaths among those aged *(a)* 60 to 69 years, *(b)* 70 to 79 years and *(c)* 80 years and over for each complete six-monthly period from 1 April 1978 to 31 March 1988 for England and Wales.

Mrs. Currie: The information is shown in the table.

Number of deaths registered in six month periods from 1 April 1978, persons aged 60 to 69, 70 to 79 and 80 and over years England and Wales

Period	Age group in years: 60 to 69	70 to 79	80 and over
1 April 1978 to 30 September 1978	54,448	87,894	82,065
1 October 1978 to 31 March 1979	61,382	104,655	103,526
1 April 1979 to 30 September 1979	52,658	88,841	83,997

Period	Age group in years		
	60 to 69	70 to 79	80 and over
1 October 1979 to 31 March 1980	58,348	101,304	100,062
1 April 1980 to 30 September 1980	52,526	88,774	85,433
1 October 1980 to 31 March 1981	57,706	101,403	104,203
1 April 1981 to 30 September 1981	51,003	87,722	86,298
1 October 1981 to 31 March 1982	57,808	104,422	110,338
1 April 1982 to 30 September 1982	51,151	88,023	88,605
1 October 1982 to 31 March 1983	57,482	103,202	110,941
1 April 1983 to 30 September 1983	50,765	88,331	90,264
1 October 1983 to 31 March 1984	54,512	98,956	106,859
1 April 1984 to 30 September 1984	49,190	87,007	91,7[illegible]
1 October 1984 to 31 March 1985	55,657	102,670	117,664
1 April 1985 to 30 September 1985	48,927	88,249	96,511
1 October 1985 to 31 March 1986	54,149	102,276	121,568
1 April 1986 to 30 September 1986	49,216	87,831	96,419
1 October 1986 to 31 March 1987	51,524	93,959	109,480
1 April 1987 to 30 September 1987	48,083	84,043	96,212
1 October 1987 to 31 March 1988[1]	54,028	95,145	120,229

[1] 1988 data is provisional.

Nurses

Mr. Macdonald: To ask the Secretary of State for Health when he next plans to meet representatives of all the nursing unions to discuss the regrading of nurses' pay.

Mr. Wallace: To ask the Secretary of State for Health whether he has any plans to meet representatives of the nursing profession to discuss the issue of staff regrading.

Mr. Mellor: I refer the hon. Members to the reply to the hon. Member for Peckham (Ms. Harman) by my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Health on 5 December at column *82*.

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many appeals have so far been heard by region, district health authority, and nationally against gradings issued to nurses; how many have succeeded; and how many have failed.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: We do not hold information on the numbers of appeals heard at health authority level centrally. No appeals against gradings issued as a consequence of the clinical grading exercise have yet been heard at regional appeals committee or Whitley council level.

VAT

Mr. Heddle: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what assessments he has made as to the likely effect on *(a)* his Department's capital building programme and *(b)* the rent the Department will pay under occupational leases of implementation of the European Court of Justice's judgment on value added tax on non-domestic buildings.

Mrs. Currie: Implementation of the European Court of Justice's judgment, on VAT will have no effect on the Department's capital building programme, since compensating adjustments have been made to the relevant expenditure provisions. At this stage, before landlords have decided whether to exercise their option to tax rents, we cannot offer estimates of the effects of the judgment on rental costs.

Residential Care Homes

Mr. Frank Field: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will request his Department's Social Services inspectorate to carry out a study of the arrangements for health care in non-statutory residential care homes similar to its review of arrangements for health care in local authority residential homes for elderly people carried out in 1986.

Mr. Mellor: The social services inspectorate carried out an exercise to examine the use made by local authorities of guidance issued by the Department some years ago. Such guidance has not been formally issued to non-statutory homes and we therefore have no plans to carry out a similar exercise there. We are now considering, in the light of the report on local authority homes, what further action we need to take to ensure good standards of health care in all residential care homes, including those in the non-statutory sector.

Resources (West Midlands)

Mr. Snape: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if, following the publication of the National Health Service management board review of the national allocation formula in July, he intends to implement the resources allocation working party formula such as to reduce future allocations to the west midlands region by approximately £23 million; and if he will made a statement.

Mr. Mellor: The Government are considering the recommendations of the National Health Service management board's review of the resource allocation working party formula in the wider context of the National Health Service review.

Dentists

Mr. Sean Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) if he will give the figures for the number of practising dentists *(a)* joining and *(b)* leaving the dental lists of family practitioner committees in the latest available five-year period;

(2) what information he has on the number of general dental practitioners who have left the National Health Service for private dentistry during the last five years.

Mr. Mellor: The number of general dental practitioners in England and Wales who joined or left the lists of family practitioner committees in the 12 months up to 30 September of each of the last five years are as follows:

Year	Entries	Exits
1984	1,199	793
1985	1,176	880
1986	1,137	957
1987	1,181	892
1988	1,161	838

We do not hold information on the number of practitioners who withdrew from an FPC list to practise privately.

Horticultural Therapy

Mr. Bowis: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what financial and others steps he is taking to encourage horticultural therapy; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Currie: The Department has grant-aided the Society for Horticultural Therapy since 1984. The current grant of £52,000 a year towards the society's project advice and training services was awarded in April 1988 and supports a range of activity including the promotion and dissemination of good practice in the therapeutic rehabilitation of hospital patients.

NHS Staff (Pay)

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will indicate the date on which he first received grading projections from each health authority on the new clinical structure for nurses, midwives and health visitors.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: I first received preliminary and provisional projections during the first two weeks of September.

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will publish a breakdown of the new grading structure for nurses, midwives and health visitors broken down by grade, types of hospital including psychiatric, geriatric and acute, by district and region.

Mr. Mellor: For the grading breakdown by district and by region, I refer the hon. Member to the answer given to my hon. Friend the Member for Staffordshire, Moorlands (Mr. Knox) on 28 November at column *147-48*. We do not hold information on the outcome by type of hospital centrally.

Salmonella

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many cases of salmonella poisoning caused by infected eggs have been reported in each month of 1988; and what percentage of total egg sales these figures represent.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: Reports of food poisoning do not normally identify the food stuff causing the illness. However, in England and Wales, there were 46 outbreaks involving 1,141 people in the first 10 months of 1988 in which the most likely source of infection was uncooked or partially cooked eggs. Recent studies indicate that some sporadic cases of salmonellosis have also been caused by eggs. We also have reason to believe that these figures underestimate the total number of people affected. The monthly breakdown of 1,141 cases is as follows:

	Number
January	27
February	—
March	—
April	60
May	302
June	159
July	207
August	145
September	114
October	127

Figures of egg sales are not available but the number of eggs produced each year in the United Kingdom is between 12,000-13,000 million. The percentage of reported cases to egg sales is clearly very small.

Although the risk of harm to any healthy individual from consuming a single raw or partially cooked egg is small, it is advisable for vulnerable people such as the elderly, the sick, babies and pregnant women to consume only eggs which have been cooked until the white and yolk are solid.

General Practice Finance Corporation

Mr. Boswell: To ask the Secretary of State for Health when the Government intends to invite offers for the purchase of the General Practice Finance Corporation.

Mr. Mellor: Hambros Bank, on behalf of the Government, will tomorrow issue an information memorandum to those financial institutions and others who have expressed an interest in acquiring the operating business of the General Practice Finance Corporation. The GPFC provides family doctors with a source of funds for the purchase, construction and improvement of their surgery premises in the form of fixed and variable rate loans and acquisition and lease finance.

An agreement has been reached with the general medical services committee of the British Medical Association providing for its participation in the management of the successor company to the corporation once it is transferred into the private sector. The object is to preserve the ethos of the existing business, maintain its sensitivity to the needs of family doctors, and ensure the operational integrity of the new company in its early years within any group of which it might become part.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Disabled Persons (Staff)

Mr. Sean Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what percentage of his Department's staff are classed as disabled.

Mrs. Chalker: In the diplomatic wing of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office 0·3 per cent. of staff are registered disabled people. In the aid wing of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office 1·4 per cent. of staff are registered disabled people.

Viacheslav Uspensky

Rev. Martin Smyth: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will raise with the Soviet authorities the case of Viacheslav Uspensky, on

hunger strike in protest against the refusal of the Soviet Government to grant a visa for himself and his parents to emigrate; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Chalker: We regularly make representations to the Soviet authorities on behalf of those, such as Viacheslav Uspensky, who are refused permission to leave the Soviet Union. We last raised the case of the Uspensky family at the bilateral consultations in Moscow on 23 June. We shall continue to raise this case at every suitable opportunity including during Mr. Gorbachev's forthcoming visit.

VAT

Mr. Heddle: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what assessments he has made as to the likely effect on *(a)* his Department's capital building programme and *(b)* the rent the Department will pay under occupational leases, of implementation of the European Court of Justice's judgment on value added tax on non-domestic buildings.

Mrs. Chalker: Implementation of the European Court of Justice's judgment on VAT will have no effect on the Department's capital building programme, since compensating adjustments have been made to the relevant expenditure provisions. At this stage, before landlords have decided whether to exercise their option to tax rents, it is not possible to offer meaningful estimates of the effects of the judgment on rental costs.

Gibraltar

Mr. Amos: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will announce the details of the agreement reached on 1 December with the Chief Minister of Gibraltar on the future of the Gibraltar social insurance fund.

Mrs. Chalker: Her Majesty's Government and the Government of Gibraltar have established that the state of the social insurance fund is such that it is no longer financially viable. Payments will continue to all beneficiaries at existing cash levels for a further five years. At the end of that time, the fund will be dissolved, and the balance paid out to all past and present contributors, taking account of their accrued rights. Under these arrangements, all beneficiaries will be treated in an equitable and non-discriminatory manner. Her Majesty's Government have agreed to make available the necessary funds to make up any shortfall in the SIF for the duration of these arrangements. The details of dissolution and distribution will now be worked out on the basis of a thorough analysis of the fund's contribution records.

Internal Market (EC)

Mr. Redwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (1) if he will list the measures required to complete the internal market for 1992;

(2) if he will list those of the items identified by the European Commission as being essential to complete the internal market in Europe which have to date been incorporated in *(a)* European Community and *(b)* United Kingdom law;

(3) if he will list those items identified by the European Commission as essential to complete the internal market where agreement has not yet been reached.

Mr. Maude: I have been asked to reply.

I refer my hon. Friend to the reply I gave to the hon. Member for Newham, North-East (Mr. Leighton) at column *440*. Since then the following measures have also been agreed by the Council of Ministers:

Control of Goods

Directive amending Directive 77/93 on protective measures concerning entry into Member States or organisms harmful to plants or plant products. [adopted]

Removal of Technical Barriers

Food for particular nutritional use (amendment). [common position]

Food labelling (amendment). [common position]

Two (concerning proprietary and immunological medicinal products) of a package of four proposals on the extension of directives to medicinal products not already included. [common position]

The following measures are either currently in force in the United Kingdom or legislation has been made or administrative action taken to bring them into force by the required implementation dates.

Control of Goods

Duty-free admission of fuel contained in the fuel tanks of commercial motor vehicles: lorries and coaches*.

Single Administrative document (SAD) third country aspects.

Simplification of Community transit procedure: amendment to Reg 222/77.

Abolition of customs presentation charges.

Elimination of customs formalities in the framework of the TIR Convention and the Introduction of common border posts—"banalisation".

Live animals of the bovine species: amended eradication directives to provide for final eradication of brucellosis, tuberculosis and leukosis.

Eradication of classical swine fever in the Community as a whole and swine fever.

Hormone growth promoters.

Medical examination of Personnel.

Antibiotic residues.

Control of residues.

Swine fever.

Control of foot and mouth disease.

Amendment to Directive 77/93 (plant health).

Maximum levels for pesticide residues in cereals and foodstuffs of animal origin.

Amendment of Directive 79/117/EEC on the prohibition of certain plant protection products (ethylene oxide).

Proposal for Directive on the fixing of guidelines for the evaluation of additives used in animal foodstuffs.

Modification of Directive 72/461 on health problems affecting Intra-Community trade in fresh meat and Directive 72/462 on health and veterinary inspection problems upon importation of bovine animals and swine and fresh meat from 3rd countries.

Acceptance for breeding purposes of purebred breeding animals of the bovine species.

Amendment to Directive 80/215 on animal health problems affecting Intra-Community trade in meat products.

Amendment to Directive 74/63 on undesirable substances and products in animal nutrition (maximum pesticide residues in animal feeding-stuffs).

Semen of animals.

Control of Individuals

Sixth Directive relative to exemptions in international travel: increase to 350 ECUs.

Tax reliefs to be allowed on the importation of goods in small consignments of a non-commercial character.

The Removal of Technical Barriers

Proposal for the extension of information procedures on standards and technical rules (amendment to Directive 83/189)

Type approval of motor vehicles and their trailers, Directive 70/156

Directive on the approximation of laws relating to weights and dimensions of certain motor vehicles
Modification of tractors framework Directive 74/150
General Directive on sampling and methods of analysis
Emulsifiers (modification)
Coffee extracts chicory extracts (modification)
Proposal for Directive concerning the placing on the market of high-technology medicinal products including those derived from biotechnology
Proposal amending Directive 75/318/EEC concerning the testing of medical specialities
Proposal amending Directive 81/852/EEC concerning veterinary medicinal products
Proposal for a Council Directive amending Directive 65/65/EEC concerning medical specialities
Council Directive relating to restrictions on the marketing and use of PCB's (polychlorinated biphenyls)
Council Directive relating to "Restrictions on the marketing and use of asbestos"
Non-ionic detergents (modification of existing Directive)
Tyre pressure gauge
Hydraulic diggers (noise)
Good laboratory practices—non-clinical testing of chemicals

Free Movement for Labour and the Professions
Comparability of vocational training qualifications
Co-operation between higher education and industry for advanced training relating to new technologies (COMETT)
Co-ordination of provisions in respect of certain activities in the field of pharmacy
Mutual recognition of diplomas in pharmacy

Common Market for Services
Collective investment undertakings for transferable securities UCITS Directive: special measures concerning certain investments.

Transport
Fares for scheduled air services.
Air transport: sharing of passenger capacity and market access
Air transport: application of Articles 85 and 86 (rules of competition).
Maritime transport:
1. freedom to provide services in the sea transport sector: between Member States and between Member States and third countries.
2. application of Articles 85 and 86 of Rome Treaty to maritime transport.
3. unfair pricing practices.
4. co-ordinated action to safeguard free access to cargoes in oceanic trades.
Road transport: organisation of the market (Community quota) for the carriage of goods by road between Member States: transitional and final stages [except in so far as all Community quotas and bilateral quotas between Member States will not be abolished until 1 January 1993].

Capital Movements
Liberalisation of units in collective investment undertakings for transferrable securities.
Liberalisation of operations such as transactions in securities not dealt in on a Stock Exchange, admission of securities of the capital market and long-term commercial credits.
Liberalisation of capital movements

Other Areas
Legal protection of micro circuits.

Fiscal Measures
13th VAT Directive concerning tax refunds to persons not established in the Community.
17th VAT Directive concerning the temporary importation of goods other than means of transport.
In addition the following measures do not require implementation by the United Kingdom because they are recommendations, or action is for other Member States or the Commission.

Control of Goods
Live animals of the porcine species: eradication of African swine fever in Portugal.
Live animals of the porcine species: eradication of African swine fever in Spain.

The removal of technical barriers
Proposals for a Council Recommendation concerning tests relating to the placing on the Market of medical specialties.
Membership of the European Pharmacopeia
Membership of the European Agreement on detergents
Protection of hotels against fire

New technologies and services
Recommendation on a European Code of Conduct relating to electronic payment (relations between financial institutions, traders and service establishments and consumers).
Establishment at Community level of a policy and plan of priority action for the development of an information services market.

Fiscal measures
Harmonisation of the structure of excise duties on alcoholic drinks (FOD Rum)

Mr. Redwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will list those items in the internal market programme which he intends to oppose in the Council of Ministers.

Mr. Maude: I have been asked to reply.

The Government strongly supports the aim of completing the Single Market. We attach priority to many of the proposals made by the European Commission, but have difficulties with some others—as do other Member States. Many measures in the Single Market Programme are complex and all involve detailed negotiation. It would not therefore be possible to present the information in the form requested.

ENERGY

Nuclear Reactors (Decommissioning)

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what progress he has made towards the production of safety specification guidelines for the decommissioning and disposal of British nuclear reactors operated by the United Kingdom Atomic Energy Authority in the event that such decommissioning and disposal becomes necessary; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Spicer: The United Kingdom Atomic Energy Authority determines the need for the decommissioning of its reactors as part of its overall technical programme and addresses the safety of such operations within well established procedures for safety management.

Mr. Angelo Casfikis

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he will list details of the occasions when he, or other Ministers in his Department, met Mr. Angelo Casfikis to discuss the reopening of Central Electricity Generating Board coal-fired power stations.

Mr. Michael Spicer: Mr. Casfikis has met Ministers here on five occasions:
10 February 1987, 19 January 1988, 17 March 1988, 15 April 1988, and 30 September 1988.

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he will list all communications made by his Department to

the Central Electricity Generating Board concerning the proposal by Mr. Angelo Casfikis and the I.P.E. Company to generate electricity under the terms of the Energy Act 1983.

Mr. Michael Spicer: My Department has been in regular touch with the CEGB, in particular in response to points raised by the hon. Member.

Coal-fired Power Stations

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what steps he has taken to vary the environmental conditions required to operate new or reopened coal-fired power stations and to encourage other responsible bodies to vary these.

Mr. Michael Spicer: None. It is the responsibility of Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution to determine the level of atmospheric emission control equipment to be fitted to such stations.

Electricity Generation

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what is his estimate of the proportion of the future supply of electricity he expects to be generated under the terms of the Energy Act 1983 in *(a)* 1990, *(b)* 1995 and *(c)* 2000.

Mr. Michael Spicer: My Department does not publish such estimates. Experience of the energy market has shown that changes in the future composition of energy production cannot be forecast with any certainty.

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he will consider amending the Energy Act 1983 to ensure the appropriate firm safeguards are required of future aspirant power generating companies to provide *(a)* security of the power supply, *(b)* high standards of pollution control and *(c)* financial security and propriety.

Mr. Michael Spicer: Clause 15 of the Electricity Bill will impose an obligation to supply on the public electricity suppliers, instead of the generators as now. Privatisation will make no difference to the environmental standards which the electricity industry has to meet. It will be required to meet United Kingdom emissions standards and will be subject to an amenity obligation similar to section 37 of the 1957 Electricity Act. Clause 3 of the Electricity Bill gives the Secretary of State and Director General of Electricity Supply a duty to secure that licence holders are able to finance the carrying on of the activities which they are authorised by their licences to carry on.

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he will list the approaches that have been made by his Department in *(a)* 1986, *(b)* 1987 and *(c)* 1988 to the Central Electricity Generating Board to encourage the implementation of competition in electricity generation as envisaged in the Energy Act 1983.

Mr. Michael Spicer: The CEGB is fully aware of its statutory responsibilities under the 1983 Energy Act.

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what information he has as to the number of new electricity generating units that *(a)* have been introduced or *(b)* are planned to be introduced as a consequence of the Energy Act 1983.

Mr. Michael Spicer: The number of private generators selling to area boards has almost doubled from 59 to 103 since the 1983 Energy Act. We are aware of some 16 new proposed private generation projects which would total over 6GW of new capacity; most of these have come forward since the Government's intention to privatise the industry was announced.

Electricity Transmission

Mr. Patrick Thompson: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy whether he has received the Central Electricity Generating Board's second response to the report by the Monopolies and Mergers Commission on the efficiency and costs of transmission of electricity.

Mr. Michael Spicer: The Central Electricity Generating Board has sent me its second response to the report which was published on 26 June 1987. Copies of the response have been placed in the Library.

The board's response summarises the action which the board has taken and is continuing to take. Of the five areas identified by the commission requiring priority action, progress has been made as follows:

1) Clear Definition of Board Responsibilities

The board will continue to ensure that the responsibilities of executive board members are clearly defined and understood up to the vesting of the CEGB's successor bodies. The CEGB has also identified the senior management of the successor bodies. It is important, particularly in view of the period of change that the industry is presently undergoing, that board members' responsibilities remain clearly defined.

2) Future Management of the Five Centre Grid Control Project

The board announced in June 1988 that it had awarded the contract for its five centre grid control project to Control Data Corporation. The CDC system will provide a single fully integrated computer system to support the operation and control of the high voltage grid transmission system. When operational the system will continuously collect, display and calculate information about power flowing through the network and the state of the network itself. The system will provide an effective mechanism with which to manage the grid.

3) Year to Year Changes in Transmission Plans, and

4) Fluctuations in estimated Plant and Equipment Requirements

Initial work on reviewing the board's last five transmission plans is expected to be complete by the end of this year. My Department will keep in touch with the progress of the review.

5) Approach to Budget Setting

The board has introduced a new project appraisal system which ensures that all projects are carefully analysed and re-examined. To ensure compliance with tight financial disciplines the board has increased the size of its audit function.

The board has responded positively to the recommendations made by the MMC and has made good progress in the fields of system operation and planning. I welcome the board's response and the progress it is making towards meeting the recommendations of the commission.

Since the board's first response the Government have announced their proposals to privatise the electricity supply industry, under which the board's transmission

system will be managed by a new transmission company. These proposals represent major changes in the organisational structure of the industry, including the management of the transmission system, and the board's second response takes account of these proposed changes. In view of these impending changes it is unlikely that the board will be called upon to produce a third response although my Department will keep in touch with the board on progress towards meeting the MMC recommendations.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Plastic Bullets

Ms. Short: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many plastic bullets have been fired each year since they first came into use in Northern Ireland.

Mr. Ian Stewart: Since the introduction of plastic baton rounds in 1973, the security forces have fired 54,234 (to 31 October 1988). The annual figures are:

Numbers of plastic baton rounds fired

Year	*Number*
1973	42
1974	216
1975	3,556
1976	3,464
1977	1,490
1978	1,743
1979	1,271
1980	1,231
1981	29,695
1982	500
1983	661
1984	1,768
1985	1,172
1986	1,785
1987	2,575
1988[1]	3,065
	54,234

[1] to 31 October 1988

Rathlin Island

Mr. John D. Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what plans he has to provide mains electricity to Rathlin Island; whether the survey report prepared by Northern Ireland Electricity is available; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Viggers: Northern Ireland Electricity has been evaluating methods of supply for Rathlin and is presently studying the results of a hydrographic survey, the implications of which, when known, will be discussed with representatives of the islanders.

Prisons

Mr. Peter Robinson: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what staff and medical care facilities would be required for an industrial or commercial business of comparable size and work force to that of each of Northern Ireland's prisons; and how far short of that level are the staffing and facilities of each of those prisons.

Mr. Ian Stewart: Regulations made under the Health and Safety at Work (NI) Order 1978, require employers to provide certain minimum levels of first aid facilities for employees who are injured or become ill at work. The first aid facilities provided in each of Northern Ireland's prisons exceed the minimum requirements.

Business Plans

Mr. Beggs: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will publish the names of accountancy firms in Northern Ireland which have submitted business plans or proposals in each of the last three years to the Local Employment Development Unit and the Industrial Development Board on behalf of clients.

Mr. Viggers: Information in the form requested is not readily available and could only be compiled at disproportionate cost.

Mr. Peter Clifford

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (1) what explosive substances were found in the car in which Peter Clifford was a passenger on 8 November; and what checks were made on his clothes;

(2) why Peter Clifford was arrested near Long Kesh on 8 November; what charges were made against him; and for how many hours he was detained;

(3) what happened to the finger-prints taken from Peter Clifford in Gough barracks on 8 November; and what records are kept of his arrest and interrogation;

(4) what questions were asked of Peter Clifford during interrogation at Gough barracks; and what documents he signed.

Mr. Ian Stewart *[holding answers 25 November 1988]:* A routine Army patrol operating close to Her Majesty's prison Maze near Lisburn, on 8 November stopped and searched a vehicle in which Mr. Clifford was a passenger. Traces of what was thought to be an explosive substance were found in the vehicle. The vehicle's occupants were subsequently arrested and the vehicle was taken for further examination. Following forensic examination of the vehicle and Mr. Clifford's clothing, it was established that the material discovered was not an explosive substance.

Mr. Clifford was initially detained under section 14 of the Northern Ireland (Emergency Provisions) Act 1978 for a period of four hours and subsequently arrested under section 12 of the Prevention of Terrorism (Temporary Provisions) Act 1984.

He was detained at 1409 hours on 8 November and released at 1300 hours on 9 November and therefore remained in custody for just under 24 hours. He was released without charge.

Whilst he was in custody, Mr. Clifford's fingerprints were taken and in accordance with normal procedure these have now been destroyed. Procedural records of his arrest and detention have been retained. During police interview Mr. Clifford was asked a number of questions about the substance found, his identity and the reasons for this presence in that particular area. Before his release Mr. Clifford signed a number of official forms relating to his detention. I now understand that Mr. Clifford has lodged a formal complaint in relation to his detention and this is being investigated by the police.

ENVIRONMENT

Radon

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) how many households in Yorkshire have been recorded as being over the recommended safety limit in respect of radon; and if he will list their locations;

(2) if he will list any sites in Yorkshire that have been identified as being over the safety limit in respect of radon; and what radiation levels were recorded.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The National Radiological Protection Board surveys in the three Yorkshire counties have led to the discovery of one house, in west Yorkshire, with a radon concentration at the action level at 400 bequerels per cubic metre. In the county as a whole, concentrations are almost exactly the national average.

Pollution Control (Self-Regulation)

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he intends to allow private industry to self regulate pollution control methods; how he would monitor such voluntary actions; and whether he will consider the application of stricter legislative controls on environmentally hazardous emissions.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: Legislative controls over hazardous emissions already exist. Where monitoring is undertaken by industry as part of the control system, it is policed by the pollution control authority. Proposals currently being developed on an integrated system for controlling industrial pollution will make this framework more efficient and effective.

Radioactivity

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list the premises in Nottingham which are authorised under the Radioactive Substances Act 1960.

Mrs. Bottomley: A list of all premises in England and Wales authorised under the Radioactive Substances Act 1960 was published by the Department in April 1988 and a copy was placed in the Library of the House.

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is the function of the RIMNET station at Watnall, Nottingham.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The function of the RIMNET station of Watnall is to measure gamma dose rate.

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether RIMNET stations can detect *(a)* particulate radioactivity, *(b)* gaseous radionuclides and *(c)* radionuclides with short half-lives.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The RIMNET monitors detect particulate and gaseous radionuclides which emit gamma radiation. They are able to detect both short and long-life radionuclides.

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list the monitoring equipment used by RIMNET; and if he will make a statement on the future of RIMNET.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: RIMNET sites are currently equipped with Geiger-Muller gamma dose rate monitors. The proposals for the development of RIMNET are set out in the DOE booklet "Nuclear Accidents Overseas—The National Response Plan and Radioactive Incident Monitoring Network (RIMNET). A Statement of Proposals", a copy of which has been placed in the Library of the House.

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list the sites where his Department conducts random monitoring for radioactivity in Nottingham other than at premises authorised under the Radioactive Substances Act 1960; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: Nottingham's drinking water is monitored regularly by HM inspectorate of pollution under the national environmental radioactivity monitoring programme. The effects of all liquid discharges in the Nottingham area are monitored by sampling the river Trent. No other monitoring for radioactivity is warranted.

Homelessness

Ms. Quin: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what new proposals he has developed to tackle homelessness.

Mr. Trippier: A review of the current homelessness legislation is under way. As yet, it is too early to say whether this will result in any new, national initiatives.

Single Market

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what plans his Department has to give advice and guidelines to local authorities on the implications for them of the introduction of the single European market in 1992; and if he would make a statement.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The Department will shortly be discussing this matter with representatives of the local authority associations.

Global Developments

Mr. Harry Barnes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will publish an annual progress report on how his Department's policies, programmes and spending are directed towards global sustainable developments.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the answer I gave to the hon. Member for Southport (Mr. Fearn) on 30 November 1988 at column *283*.

Planning Appeals (Hampshire)

Sir David Price: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many planning appeals relating to Hampshire were made to his Department in 1987; how many were determined; how many were allowed; and what has happened to those not determined.

Mr. Howard: A total of 1,124 planning appeals relating to Hampshire were lodged in 1987, but 186 of these have been withdrawn. Of the remainder, 351 were allowed, 570

were dismissed and 17 are still to be determined. Those appeals still to be decided are either in abeyance (at the request of the parties) or are in the final stages of processing.

Clay Pigeon Shooting

Sir Nicholas Bonsor: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will annul the General Development Order 1988 to ration permitted days use of land for clay pigeon shooting to 28.

Mr. Chope: The General Development Order 1988 came into operation on 5 December. We intend to consult shortly on whether to amend it so as to increase from 14 to 28 the maximum number of days in a year on which land may be used for clay pigeon shooting without planning permission.

Rating Reform

Mr. Rooker: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement on progress on his consultations regarding the draft poll tax regulations.

Mr. Gummer: We are currently consulting the local authority associations and other bodies on draft regulations covering the administration and enforcement of community charges. Consultation on further regulations will follow shortly.

Housing Statistics

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what are the most recent figures he has for the number of dwellings owned by *(a)* the London residuary body, *(b)* the Inner London education authority, *(c)* central Government Departments and *(d)* housing associations, which are unlawfully occupied in each London borough.

Mr. Trippier: This information is not held by the Department.

Sewage Works

Mr. Hanley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he is yet in a position to make a further statement on his policies for improving the performance of sewage treatment works in England and Wales.

Mr. Howard: Yes. There will be capital programmes involving expenditure of £900 million to £1,000 million designed to bring substandard works into compliance with their legal limits by March 1992. But in some cases, because of the scale of the design and construction work which is necessary, it will not be possible to complete the work by this date. In those cases, completion will be achieved as soon as practically possible thereafter. The Government will be discussing with water authorities the detailed timetables for their programmes.

Applications for temporary variations in consent conditions will be considered in cases where improvement works are programmed for completion by March 1992. This is the best way of securing rapid completion of major investment programmes while protecting river quality.

Upper tier conditions in time-limited consents will also be introduced as a new maximum limit for effluent standards. These will be set at levels which ensure the protection of the receiving waters against excessive discharges. Water authorities exceeding their limits will be at risk of prosecution.

Direct Labour Organisations

Mr. Hind: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what amendments he will be seeking to make to the regulations made under the Local Government, Planning and Land Act 1980 relating to direct labour organisations, in the light of consultation.

Mr. Gummer: My right hon. Friends the Secretaries of State for the Environment and Wales have now decided, in the light of a consultation exercise carried out earlier this year, that all building and maintenance work other than highways and sewerage work should be subject to competition from October of next year and that the present exemption for direct labour organisations with not more than 30 employees should be reduced to 15 employees.

We are also prohibiting authorities from renewing maintenance contracts with their direct labour organisations without first going out to tender. We are examining the scope for restricting the kinds of emergency work which can be carried out by direct labour organisations without open competition.

The present regulations, made under part III of the Local Government Planning and Land Act 1980, have been in force since 1983 and the Government feel that there is no longer a case for any competition-free allowance for this work. Some authorities already expose all their maintenance and minor construction work to competition.

We estimate that an extra £400 million of work would be exposed to compulsory competition each year. A 30-employee de minimis threshold no longer seems justified. This could allow an authority to carry out work worth £600,000 a year without competition.

Local Authority Rents

Sir Ian Gilmour: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will publish a table showing average local authority rents at 1987-88 prices, for each year since 1967-68.

Mr. Trippier *[holding answer 6 December 1988]:* Average weekly unrebated rents for English local authorities, revalued to 1987-88 prices using the retail prices index, are as follows:

	£ per week
1967-68	11·23
1968-69	11·63
1969-70	12·01
1970-71	12·49
1971-72	12·33
1972-73	12·75
1973-74	15·01
1974-75	13·51
1975-76	12·24
1976-77	12·18
1977-78	12·15
1978-79	11·85
1979-80	11·26
1980-81	12·22
1981-82	15·43
1982-83	16·97

	£ per week
1983-84	16·75
1984-85	16·81
1985-86	16·77
1986-87	17·14
1987-88	17·36

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Fish (Contamination)

Mr. McTaggart: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what measures his Department is taking to monitor the level of contamination of fish landed at British ports; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Donald Thompson: Scientists from my Department carry out a regular monitoring programme to assess the quality of fish and shellfish in terms of contaminant concentrations. Results of this programme are published at regular intervals in aquatic environment monitoring reports which are available in the Library of the House.

The information gathered over almost 20 years has shown that levels of contaminants are low and that the quality of our fish complies fully with European Community environmental quality standards and national guidelines.

Fishing Vessels

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what EEC funding for the buying up of fishing vessels is available under regulation 4028/86; how many British vessels have been able to take advantage of this; and what proposals he has for allowing more British fishing vessels to do so.

Mr. Donald Thompson: The Commission has allocated 100 mecu (£65 million) over a five-year period from 1987 to 1991 under regulation 4028/86 for the buying up (decommissioning) of fishing vessels. The United Kingdom has not implemented this particular measure and at present we have no plans to do so.

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many Spanish-owned vessels are currently on the register of British fishing vessels; what ports they fish from; and in which quota sectors they operate.

Mr. Donald Thompson: There are at present approximately 150 fishing vessels on the British register which are believed to be beneficially Spanish owned. Of these 97 are licensed to fish for stocks subject to quotas.

The vessels operate mainly in Western waters (ICES areas VI, Vb, VII and VIII) taking substantial quantities of hake, megrim and anglerfish. They also catch significant quantities of haddock and saithe from areas VII and VIII plus some whiting from area VII (exc VIIa), cod VII (exc VIIa) and VIII and sole VIIfg.

Whilst the majority of the vessels are nominally based in the ports of Milford haven, Plymouth or Fleetwood, the majority of their catches are landed and sold at ports in Northern Spain.

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what reduction of number of fishing vessels and what proportion of the reduction has been secured to date in the multi annual guidance programmes for fishing for *(a)* the United Kingdom, *(b)* Denmark, *(c)* France and *(d)* Holland.

Mr. Donald Thompson: The information requested is only readily available as follows:

	Situation at 1 January 1987	*Reduction required at 1 January 1987*	*Situation at 30 June 1988*	*Reduction required at 30 June 1988*
United Kingdom				
GRT	151,823	−10,203	168,806	−27,186
KW	789,241	−40,996	863,199	−114,954
Denmark				
GRT	136,488	−17,088	130,554	−11,154
KW	571,996	−56,696	555,212	−39,912
France				
GRT	192,953	−5,930	195,488	−8,465
KW	988,418	−92,698	1,037,220	−141,500
Netherlands				
GRT	77,500	−12,704	[1]	[1]
KW	462,900	−80,622	443,620	−61,342

[1] Information not yet available.

Potato Marketing Board

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what has been the overall response to his consultation paper regarding the Potato Marketing Board; and whether he proposes to accept the majority or minority views expressed on the options suggested.

Mr. Ryder: The period for the response to the consultation paper on future potato market policy in Great Britain does not expire until 31 December 1988, and there are clearly many replies yet to be received.

Aldrin

Mr. Alton: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will ban the use of the pesticide Aldrin immediately; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Ryder: Three minor pesticide uses of aldrin are currently permitted until the end of 1992, when approval for these uses will be revoked. This interval is intended to permit alternative treatments to be developed and growers' stocks to be used up safely. No further opportunity can be allowed.

NATIONAL FINANCE

Domestic Credit

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether he will publish in the *Official Report* a table showing for each quarter since 1 January 1986 the contribution made to the expansion of domestic credit by the overseas sector.

Mr. Lilley: I refer the hon. Member to my reply to his earlier question on 9 November 1988 at column *240*.

Smokeless Fuels

Ms. Walley: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will take steps to provide a tax incentive in favour of premium smokeless fuels; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lilley: Premium, smokeless fuel, like other forms of fuel and power, are zero-rated for VAT purposes. They are not liable to any other form of indirect taxation.

Disabled Persons (Staff)

Mr. Sean Hughes: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what percentage of Her Majesty's Treasury staff are classed as disabled.

Mr. Brooke: The current figure for the Treasury is 1·4 per cent.

Overseas Assets

Mr. Yeo: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what are the latest figures for the stock of net overseas assets.

Mr. Major: At the end of 1987 the United Kingdom's net stock of overseas assets was worth £89½ billion, or 21 per cent. of GDP. These assets generated earnings of £5½ billion in 1987. The surplus on invisibles in 1986 and 1987 was the largest in the world.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Civil Defence

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) which local authorities have applied for grant-aid for the purpose of establishing, equipping or maintaining emergency centres, pursuant to regulation 4(1)(b) of the Civil Defence (General Local Authority Functions) Regulations 1983, since 2 December 1985;

(2) which local authorities have been given grant-aid for the purpose of establishing, equipping or maintaining emergency centres, pursuant to regulation 4(1)(b) of the Civil Defence (General Local Authority Functions) Regulations 1983, since 2 December 1985; and what was the amount of such grant.

Mr. John Patten: The local authorities which have applied for and been given grant aid for this purpose are listed. Details of grants paid in respect of these centres, for each local authority and over the particular period quoted, could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Counties and fire and civil defence authorities which have applied for and been given grant are as follows:
Avon, Bedfordshire, Berkshire, Buckinghamshire, Cambridgeshire, Cheshire, Cleveland, Clwyd, Cornwall, Cumbria, Derbyshire, Devon, Dorset, Durham, Dyfed, Essex, Mid Glamorgan, South Glamorgan, West Glamorgan, Gloucestershire, Greater Manchester, Gwent, Gwynedd, Hampshire, Hereford and Worcester, Hertfordshire, Humberside, Isle of Wight, Kent, Lancashire, Leicestershire, Lincolnshire, London, Merseyside, Norfolk, Northamptonshire, Northumberland, Nottinghamshire, Oxfordshire, Powys, Shropshire (Salop), Somerset, Staffordshire, Suffolk, Surrey, East Sussex, West Sussex, Tyne and Wear, Warwickshire, West Midlands, Wiltshire, North Yorkshire.

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) which local authorities have applied for grant-aid for the purpose of establishing, equipping or maintaining emergency centres, pursuant to regulation 5(1)(c) of the Civil Defence (General Local Authority Functions) Regulations 1983, since 2 December 1985;

(2) which local authorities have been given grant-aid for the purpose of establishing, equipping or maintaining emergency centres, pursuant to regulation 5(1)(c) of the Civil Defence (General Local Authority Functions) Regulations 1983, since 2 December 1985; and what was the amount of such grant.

Mr. John Patten: Civil defence grant is normally claimed by county authorities and fire and civil defence authorities on behalf of district level authorities. The local authorities which have applied for and been given grant in respect of district level emergency centres are listed. Details of grant paid in respect of these centres, for each local authority and over the particular period quoted, could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Counties and fire and civil defence authorities which have applied for and been given grant are as follows:
Avon, Berkshire, Buckinghamshire, Cambridgeshire, Cleveland, Clwyd, Cornwall, Cumbria, Derbyshire, Devon, Dorset, Durham, Dyfed, Essex, Gloucestershire, Greater Manchester, Gwent, Gwynedd, Hampshire, Hereford and Worcester, Hertfordshire, Humberside, Isle of Wight, Kent, Lancashire, Leicestershire, Lincolnshire, London, Merseyside, Norfolk, Northamptonshire, Northumberland, Nottinghamshire, Oxfordshire, Shropshire (Salop), Somerset, Staffordshire, Suffolk, Surrey, East Sussex, West Sussex, Tyne and Wear, Warwickshire, Wiltshire, North Yorkshire.

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) if he will list the annual spending on civil defence research and development over the past four years;

(2) what plans he has for future expenditure on civil defence research and development.

Mr. John Patten: Home Office expenditure on civil defence research and development (including scientific staff costs) for the past four years was as follows:

	£ million
1984-85	0·560
1985-86	1·192
1986-87	1·028
1987-88	1·293

The estimate for 1988-89 is £1·015 million; proposed expenditure for future years is about £1·3 million per annum.

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what are the numbers of members of staff employed for emergency planning in district authorities whose salary costs are funded either wholly or partly by Home Office civil defence grant.

Mr. John Patten: The total numbers of grant-aided local authority staff employed for emergency planning in England and Wales at 30 September 1988 were 499 emergency planning officers and 147 administrative and support staff. The great majority of these staff have some involvement in emergency planning in district authorities. The numbers employed directly by district authorities are 35 emergency planning officers and 10 administrative and support staff.

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when the report of his Department's review of the United Kingdom warning and monitoring organisation will be published; and whether he has considered the case for a moratorium on capital expenditure by the United Kingdom warning and monitoring organisation until the review report is available for consideration.

Mr. John Patten: We expect to publish shortly an account of the main findings of the review. During the course of the review, new capital expenditure on warning and monitoring was limited to items essential to the maintenance of the organisation's effectiveness and readiness for operation. Future capital programmes will be considered in the light of the review, taking fully into account the results of consultation with interested parties on its findings.

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many members of staff are employed by each county council and fire and civil defence authority *(a)* as emergency planning officers and *(b)* as emergency planning team administrative and support staff.

Mr. John Patten: The numbers of civil defence grant-aided staff employed in England and Wales at 30 September 1988 were as follows:

	Emergency planning officer	*Emergency planning team administrative and support staff*
Avon	5	2
Bedfordshire	4	1
Berkshire	10	2
Buckinghamshire	6	2
Cambridgeshire	9	2
Cheshire	13	4
Cleveland	5	2
Clwyd	10	2
Cornwall	10	2
Cumbria	8	2
Derbyshire	6	3
Devon	18	8
Dorset	10	2
Durham	8	1
Dyfed	8	2
Essex	8	3
Mid Glamorgan	6	2
South Glamorgan	5	3
West Glamorgan	7	3
Gloucestershire	9	1
Greater Manchester	13	3
Gwent	9	2
Gwynedd	5	2
Hampshire	9	2
Hereford and Worcester	6	2
Hertfordshire	7	3
Humberside	8	6
Isle of Wight	4	—
Kent	11	3
Lancashire	6	2
Leicestershire	6	2
Lincolnshire	9	2
London	34	7
Merseyside	13	5
Norfolk	4	1
Northamptonshire	6	4
Northumberland	8	3
Nottinghamshire	9	2
Oxfordshire	5	1
Powys	5	—
Shropshire (Salop)	7	1
Somerset	8	3
Staffordshire	7	3
Suffolk	4	1
Surrey	9	4
East Sussex	6	—
West Sussex	6	1
Tyne and Wear	12	3
Warwickshire	7	3
West Midlands	14	5
Wiltshire	9	2
North Yorkshire	10	4
South Yorkshire	12	3
West Yorkshire	11	3
Total	464	137

Adults (Arrests)

Mr. Pendry: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what percentage of the adult population in England and Wales were arrested in 1987.

Mr. John Patten: This information is not available in the form requested. The latest available information relates to arrests of those aged 17 and over in England and Wales, excluding the Metropolitan police district, in 1987. There were 1·3 million such arrests among a population of the same age group of 33·5 million.

VAT

Mr. Heddle: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what assessments he has made as to the likely effect on *(a)* his Department's capital building programme and *(b)* the rent the Department will pay under occupational leases of implementation of the European Court of Justice's judgment on value added tax on non-domestic buildings.

Mr. Hurd: Implementation of the European Court of Justice's judgment on VAT will have no effect on my Department's capital building programme, since compensating adjustments have been made to the relevant expenditure provisions. At this stage, before landlords have decided whether to exercise their option to tax rents, it is not possible to offer meaningful estimates of the effects of the judgment on rental costs.

Wild Birds

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he last consulted the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds over the use of its

database to identify prosecution cases including the killing, sale and smuggling of British birds of prey and other wild birds; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The Royal Society for the Protection of Birds wrote to the Home Office in July 1988 to seek assistance with the maintenance of its database. We consulted the Association of Chief Police Officers about this request. We understand from ACPO that the police service only rarely consults the RSPB database and we have informed the RSPB that in those circumstances Home Office assistance could not be justified.

Lindholme Prison (Disturbances)

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what inquiries will be undertaken into the disturbances in Her Majesty's prison Lindholme in July by *(a)* Her Majesty's chief inspector of prisons and *(b)* the prison's board of visitors; and when reports will be produced.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: A full inquiry into the incident was conducted by the deputy director general of the prison service in July and a copy of his report is in the Library. Her Majesty's chief inspector of prisons has not been invited to make any new inquiry, and I understand that Her Majesty's prison Lindholme board of visitors has no plans to do so.

POA (Deduction of Subscriptions)

Mr. Beith: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department why he has withdrawn the facility for allowing the voluntary deduction of Prison Officers Association subscriptions from members' pay.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The facility was suspended because the association, after due warning, has failed to take genuine steps to draw up and agree with prison service management a firm programme for ending national industrial action which has been taking place since 13 January 1988.

Women Police Surgeons (South Yorkshire)

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the establishment requirement for women police surgeons in the South Yorkshire police force; and how many are in post.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Police surgeons are appointed by police authorities, which determine their own establishment requirements. No central record is maintained.

Passports (Cabinet)

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department which members of the Cabinet have been issued with the new common format passport.

Mr. Renton: United Kingdom passports in the European Community common format are at present held by the Home Secretary and the Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary.

Asylum (Singhalese and Tamils)

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will take steps to review the current level of political and inter-racial violence in Sri Lanka with regard to the application of criteria for granting of asylum to Singhalese and Tamils; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Renton: The situation in Sri Lanka is kept under constant review. Applications for asylum from Sri Lankans, as for all nationalities, are considered on an individual basis and refugee status is granted to those who meet the criteria established by the 1951 convention. The Government remain of the view, however, that membership of any particular ethnic group in Sri Lanka does not of itself provide the basis of a claim to refugee status under the convention. Asylum applicants who fail to meet the requirements of the convention are liable to be returned to Sri Lanka. Exceptional leave to enter, or remain, in the United Kingdom may be considered taking into account all the individual circumstances of a case, including in particular an applicant's personal acceptability, the length of time he has been in the United Kingdom and any compassionate factors.

Driving While Disqualified

Mr. Hunter: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many convictions there were in England and Wales in 1987 for the offence of driving while disqualified; and what assessment he has made of the actual incidence of driving whilst disqualified which remains undetected.

Mr. John Patten: The number of findings of guilt for driving while disqualified is published annually in Home Office statistical bulletins, "Offences, relating to motor vehicles, England and Wales" (table 9 of issue 32/88 gives figures up to 1987). Further information is given in a companion volume of supplementary tables; the issue for 1987 will be published soon.

Information on the level of undetected offences of driving while disqualified is not available.

Vietnamese Refugees

Mr. Foulkes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will give a breakdown of Vietnamese refugees from Hong Kong admitted to the United Kingdom by each year, for the last 10 years.

Mr. Renton: The total numbers of south-east Asian refugees accepted for settlement in the United Kingdom in the years 1978 to 1987 and in the first half of 1988 are published in table 18 of "Control of Immigration: Statistics United Kingdom 1987" (Cm. 415) and in table 3 of Home Office statistical bulletin "Control of Immigration; Statistics—Second Quarter 1988" (Issue 27/88). Separate figures are not available for the number of these refugees who have come from Hong Kong.

Prisoners (Repatriation)

Mr. Bowis: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list the countries with which the United Kingdom has a reciprocal arrangement for the repatriation of prisoners to serve their sentences in their home countries.

Mr. John Patten: Austria, Canada, Cyprus, Denmark, Finland, France, Greece, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Turkey, the United States of

America; and the following overseas territories: Anguilla, British Indian Ocean Territory, British Virgin Islands, Cayman Islands, Falkland Islands, Gibraltar, Hong Kong, Montserrat, Pitcairn, Henderson, Ducie and Oeno Islands, St. Helena, St. Helena Dependencies, and the Sovereign Base Areas of Akrotiri and Dhekelia in the Island of Cyprus.

Broadcasting

Mr. Fisher: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, further to his White Paper, "Broadcasting in the 1990s," whether he will specify the criteria which will be used in assessing the diversity of programming.

Mr. Renton: The positive programming requirements will be spelt out in general terms in legislation, and it would be for the new Independent Television Commission to decide precisely how to apply them in practice.

Mr. Fisher: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many items of news reporting and current affairs which were broadcast on *(a)* BBC 1, *(b)* BBC 2, *(c)* ITV, *(d)* Channel 4, *(e)* independent local radio, *(f)* BBC Radio 1, 2, 3 or 4 and *(g)* BBC local radio have been affected by the order on restrictions on reporting from Northern Ireland.

Mr. Tim Renton: My right hon. Friend has given general directions to the BBC and the IBA requiring them to refrain from broadcasting direct statements by Northern Ireland terrorist organisations and their apologists. It is now for the BBC and the IBA to apply those directions. They are not, of course, required to make returns to my right hon. Friend about the effect of the directions. In any case, the directions do not prevent the second-hand reporting of events, only the coverage of direct broadcast statements.

Extradition

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many extradition requests have been received from the Republic of Ireland in each year since 1968 for *(a)* terrorist and terrorist-related offences and *(b)* other offences; and how many in each category have been refused in each year.

Mr. John Patten: The readily available information for extradition requests from the Republic of Ireland to England and Wales is given in the table. It is based on statistics provided by police forces.

	Requests received	*Requests refused*
1982	9	—
1983	15	—
1984	31	—
1985	29	—
1986	15	3
1987	20	—
1988	[1]	[1]

[1]Not yet available.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many extradition requests have been received from Belgium in each year since 1968 for *(a)* terrorist and terrorist-related offences and *(b)* other offences; and how many in each category have been refused in each year.

Mr. John Patten: Since January 1968 the Belgian Government have made extradition requests to the United Kingdom in respect of 50 persons. Of these 26 were charged in connection with the Heysel stadium riot. No requests were for terrorist or terrorist-related offences. Requests relating to other offences were made in the following years:

	Number of requested persons	*Refused*
1968	3	3
1971	1	1
1972	1	1
1973	2	1
1975	1	—
1977	2	—
1979	1	—
1980	2	—
1981	4	1
1983	2	1
1984	1	—
1985	1	1
1986	28	2
1987	1	—
	50	11

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what was the total number of extraditions requested in each year since 1968 from Belgium for *(a)* terrorist and terrorist-related offences and *(b)* other offences; and how many requests in each category were refused in each year.

Mr. John Patten: Since January 1986 the Government have made extradition requests for 14 persons to be returned from Belgium. Only one request, made in 1988, was for terrorist or terrorist-related offences and this was refused. Requests relating to other offences were made in the following years:

	Number of requested persons	*Refused*
1969	2	—
1971	1	—
1972	3	1
1978	1	—
1981	1	—
1983	1	—
1985	2	—
1986	2	—
	13	1

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what was the total number of extraditions requested in each year since 1968 from the Republic of Ireland for *(a)* terrorist and terrorist-related offences and *(b)* other offences; and how many requests in each category were refused in each year.

Mr. John Patten: The readily available information for extradition requests from England and Wales to the Republic of Ireland is given in the table. This is based mainly on information provided by police forces. Requests involving terrorist offences are specified where known.

	Requests made	*Requests refused*
1982	41	1
1983	31	—
1984	29	—
1985	23	—
1986	[1]12	[1]1
1987	5	2
1988	[2]7	—

[1] includes 1 case involving terrorist offences
[2] includes 2 cases involving terrorist offences

SCOTLAND

Public Bodies

Mr. Home Robertson: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement on his policy on ministerial appointments to public bodies; if he will publish an up-to-date list of the quangos to which he nominates members, showing the level of public funding for each body and listing the individual members appointed by himself and showing any renumeration that they receive in connection with such membership; and if he will indicate any political allegiance that has been drawn to his attention in the nomination of candidates for such positions.

Mr. Rifkind: In making appointments to public bodies, I seek to draw from all sections of the community candidates who will be able to make a significant personal contribution to the body to which they are appointed. In all cases I expect to appoint the best person available.

The list of non-departmental bodies to which I make appointments is contained in the Cabinet Office publication "Public Bodies", a copy of which is available in the Library. A new edition is to be published shortly. The list includes information about the public funding of each body and the remuneration paid to members. No consistent record is kept of the political affiliation of persons nominated for or appointed to public office.

The list of individuals appointed is too long for publication in *Hansard*. I will write to the hon. Member with the information requested and place a copy of my letter in the Library.

Greater Glasgow Health Board

Mr. Galbraith: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland why officials of the Greater Glasgow health board came to London to meet the Scottish representatives of the Royal College of Nursing and Royal College of Midwives; what was the cost to public funds; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: These are matters for the health board, and I am asking the chairman to write to the hon. Gentleman.

Mr. Galbraith: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland pursuant to his answer of 30 November, if he will instruct Greater Glasgow health board, under section 2 of the Health Services (Scotland) Act 1974, to provide him with the information requested in order that it can be made available to Parliament.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: There is no such Act. I understand that the information that the hon. Gentleman is seeking was made public by the health board through a press release on 28 November.

Water Research Council

Mr. Allan Stewart: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) what will be the effects on the work in Scotland of the Water Research Council of the privatisation of the water industry in England and Wales;

(2) what representations he has received concerning the future role of the Water Research Council in Scotland; and if he will make a statement.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The organisation and work of the Water Research Centre is determined by its members, among them the Scottish water authorities and river purification boards. Arrangements are being made for the WRC to continue to serve the water industry, Government and other customers and for its work in Scotland to be maintained. No representations on the future role of WRC in Scotland have been received.

Health Service (Grading)

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will publish a breakdown of the new grading structure for nurses, midwives and health visitors broken down by grade, type of hospital including psychiatric, geriatric and acute, by district and region.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: This information is not held centrally and could be gathered only at disproportionate cost. I would, however, refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave to my hon. Friend the Member for Tayside, North (Mr. Walker) on Thursday 1 December 1988, at column *342*.

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will indicate the date on which he first received grading projections from each health board on the new clinical structure for nurses, midwives and health visitors.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Health boards' interim returns were received in the latter part of August and in September.

Domestic Assaults

Mrs. Ray Michie: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will instruct police forces to produce separate figures on the number of reported domestic assaults each year; and if he will make a statement.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: This matter is currently under consideration in consultation with the Association of Chief Police Officers (Scotland).

Schools

Mr. Allan Stewart: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland whether he will publish details of his proposals for allowing parents to take schools out of local authority control.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: A paper is being issued today entitled "Self-Governing Schools—Extending Choice for Scottish Parents" describing proposals expected to provide

the basis for forthcoming legislation. It is being made available to education authorities representative bodies, school councils, parent-teacher associations and the general public. Copies have been placed in the Library.

These proposals represent another major step towards greater choice in education. Opting for local self-management in place of central control by the education authority will create a new form of school. The school will remain in the public sector but will enjoy freedom to develop its own ethos under local management and to tailor provision to the needs of its pupils and the expectations of the local community.

The decision whether to seek self-governing status will be entirely for the parents at each individual school: there will be no pressure or obligation on any school to take this route against the wishes of parents. The paper we have now issued to education authorities and others provides fuller details of what would be involved. The main features are:

A self-governing school will remain part of the mainstream of education provision, publicly funded, open to all without qualifying examination or fees.

Self-governing schools will be subject to inspection to ensure that they provide a satisfactory standard of education.

The school will be managed, and its staff employed, by a board of management consisting of parents, staff and representatives of the wider community.

Funding will be by direct Government grant, set to match the resources which the school could reasonably have expected to receive if it had stayed under the management of the education authority.

EMPLOYMENT

Skill Training

67. **Mr. Blunkett:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment by what means he ensures that the needs of industry for a properly trained work force are met.

Mr. Cope: I refer the hon. Member to the White Paper "Employment in the 1990s" and the statement by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State of 5 December 1988.

Skills Shortages

Mr. Andrew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what measures his Department is taking to counteract the skills shortage in the south-east.

Mr. Cope: I refer the hon. Member to the chapter on training in White Paper "Employment in the 1990s" published by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State on Monday 5 December.

Tourism

Mr. Robert G. Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he plans to meet the chairman of the English Tourist Board to discuss the expansion of the tourist industry; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lee: My right hon. Friend has no plans for a meeting with the chairman of the English Tourist Board on this subject.

Employment Training (Liverpool)

Mr. Barry Field: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will make a statement on Liverpool city council's participation in the employment training scheme.

Mr. Nicholls: Liverpool city council is not taking part in employment training. Indeed, the council decided to punish local voluntary organisations and employers which did want to participate and the High Court has now ruled that this action is unlawful. Unlike Liverpool city council, the Government will continue to provide help through the quality training opportunities offered through employment training.

School Leavers

Mr. McCrindle: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will estimate the numbers of young people leaving school and being available for work in each of the next five years; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Cope: The most recent projected numbers of school leavers in Great Britain available for employment for academic years from 1988-89 to 1992-93 are as follows:

Projected number of school leavers in Great Britain available for employment[1]

Academic year ending 31 August	*Thousands*
1988-89	520
1989-90	490
1990-91	460
1991-92	440
1992-93	420

[1] Rounded to the nearest 10,000.

Careers Service (Funding)

Mr. Cummings: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what is the proposed allocation for the revised careers service strengthening scheme for 1989-90 and for 1988-89 for all local education authorities based on the current method of funding for specific posts.

Mr. Cope: The available information is given in the table below. For 1989-90 under the revised scheme, the figures are of provisional cash allocations; 1988-89 figures show the number of posts allocated. Grants to LEAs in 1988-89 depends on the number of posts allocated, the extent to which those posts are filled, the salary level of careers officers filling the posts and the level of grants payable for posts under the scheme. Estimates of the actual cash grants which will be paid to each individual authority as a result of these factors are not made. Allocations in 1989-90 are designed to provide a contribution to all careers service costs and are not related to numbers of posts.

Local education authority	*Allocated posts 1988-89*	*Cash allocations 1989-90*
ILEA	52·0	920,000
Barking	2·5	43,000
Barnet	3·0	42,000
Bexley	3·0	41,000
Brent	4·0	78,000
Bromley	3·5	49,000
Croydon	4·0	70,000
Ealing	5·0	63,000
Enfield	4·0	50,000
Haringey	5·0	92,000
Harrow	1·0	22,000
Havering	2·5	37,000
Hillingdon	2·0	29,000

Local education authority	Allocated posts 1988-89	Cash allocations 1989-90
Hounslow	2·0	38,000
Kingston	1·0	13,000
Merton	0·5	26,000
Newham	8·0	122,000
Redbridge	2·5	47,000
Richmond	0·5	13,000
Sutton	1·0	19,000
Waltham Forest	5·0	73,000
Bedfordshire	9·0	123,000
Berkshire	9·0	113,000
Buckinghamshire	6·0	78,000
Cambridgeshire	9·0	133,000
East Sussex	8·0	122,000
Essex	21·0	303,000
Hampshire	24·0	358,000
Hertfordshire	11·0	139,000
Isle of Wight	4·0	50,000
Kent	26·0	370,000
Norfolk	15·0	218,000
Oxfordshire	8·0	101,000
Suffolk	10·0	126,000
Surrey	8·0	101,000
West Sussex	5·0	65,000
Avon	18·0	227,000
Cornwall	11·5	152,000
Devon	20·0	290,000
Dorset	8·0	108,000
Gloucestershire	10·0	126,000
Somerset	9·0	113,000
Wiltshire	10·5	132,000
Birmingham	41·0	667,000
Coventry	15·0	196,000
Derbyshire	25·0	384,000
Dudley	9·0	133,000
Hereford	13·0	185,000
Leicestershire	14·0	217,000
Lincolnshire	14·0	178,000
Northamptonshire	10·0	126,000
Nottinghamshire	29·0	446,000
Sandwell	13·0	190,000
Shropshire	12·0	151,000
Solihull	5·0	82,000
Staffordshire	26·0	383,000
Walsall	9·0	141,000
Warwickshire	11·0	139,000
Wolverhampton	14·0	188,000
Barnsley	11·0	172,000
Bradford	16·0	234,000
Calderdale	5·5	69,000
Doncaster	15·0	192,000
Humberside	34·5	440,000
Kirklees	11·0	160,000
Leeds	22·0	330,000
North Yorkshire	12·0	178,000
Rotherham	11·0	160,000
Sheffield	23·0	402,000
Wakefield	10·0	168,000
Bolton	8·0	126,000
Bury	6·0	75,000
Cheshire	26·0	386,000
Cumbria	13·0	169,000
Knowsley	17·0	214,000
Lancashire	33·0	494,000
Liverpool	37·0	467,000
Manchester	18·0	317,000
Oldham	6·0	90,000
Rochdale	6·0	94,000
Salford	9·0	138,000
Sefton	13·0	164,000
St. Helens	10·0	126,000
Stockport	6·0	88,000
Tameside	6·0	91,000
Trafford	6·0	75,000
Wigan	12·0	187,000
Wirral	13·0	182,000
Cleveland	30·0	379,000
Durham	25·0	315,000
Northumberland	11·0	139,000
Gateshead	11·0	139,000
Newcastle	16·0	202,000
North Tyne	10·0	126,000
South Tyne	12·0	151,000
Sunderland	17·0	219,000

Job Vacancies

Mr. Bradley: To ask the Secretary of State for employment if he will publish an analysis of known job vacancies in Greater Manchester by skill category required.

Mr. Lee: the following information is in the Library. The table shows the number of unfilled vacancies analysed by occupation at jobcentres in the Greater Manchester county on 7 October 1988.

Recent research has confirmed that, nationally, about a third of vacancies are notified to jobcentres.

Job vacancies analysed by occupation in Greater Manchester as at 7 October 1988

Occupation description	Vacancies
Managerial	478
Nursing	139
Typing and Secretarial	245
Clerical and Machine operators	1,648
Selling—Distribution	1,159
Selling—others	493
Security and Protective services	244
Catering	1,367
Cleaning and personal services	1,158
Farming and Fishing	29
Materials Processing—Textiles/Cloth	14
Materials Processing—Food	121
Metal Processing	13
Metal Processing—Others	14
Making/ Repairing/Textiles/Cloths	522
Making/Repairing—Others	273
Machine operator (Engineering)—Skilled	120
Machine operator (Engineering)—Unskilled	19
Toolmakers/Fitters	44
Installation/Maintenance	230
Electricians	166
Electronic Technicians	36
Welding/Fabrication	231
Painting	80
Assembling/Packaging/Inspecting	306
Construction—Skilled	211
Construction—Unskilled	34
Mining and Quarrying	2
Transport Operators—HGV and PSV	173
Transport Operators—Others	509
Miscellaneous	380
Total	10,504

Mr. Bradley: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will list the number of vacancies which exist by industrial classification in each of the constituencies in Greater Manchester; and if he will list other vacancies according to whatever similar criteria his Department uses for the same area.

Mr. Lee: The table gives the available information which is also in the Library. It shows the number of unfilled vacancies analysed by industry at jobcentres in the county of Greater Manchester on 5 August 1988, the latest

available date. Vacancy statistics are collected by jobcentre area, and it is not possible to allocate the figures accurately by parliamentary constituency for Greater Manchester.

Recent research has confirmed that, nationally, about a third of vacancies are notified to jobcentres.

Unfilled vacancies analysed by industry—5 August 1988

Industrial classification	*Altrincham jobcentre*	*Ashton-under-Lyne jobcentre*	*Atherton jobcentre*
Agriculture, forestry and fishing	3	0	8
Coal extraction	0	0	0
Mineral oil and natural gas extraction	0	0	0
Mineral oil processing	0	0	0
Nuclear fuel production	0	0	0
Gas, electricity and water	4	0	0
Extraction of other minerals and ores	0	0	0
Metal manufacture	0	0	0
Manufacture of non-metallic products	0	1	0
Chemical industry	0	3	0
Production of man-made fibres	0	0	0
Manufacture of metal goods	4	12	1
Mechanical engineering	15	16	4
Manufacture: office machinery/D.P. equipment	1	0	0
Electrical and electronic engineering	8	5	2
Manufacture of motor vehicles	1	0	2
Shipbuilding and repairing	0	0	0
Manufacture: aerospace/transport equipment	0	0	0
Instrument engineering	0	0	0
Food, drink and tobacco	1	3	3
Textiles	1	8	4
Leather, footware and clothing	1	16	12
Timber and furniture	3	3	10
Paper, printing and publishing	5	2	0
Other manufacturing	6	2	4
Construction	25	14	8
Wholesale and distribution	9	7	1
Retail distribution	101	32	5
Hotels and catering	80	24	3
Repair of consumer foods and vehicles	4	1	1
Transport	13	11	14
Telecommunications	2	1	1
Insurance, banking etc., business services	49	25	8
Public administration and defence	19	33	5
Medical and other health services	14	88	3
Other services—NES	38	11	7
Speculative placings/transfers/inputs	0	0	0
TOTALS	407	318	106

Unfilled vacancies analysed by industry—5 August 1988

Industrial classification	*Beswick jobcentre*	*Bolton jobcentre*	*Bury jobcentre*
Agriculture, forestry and fishing	0	0	1
Coal extraction	0	0	0
Mineral oil and natural gas extraction	0	0	0
Mineral oil processing	0	0	0
Nuclear fuel production	0	0	0
Gas, electricity and water	0	7	0
Extraction of other minerals and ores	0	0	0
Metal manufacture	0	0	2
Manufacture of non-metallic products	0	1	5
Chemical industry	7	2	9
Production of man-made fibres	0	0	0
Manufacture of metal goods	5	10	5
Mechanical engineering	16	40	8
Manufacture: office machinery/D.P. equipment	2	0	0
Electrical and electronic engineering	1	4	3
Manufacture of motor vehicles	4	1	1
Shipbuilding and repairing	0	0	0
Manufacture: aerospace/transport equipment	0	0	0
Instrument engineering	0	1	0
Food, drink and tobacco	3	1	2
Textiles	C	23	10
Leather, footware and clothing	4	41	17
Timber and furniture	2	7	8
Paper, printing and publishing	2	7	8
Other manufacturing	0	17	13
Construction	6	38	28
Wholesale and distribution	18	21	14

Industrial classification	*Beswick jobcentre*	*Bolton jobcentre*	*Bury jobcentre*
Retail distribution	15	119	28
Hotels and catering	16	62	18
Repair of consumer foods and vehicles	1	11	5
Transport	7	11	14
Telecommunications	2	1	0
Insurance, banking etc., business services	5	60	15
Public administration and defence	13	78	29
Medical and other health services	1	20	13
Other services—NES	5	37	31
Speculative placings/transfers/inputs	0	0	0
TOTALS	135	620	287

Unfilled vacancies analysed by industry—5 August 1988

Industrial classification	*Denton jobcentre*	*Didsury jobcentre*	*Droylsden jobcentre*
Agriculture, forestry and fishing	0	0	0
Coal extraction	0	0	0
Mineral oil and natural gas extraction	0	0	0
Mineral oil processing	0	0	0
Nuclear fuel production	0	0	0
Gas, electricity and water	1	0	0
Extraction of other minerals and ores	0	0	0
Metal manufacture	0	0	0
Manufacture of non-metallic products	0	0	0
Chemical industry	0	0	0
Production of man-made fibres	0	0	0
Manufacture of metal goods	0	0	2
Mechanical engineering	5	0	0
Manufacture: office machinery/D.P. equipment	0	0	0
Electrical and electronic engineering	5	3	1
Manufacture of motor vehicles	1	0	0
Shipbuilding and repairing	2	0	0
Manufacture: aerospace/transport equipment	0	0	0
Instrument engineering	0	0	0
Food, drink and tobacco	0	6	1
Textiles	0	0	1
Leather, footware and clothing	8	0	0
Timber and furniture	3	1	2
Paper, printing and publishing	1	2	0
Other manufacturing	1	2	3
Construction	3	8	1
Wholesale and distribution	1	1	1
Retail distribution	10	32	3
Hotels and catering	7	35	12
Repair of consumer goods and vehicles	0	2	0
Transport	5	1	1
Telecommunications	1	5	0
Insurance, banking etc., business services	9	24	2
Public administration and defence	2	16	2
Medical and other health services	0	20	0
Other services—NES	7	32	2
Speculative placings/transfers/inputs	0	0	0
TOTALS	72	190	34

Unfilled vacancies analysed by industry—5 August 1988

Industrial classification	*Eccles jobcentre*	*Failsworth jobcentre*	*Farnworth jobcentre*
Agriculture, forestry and fishing	0	0	0
Coal extraction	0	0	0
Mineral oil and natural gas extraction	0	0	0
Mineral oil processing	0	0	0
Nuclear fuel production	0	0	0
Gas, electricity and water	0	0	0
Extraction of other minerals and ores	0	0	0
Metal manufacture	0	0	1
Manufacture of non-metallic products	0	0	0
Chemical industry	0	1	0
Production of man-made fibres	0	0	0
Manufacture of metal goods	1	4	0
Mechanical engineering	3	1	5
Manufacture: office machinery/DP equipment	2	0	0
Electrical and electronic engineering	0	4	5

Industrial classification	Eccles jobcentre	Failsworth jobcentre	Farnworth jobcentre
Manufacture of motor vehicles	1	0	4
Shipbuilding and repairing	0	0	0
Manufacture: aerospace/transport equipment	0	0	1
Instrument engineering	0	1	0
Food, drink and tobacco	1	0	1
Textiles	0	0	2
Leather, footware and clothing	5	3	19
Timber and furniture	4	2	6
Paper, printing and publishing	0	2	2
Other manufacturing	5	4	10
Construction	11	16	18
Wholesale and distribution	9	3	4
Retail distribution	23	12	26
Hotels and catering	23	14	12
Repair of consumer goods and vehicles	0	0	0
Transport	10	2	13
Telecommunications	0	0	1
Insurance, banking etc., business services	20	9	10
Public administration and defence	20	3	41
Medical and other health services	8	0	11
Other services—NES	6	3	12
Speculative placings/transfers/inputs	0	0	0
TOTALS	152	84	204

Unfilled vacancies analysed by industry—5 August 1988

Industrial classification	Heywood jobcentre	Hindley jobcentre	Horwich jobcentre
Agriculture, forestry and fishing	0	0	0
Coal extraction	0	0	0
Mineral oil and natural gas extraction	0	0	0
Mineral oil processing	0	0	0
Nuclear fuel production	0	0	0
Gas, electricity and water	0	0	0
Extraction of other minerals and ores	0	0	1
Metal manufacture	0	0	0
Manufacture of non-metallic products	1	0	0
Chemical industry	1	0	0
Production of man-made fibres	0	0	0
Manufacture of metal goods	0	0	3
Mechanical engineering	1	0	3
Manufacture: office machinery/DP equipment	0	0	0
Electrical and electronic engineering	3	11	1
Manufacture of motor vehicles	0	0	0
Shipbuilding and repairing	0	1	0
Manufacture: aerospace/transport equipment	0	0	0
Instrument engineering	0	0	0
Food, drink and tobacco	0	1	3
Textiles	7	3	2
Leather, footware and clothing	0	3	5
Timber and furniture	0	2	1
Paper, printing and publishing	0	0	4
Other manufacturing	2	0	0
Construction	5	3	4
Wholesale and distribution	10	0	2
Retail distribution	5	3	5
Hotels and catering	5	11	17
Repair of consumer goods and vehicles	1	0	0
Transport	8	3	0
Telecommunications	0	0	0
Insurance, banking etc., business services	17	0	4
Public administration and defence	4	2	0
Medical and other health services	1	0	3
Other services—NES	7	10	4
Speculative placings/transfers/inputs	0	0	0
TOTALS	78	53	68

Unfilled vacancies analysed by industry—5 August 1988

Industrial classification	*Hyde jobcentre*	*Irlam jobcentre*	*Leigh jobcentre*
Agriculture, forestry and fishing	0	1	0
Coal extraction	0	0	0
Mineral oil and natural gas extraction	0	0	0
Mineral oil processing	0	0	0
Nuclear fuel production	0	0	0
Gas, electricity and water	0	0	1
Extraction of other minerals and ores	1	0	0
Metal manufacture	0	0	0
Manufacture of non-metallic products	0	0	0
Chemical industry	2	2	0
Production of man-made fibres	0	0	0
Manufacture of metal goods	5	1	0
Mechanical engineering	16	8	8
Manufacture: office machinery/DP equipment	0	0	0
Electrical and electronic engineering	4	1	4
Manufacture of motor vehicles	0	0	1
Shipbuilding and repairing	0	0	0
Manufacture: aerospace/transport equipment	1	0	0
Instrument engineering	0	0	0
Food, drink and tobacco	6	1	3
Textiles	5	0	1
Leather, footware and clothing	7	1	7
Timber and furniture	2	3	1
Paper, printing and publishing	6	0	7
Other manufacturing	0	0	4
Construction	12	8	31
Wholesale and distribution	3	2	2
Retail distribution	11	2	17
Hotels and catering	11	2	19
Repair of consumer goods and vehicles	4	1	2
Transport	4	4	33
Telecommunications	0	0	0
Insurance, banking etc., business services	8	9	11
Public administration and defence	1	4	12
Medical and other health services	4	1	10
Other services—NES	4	0	13
Speculative placings/transfers/inputs	0	0	0
TOTALS	117	51	187

Unfilled vacancies analysed by industry—5 August 1988

Industrial classification	*Levenshulme jobcentre*	*Manchester jobcentre*	*Marple jobcentre*
Agriculture, forestry and fishing	0	0	0
Coal extraction	0	0	0
Mineral oil and natural gas extraction	0	0	0
Mineral oil processing	0	1	0
Nuclear fuel production	0	0	0
Gas, electricity and water	8	5	0
Extraction of other minerals and ores	0	0	0
Metal manufacture	0	1	0
Manufacture of non-metallic products	0	0	0
Chemical industry	0	0	0
Production of man-made fibres	0	0	0
Manufacture of metal goods	0	9	2
Mechanical engineering	10	14	1
Manufacture: office machinery/DP equipment	1	2	0
Electrical and electronic engineering	0	11	1
Manufacture of motor vehicles	0	1	2
Shipbuilding and repairing	0	1	0
Manufacture: aerospace/transport equipment	0	0	0
Instrument engineering	0	1	0
Food, drink and tobacco	7	5	0
Textiles	6	43	2
Leather, footware and clothing	17	78	7
Timber and furniture	2	8	0
Paper, printing and publishing	1	16	0
Other manufacturing	3	7	0
Construction	2	32	5
Wholesale and distribution	2	100	0
Retail distribution	40	269	5
Hotels and catering	12	237	7
Repair of consumer goods and vehicles	1	15	1
Transport	13	31	5

Industrial classification	Levenshulme jobcentre	Manchester jobcentre	Marple jobcentre
Telecommunications	1	13	0
Insurance, banking etc., business services	12	209	3
Public administration and defence	5	129	2
Medical and other health services	3	21	1
Other services—NES	32	102	22
Speculative placings/transfers/inputs	0	0	0
TOTALS	178	1,361	66

Unfilled vacancies analysed by industry—5 August 1988

Industrial classification	Middleton jobcentre	Moss Side jobcentre	Mossley jobcentre
Agriculture, forestry and fishing	0	0	0
Coal extraction	0	0	0
Mineral oil and natural gas extraction	0	0	0
Mineral oil processing	0	0	0
Nuclear fuel production	0	0	0
Gas, electricity and water	0	0	0
Extraction of other minerals and ores	0	0	0
Metal manufacture	0	2	2
Manufacture of non-metallic products	1	0	0
Chemical industry	1	5	2
Production of man-made fibres	0	0	0
Manufacture of metal goods	2	0	2
Mechanical engineering	3	1	8
Manufacture: office machinery/D.P. equipment	0	0	0
Electrical and electronic engineering	2	0	0
Manufacture of motor vehicles	0	1	0
Shipbuilding and repairing	0	0	0
Manufacture: aerospace/transport equipment	0	5	0
Instrument engineering	0	0	0
Food, drink and tobacco	5	1	0
Textiles	0	0	2
Leather, footware and clothing	11	12	1
Timber and furniture	0	1	0
Paper, printing and publishing	5	1	1
Other manufacturing	1	0	0
Construction	6	11	5
Wholesale and distribution	1	8	0
Retail distribution	15	8	3
Hotels and catering	5	16	0
Repair of consumer goods and vehicles	1	9	0
Transport	9	5	2
Telecommunications	1	0	0
Insurance, banking etc., business services	14	24	4
Public administration and defence	5	27	2
Medical and other health services	0	7	2
Other services—NES	3	22	5
Speculative placings/transfers/inputs	0	0	0
TOTALS	91	166	41

Unfilled vacancies analysed by industry—5 August 1988

Industrial classification	Newton Heath jobcentre	Oldham and Chadderton jobcentre	Prestwick jobcentre
Agriculture, forestry and fishing	0	0	0
Coal extraction	0	0	0
Mineral oil and natural gas extraction	0	0	0
Mineral oil processing	0	0	0
Nuclear fuel production	0	0	0
Gas, electricity and water	0	2	0
Extraction of other minerals and ores	1	0	0
Metal manufacture	2	0	0
Manufacture of non-metallic products	3	0	0
Chemical industry	0	6	0
Production of man-made fibres	0	0	0
Manufacture of metal goods	11	11	0
Mechanical engineering	8	17	0
Manufacture: office machinery/DP equipment	0	6	0
Electrical and electronic engineering	3	15	1
Manufacture of motor vehicles	1	6	0
Shipbuilding and repairing	0	0	0
Manufacture: aerospace/transport equipment	0	0	0

Industrial classification	*Newton Heath jobcentre*	*Oldham and Chadderton jobcentre*	*Prestwich jobcentre*
Instrument engineering	0	1	0
Food, drink and tobacco	4	33	0
Textiles	6	9	0
Leather, footware and clothing	16	19	4
Timber and furniture	3	14	4
Paper, printing and publishing	1	5	1
Other manufacturing	0	21	2
Construction	5	36	8
Wholesale and distribution	9	12	13
Retail distribution	11	59	15
Hotels and catering	9	44	11
Repair of consumer goods and vehicles	3	6	0
Transport	4	20	2
Telecommunications	1	1	0
Insurance, banking etc., business services	7	29	11
Public administration and defence	3	42	7
Medical and other health services	46	28	6
Other services—NES	5	41	15
Speculative placings/transfers/inputs	0	0	0
TOTALS	162	483	100

Unfilled vacancies analysed by industry—5 August 1988

Industrial classification	*Radcliffe jobcentre*	*Rochdale jobcentre*	*Royton jobcentre*
Agriculture, forestry and fishing	0	0	0
Coal extraction	0	0	0
Mineral oil and natural gas extraction	0	0	0
Mineral oil processing	0	0	0
Nuclear fuel production	0	0	0
Gas, electricity and water	0	0	0
Extraction of other minerals and ores	0	0	0
Metal manufacture	0	0	0
Manufacture of non-metallic products	0	2	0
Chemical industry	0	4	0
Production of man-made fibres	0	0	0
Manufacture of metal goods	1	5	5
Mechanical engineering	5	18	7
Manufacture: office machinery/DP equipment	0	0	0
Electrical and electronic engineering	7	4	4
Manufacture of motor vehicles	0	1	0
Shipbuilding and repairing	0	0	0
Manufacture: aerospace/transport equipment	0	0	0
Instrument engineering	0	0	0
Food, drink and tobacco	1	3	4
Textiles	2	23	11
Leather, footware and clothing	6	8	3
Timber and furniture	1	7	2
Paper, printing and publishing	2	1	1
Other manufacturing	3	3	0
Construction	9	33	7
Wholesale and distribution	2	2	9
Retail distribution	14	45	8
Hotels and catering	5	26	6
Repair of consumer foods and vehicles	1	9	0
Transport	1	22	2
Telecommunications	0	17	0
Insurance, banking etc., business services	6	38	3
Public administration and defence	0	48	5
Medical and other health services	2	1	1
Other services—NES	5	14	8
Speculative placings/transfers/inputs	0	0	0
TOTALS	73	334	86

Unfilled vacancies analysed by industry—5 August 1988

Industrial classification	*Salford jobcentre*	*Stalybridge jobcentre*	*Stockport jobcentre*
Agriculture, forestry and fishing	0	0	2
Coal extraction	0	0	0
Mineral oil and natural gas extraction	0	0	0
Mineral oil processing	0	0	0
Nuclear fuel production	0	0	0

Industrial classification	*Salford jobcentre*	*Stalybridge jobcentre*	*Stockport jobcentre*
Gas, electricity and water	0	1	4
Extraction of other minerals and ores	0	0	0
Metal manufacture	1	1	0
Manufacture of non-metallic products	0	4	2
Chemical industry	1	0	16
Production of man-made fibres	0	0	0
Manufacture of metal goods	2	5	10
Mechanical engineering	9	4	32
Manufacture: office machinery/DP equipment	4	0	10
Electrical and electronic engineering	7	0	27
Manufacture of motor vehicles	0	0	3
Shipbuilding and repairing	0	0	0
Manufacture: aerospace/transport equipment	0	0	3
Instrument engineering	1	0	2
Food, drink and tobacco	4	0	16
Textiles	0	2	11
Leather, footware and clothing	26	3	33
Timber and furniture	4	0	12
Paper, printing and publishing	0	1	17
Other manufacturing	5	1	17
Construction	26	2	68
Wholesale and distribution	18	1	27
Retail distribution	39	6	163
Hotels and catering	23	8	82
Repair of consumer goods and vehicles	5	0	19
Transport	5	0	38
Telecommunications	1	0	2
Insurance, banking etc., business services	31	6	116
Public administration and defence	16	2	70
Medical and other health services	11	0	38
Other services—NES	12	4	61
Speculative placings/transfers/inputs	0	0	0
TOTALS	251	51	901

Unfilled vacancies analysed by industry—5 August 1988

Industrial classification	*Stretford jobcentre*	*Swinton jobcentre*	*Westhoughton jobcentre*
Agriculture, forestry and fishing	1	0	1
Coal extraction	0	0	0
Mineral oil and natural gas extraction	0	0	0
Mineral oil processing	4	0	0
Nuclear fuel production	2	0	0
Gas, electricity and water	3	0	0
Extraction of other minerals and ores	0	0	0
Metal manufacture	2	1	0
Manufacture of non-metallic products	3	0	0
Chemical industry	8	2	2
Production of man-made fibres	0	0	0
Manufacture of metal goods	17	0	2
Mechanical engineering	22	3	4
Manufacture: office machinery/DP equipment	1	0	0
Electrical and electronic engineering	10	3	0
Manufacture of motor vehicles	4	0	0
Shipbuilding and repairing	0	0	0
Manufacture: aerospace/transport equipment	5	0	2
Instrument engineering	3	2	1
Food, drink and tobacco	10	0	0
Textiles	2	2	0
Leather, footware and clothing	3	0	2
Timber and furniture	2	0	4
Paper, printing and publishing	1	0	0
Other manufacturing	4	0	1
Construction	40	13	12
Wholesale and distribution	34	0	1
Retail distribution	60	13	7
Hotels and catering	27	16	18
Repair of consumer goods and vehicles	11	3	2
Transport	21	2	0
Telecommunications	2	2	0
Insurance, banking etc., business services	43	8	1
Public administration and defence	80	131	4
Medical and other health services	15	7	0
Other services—NES	39	5	8
Speculative placings/transfers/inputs	0	0	0

Industrial classification	Stretford jobcentre	Swinton jobcentre	Westhoughton jobcentre
TOTALS	479	213	72

Unfilled vacancies analysed by industry—5 August 1988

Industrial classification	Wigan jobcentre	Worsley jobcentre	Wythenshawe jobcentre
Agriculture, forestry and fishing	0	0	0
Coal extraction	1	0	0
Mineral oil and natural gas extraction	0	0	0
Mineral oil processing	0	0	0
Nuclear fuel production	0	0	0
Gas, electricity and water	0	0	0
Extraction of other minerals and ores	0	0	0
Metal manufacture	0	0	0
Manufacture of non-metallic products	4	0	0
Chemical industry	1	6	0
Production of man-made fibres	0	0	0
Manufacture of metal goods	5	2	0
Mechanical engineering	14	22	3
Manufacture: office machinery/DP equipment	0	0	5
Electrical and electronic engineering	6	17	12
Manufacture of motor vehicles	6	2	0
Shipbuilding and repairing	0	3	0
Manufacture: aerospace/transport equipment	2	0	0
Instrument engineering	1	0	0
Food, drink and tobacco	9	0	7
Textiles	2	2	0
Leather, footware and clothing	21	9	1
Timber and furniture	8	4	10
Paper, printing and publishing	5	1	0
Other manufacturing	6	0	1
Construction	35	7	4
Wholesale and distribution	3	9	3
Retail distribution	43	13	16
Hotels and catering	34	13	37
Repair of consumer goods and vehicles	6	0	0
Transport	16	11	41
Telecommunications	1	1	1
Insurance, banking etc., business services	49	7	14
Public administration and defence	30	8	30
Medical and other health services	14	4	13
Other services—NES	22	8	45
Speculative placings/transfers/inputs	0	0	0
TOTALS	346	149	243

Coal Industry (Accidents)

Mr. Illsley: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment whether, in view of the accident rates of contractors to British Coal, he will take any measures to improve safety records of those companies through stricter enforcement of the relevant legislation.

Mr. Nicholls: The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) enforce the Health and Safety at Work Etc. Act 1974 and other legislation as it applies to contractors and their employees within mines. This Act and the Mines and Quarries Act 1954 also require British Coal and its managers to ensure the safety of contractors. British Coal has also recently taken action with its major contractors to improve safety standards and safety awareness.

Children (Insurance Cover)

Mr. Archer: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he has any plans to seek to amend section 2 of the Employers Liability (Compulsory Insurance) Act 1969 so as to provide for compulsory insurance cover for children employed by their relatives; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Nicholls: My right hon. Friend has no plans to seek to amend section 2 of the Act.

Mining Industry (Accidents)

Mr. Illsley: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what is the rate of fatal and major injury accidents of *(a)* British Coal employees and *(b)* employees contracted to British Coal expressed as a ratio of accidents to total numbers employed in each category.

Mr. Nicholls: The information is not available in the form requested.

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what has been the rate of (i) deaths and (ii) serious accidents in the mining industry per 100,000 workers in each year since 1970.

Mr. Nicholls: The information requested is listed in the table:

Year	Number employed (1,000's)	Fatal rate per 100,000 employed	Serious injury rate per 100,000 employed
1970	304·4	29·9	210·8
1971	297·7	24·2	215·8
1972	289·7	22·1	179·6
1973	270·1	29·6	204·8
1974	256·7	18·7	194·1
1975	259·2	24·7	226·2
1976	254·5	19·7	210·6
1977	252·6	15·9	198·8
1978	248·1	25·4	199·2
1979	243·5	18·9	194·6
1980	242·6	17·3	211·6
1981[1]	232·4	15·1	351·3
1982	220·5	17·3	393·2
1983	206·3	14·6	400·0
1984-85[3,4]	175·4	12·6	216·0
1985-86[3,5]	154·6	18·2	464·3
1986-87[2,3,5]	125·4	12·0	761·6
1987-88[3,5]	104·4	8·6	702·9

Source: Health and Safety Executive and British Coal.

[1] NADOR Regulations 1980—introduced 1 January 1981.

[2] RIDDOR Regulations 1985—introduced 1 April 1986.

[3] Average number employed during the year.

[4] Covers 15-month period January 1984-March 1985—not comparable with earlier calendar year data.

[5] Excludes licensed mines.

Opencast Mining

Mrs. Golding: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if any investigation has been made of health problems arising from the close proximity of people to opencast mining; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Nicholls: I am not aware of any authoritative survey or investigation into links between opencast mining and illness in people living nearby. There is no firm evidence that such a study would be worthwhile. However the Health and Safety Executive will continue to monitor the position and will take account of any new evidence that may emerge.

Labour Statistics

Mr. Tony Lloyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will give details of the impact of changes in the method of calculating unemployment figures since 1979 on the figures for the Stretford constituency.

Mr. Lee: The information requested is not available for areas smaller than standard planning regions.

Mr. Bradley: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will publish a table showing what information he has for Greater Manchester as to the average weekly wage for *(a)* full-time male employees, *(b)* part-time male employees, *(c)* full-time female employees and *(d)* part-time female employees in both cash terms and real terms based on 1987-88 prices, for each year since 1979.

Mr. Lee: The available figures of average gross weekly earnings of employees in Greater Manchester are given in the table.

Average gross weekly earnings—Greater Manchester metropolitan county (gross earnings of adult employees whose pay was not affected by absence)

April (£ per week)

	Males[1] Full time	Females[2] Full time	Females[2] Part time[3]
Cash terms			
1979	98·8	60·7	26·7
1980	120·0	74·3	33·5
1981	136·6	88·2	36·5
1982	147·1	93·8	39·4
1983	160·1	101·7	43·4
1984	171·5	110·9	45·9
1985	183·5	119·6	48·8
1986	198·6	130·6	52·0
1987	214·4	140·6	55·7
1988	231·4	154·8	NYA
At April 1988 prices[4]			
1979	192·5	118·3	52·0
1980	192·1	118·9	53·6
1981	195·1	126·0	52·1
1982	192·1	122·5	51·4
1983	201·0	127·7	54·5
1984	204·7	132·4	54·8
1985	204·8	133·9	54·5
1986	215·1	141·5	56·3
1987	222·8	146·1	57·9
1988	231·4	154·8	NYA

Notes:

[1] Aged 21 years and over.

[2] Aged 18 years and over.

[3] Figures from 1984 onwards estimated from those on adult rates.

[4] Cash figures revalued using April 1988 retail price index (all items).

NYA denotes not yet available.

Figures for part time males are not available.

Source: New Earnings Survey.

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will publish in the *Official Report* the unemployment figures for each quarter from 1971 onwards, calculated on the same basis as last week's figures and publish alongside them the figures released at each quarter by his Department.

Mr. Lee: The table shows the latest seasonally adjusted unemployment figures consistent with the current coverage, together with the seasonally adjusted unemployment figures as published at the time for the United Kingdom, quarterly from January 1971.

United Kingdom

	Seasonally adjusted unemployment consistent with current coverage Total	Seasonally adjusted unemployment as published at the time[1] Total
1971		
January	538·2	647·7
April	604·3	718·7
July	670·2	794·2
October	721·5	852·6
1972		
January	760·1	900·1
April	782·7	911·9
July	718·3	846·4
October	686·9	814·8
1973		
January	609·4	738·6
April	552·9	647·7
July	512·1	606·3
October	461·5	538·8

	Seasonally adjusted unemployment consistent with current coverage Total	*Seasonally adjusted unemployment as published at the time[1] Total*
1974		
January	473·8	565·1
April	504·1	573·0
July	517·4	605·5
October	546·1	636·8
1975		
January	594·6	712·9
April	691·2	798·3
July	825·4	968·2
October	944·6	1,088·7
1976		
January	1,032·5	1,196·9
April	1,081·8	1,251·5
July	1,103·6	1,285·6
October	1,110·3	1,305·9
1977		
January	1,123·6	1,345·1
April	1,130·4	1,322·6
July	1,180·4	1,402·2
October	1,201·3	1,433·4
1978		
January	1,180·8	1,419·2
April	1,161·2	1,387·1
July	1,147·7	1,371·4
October	1,127·7	1,359·6
1979		
January	1,102·3	1,339·1
April	1,089·1	1,327·4
July	1,066·1	1,278·7
October	1,053·9	1,282·0
1980		
January	1,073·8	1,336·7
April	1,185·9	1,458·1
July	1,342·6	1,605·7
October	1,596·4	1,892·6
1981		
January	1,861·1	2,228·3
April	2,068·0	2,452·3
July	2,226·8	2,582·3
October	2,342·2	2,728·9
1982		
January	2,425·8	2,828·9
April	2,477·7	2,850·3
July	2,553·4	2,926·4
October	2,641·4	3,059·5
1983		
January	2,718·0	2,984·7
April	2,766·8	3,021·2
July	2,810·2	2,963·2
October	2,822·0	2,941·2
1984		
January	2,853·4	2,975·1
April	2,878·7	3,012·3
July	2,917·3	3,053·9
October	2,972·2	3,101·2
1985		
January	3,000·6	3,126·4
April	3,037·2	3,177·2
July	3,033·3	3,175·4
October	3,050·7	3,174·8
1986		
January	3,081·3	3,204·9
April	3,114·6	3,201·8
July	3,133·2	3,224·0
October	3,096·3	3,167·6
1987		
January	3,051·3	3,119·4
April	2,953·9	3,020·1
July	2,812·6	2,877·6
October	2,663·9	2,714·9
1988		
January	2,519·4	2,563·1
April	2,402·9	2,455·0
July	2,267·3	2,313·9
October	2,160·2	2,160·2

[1] These are the figures first published at the time. They therefore do not allow for all the various changes in coverage. Nor do they take account of the later more accurate assessments of the seasonal variations.

Tourism

Mr. Butterfill: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what plans the Government have to increase employment in the tourism industry in *(a)* the United Kingdom and *(b)* the south; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lee: The Government will continue with the sound economic policies that have helped to establish an enterprise economy which is generating sustained growth. The Government's role in developing the tourism industry in England is being considered as part of the review announced by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State on July 18.

Mr. Butterfill: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what information he has on the total amount spent on tourism and leisure developments in the first six months of 1988; what are the figures compared with those for the previous six month period; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lee: The English tourist board's "Tourism Investment Report" shows that the total amount spent on projects with a value of £0·5 million or more which were completed in the period January to June 1988 was £247 million. Investment in projects under construction during the periods January to June 1988 and July to December 1987 amounted to £1,737 million and £1,005 million respectively.

VAT

Mr. Heddle: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what assessments he has made as to the likely effect on *(a)* his Department's capital building programme and *(b)* the rent the Department will pay under occupational leases, of implementation of the European Court of Justice's judgment on value added tax on non-domestic buildings.

Mr. Cope: Implementation of the European Court of Justice's judgment on VAT will have no effect on my Department's capital building programme, since compensating adjustments have been made to the relevant expenditure provisions. At this stage, before landlords have decided whether to exercise their option to tax rents, it is not possible to offer meaningful estimates of the effects of the judgment on rental costs.

Written Answers to Questions

Thursday 8 December 1988

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Sea Defences

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what has been the annual cost of sea defences in the United Kingdom from 1979 to the present year.

Mr. Ryder: Annual capital costs of sea defence works from 1979 to the present year in England, Wales and Northern Ireland which attracted Government funding are as follows:

£ million

	England (estimated)	*Northern Ireland*	*Wales*
1979-80	18·3	n/a	0·427
1980-81	15·8	n/a	0·274
1981-82	16·7	0·078	0·225
1982-83	18·4	0·128	0·289
1983-84	23·0	0·214	0·757
1984-85	20·0	0·311	0·798
1985-86	17·9	0·304	0·121
1986-87	23·6	0·149	0·175
1987-88	27·6	0·122	0·058

Coastal works in Scotland are carried out primarily to prevent erosion rather than to defend land against flooding from the sea, and, hence, expenditure has not been included.

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what is the current level of expenditure required to bring United Kingdom sea defences up to present day satisfactory levels.

Mr. Ryder: As a result of a comprehensive review of flood defence requiremens in England which was carried out recently, the need for an increased long-term programme of work was identified. The Government recently agreed to increase provision for the programme and this will facilitate additional capital funding of about £50 million over the next three years for local and water authority schemes both inland and on the coast; approximately half of this expenditure will be spent on sea defence works.

From 1989 to 1992 it is estimated that capital funding for sea defence works in Wales and Northern Ireland will be £335,000 and £331,000 respectively. In Scotland work is necessary primarily for inland fluvial and coastal erosion works; no significant sea defence works are anticipated.

Greenhouse Effect

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what action he is taking to establish the long term effects of the greenhouse effect on British coastlines; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Ryder: A rise in the mean sea level is the main possible consequence of the greenhouse effect on British coastlines. A national research programme, led by the Department of the Environment and co-ordinated with European Community and world-wide research, is investigating the implications for the United Kingdom of the greenhouse effect. The results will be monitored carefully, particularly with regard to predictions of changes in mean sea level and the implications for the design of sea defences. The existing tide gauge network already provides useful information on actual changes in sea level.

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what is the annual budget devoted by his Department to the investigation of the effects of the greenhouse effect and freak weather conditions on Britain's coastline.

Mr. Ryder: Responsibility for research into the greenhouse effect and its consequences rests primarily with the Department of the Environment, although my Department maintains close liaison on these matters. Some £2 million is spent annually by my Department on river and coastal research generally, of which about 60 per cent. is directed to research which will assist with the future planning and design of coastal defences.

Sea Level

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what are the projected sea level rises for the mid 21st century; and what would be the corresponding effects to the British coastline.

Mr. Ryder: There is, at the moment, a wide range of predictions about the possible rise in sea levels. Because of the many uncertainties, however, it is not realistic to make firm assessments of the likely effects on the coastline.

Bristol Channel (Sludge Dumping)

Mr. Gareth Wardell: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what assessment he has made of the environmental impact of the dumping of sludge in the Bristol channel south of Pwlldu Head; and if his Department will publish the studies that have been carried out in this area.

Mr. Donald Thompson: Scientists from my Department's directorate of fisheries research undertake a regular monitoring programme at the sewage sludge disposal ground in the Bristol channel. Results of this work have been published in Fisheries Research Technical Report number 59.

Further information on the quality of fish and shellfish in the Bristol channel have been published in Aquatic Environment Monitoring reports numbers 10 and 16. All these publications are available in the Library of the House.

Salmonella

Mr. Cryer: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (1) whether funds will continue to be provided for Dr. Geoff Mead at the Institute of Food Research in Bristol and his work on the introduction of benign bacteria to chickens to kill salmonella organisms; and if he will make a statement;

(2) how much grant has been paid to Dr. Geoff Mead at the Institute of Food Research for research into the

suppression of salmonella organisms; what results have been obtained; whether further grant aid has been requested; and if he will make a statement.

Mr Ryder: The research conducted by Dr. Geoff Mead and his team of scientists over more than 10 years into the manipulation of microbial flora of the gut of young chickens has been supported by my Department and the Agricultural and Food Research Council at a current cost of about £100,000 annually. As stated in my reply to the hon. Member for St. Helens, South (Mr. Bermingham), this work was reviewed as part of an extensive review of MAFF-commissioned research in microbiology and it was decided that funding should cease from April 1989. Since my reply to the hon. Member I understand that a commercial company has expressed interest in taking that work further. Funding is to be diverted to other important microbiological work.

Mr. Butler: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what estimate he has made of the proportion of eggs produced in England which are infected with salmonella.

Mr. Key: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Fod what proportion of British egg production is now infected with salmonella.

Mr. Ryder: I regret that it is not possible to make a precise estimate, but I agree with what my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Health told the House on 5 December at column 19—that the risk of infection to any individual is small and the risk to the healthy adult is small indeed. The industry and the Government are working together urgently to reduce that risk to a minimum.

Food Additives

Mr. Greg Knight: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what information he has on the safety, or otherwise, of the use of "E" numbered substances in processed foods; if he will examine latest reports on such substances from other countries, including the United States of America; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Ryder: All available world-wide information on the safety of food additives is assessed by the committees of independent experts who advise me on these matters. Any information which might subsequently affect the approval of any food additive is carefully reviewed. The prefix "E" indicates those food additives whose use has been approved throughout the European Community.

Badgers

Mr. Hardy: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will arrange for the area of some farms where a breakdown or breakdowns involving bovine tuberculosis has occurred to be exempt from badger control to enable an assessment of the control programme to be made.

Mr. Donald Thompson: An experimental area already exists where badgers are not removed when TB breakdowns in cattle occur. This area, which is in Gloucestershire, contains 18 farms which are not subject to badger control.

The creation of additional areas comparable with the Gloucestershire study area was considered by Professor Dunnet in his review of the badger control strategy in 1986. He concluded that the cost of maintaining such areas made the proposal impractical.

The current badger control strategy is that recommended by Professor Dunnet. It is kept under review, but in accordance with Professor Dunnet's recommendation it needs to operate for at least three years before a reliable review of its effects on the extent of herd breakdowns can be carried out.

Shellfish

Mr. Macdonald: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will publish the results of the recent survey into shellfish stocks in the English channel; and whether he intends to take any action to conserve stocks.

Mr. Donald Thompson: My Department is currently investigating the state of crab stocks in the English channel for which a major sampling programme has just been completed. The scallop fishery is also being investigated. Both investigations are due to be completed in 1990 and the results will be published.

Disabled Persons (Staff)

Mr. Sean Hughes: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what percentage of his Ministry's staff are classed as disabled.

Mr. Donald Thompson: 1·3 per cent. of the Ministry's permanent staff are registered disabled—as at 1 November 1988.

Common Agricultural Policy

Mr. Barry Field: To ask the Minister of Agricuture, Fisheries and Food if he will provide details of expenditure in 1987-88 and 1988-89 by the Intervention Board for Agricultural Produce and the agricultural departments on market regulation under the common agricultural policy.

Mr. Ryder: Details are given of the outturn for 1987-88 and the latest forecast of outturn for 1988-89.

£ million

	1987-88 (Actual outturn)	*1988-89 (Forecast outturn)*
(i) *Expenditure by the intervention board for agricultural produce*		
Cereals	229·4	163·8
Beef and Veal	201·4	160·9
Pigmeat	−1·9	0·6
Sugar	151·1	135·2
Processed goods	47·6	78·8
Milk products	251·1	79·3
Oilseeds	208·3	167·3
Sheepmeat	119·4	104·2
Others	16·6	33·8
Total	1,222·9	923·9
(ii) *Expenditure by the agricultural departments*		
Payments to producers giving up milk production	51·0	74·1
Suckler cow premium scheme	36·7	37·8
Annual premium on ewes	80·6	202·0
Small cereals producers	1·7	1·9
Total	170·0	315·8
Grand total	1,392·9	1,239·7

Some of the expenditure shown benefits consumers and trade interests rather than United Kingdom producers.

The figures for the Intervention Board for Agricultural Produce are made up of several elements and include refunds on intra-Community trade, import and export refunds on third country trade, the beef and sheep variable premium schemes (net of clawback for sheepmeat and charges on beef exported and sold into intervention), aid for private storage and animal feed, certain other marketing and production subsidies and the cost of purchasing commodities into intervention less proceeds from sales. The figures are also net of other receipts treated as negative expenditure, namely monetary compensatory amounts levied on intra-Community trade (in the case of pigmeat these exceeded expenditure prior to 1988-89), the co-responsibility and supplementary levies on milk producers and the co-responsibility levy on cereals. Receipts from levies on the production and storage of sugar and isoglucose and on third country exports, which are regarded as Community own resources, are excluded. The figures include the United Kingdom share of the EC school milk subsidy scheme.

For the annual premium on ewes from the 1985 marketing year, late publication of the final rate of payment has delayed the making of some payments into the following year. The forecast for 1988-89 provides for slippage from the 1987 marketing year and payment for the 1988 marketing year in full.

Of the estimated outturn for 1988-89 £1,507·4 million is expected to be financed from the European agricultural guidance and guarantee fund (EAGGF); in 1987-88 £1,086·7 million was thus financed. However, because the United Kingdom is a net contributor to the European Community budget, the whole of this expenditure is attributable to the Exchequer. Receipts from the European Community do not always relate to expenditure in the period. For market support there was prior to 1987 little delay in reimbursement of expenditure but in that year a delay of two months was introduced as an economy measure and this was lengthened to two and a half months from 1988. Receipts for 1988-89 reflect new arrangements for the depreciation of stocks agreed at the February 1988 European Council.

The individual totals may not add up due to rounding.

Mr. Moss: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will give details of expenditure in 1987-88 and 1988-89 by the agricultural department on agricultural grants and subsidies excluding regulation under the common agricultural policy.

Mr. Ryder: Details are given of the outturn for 1987-88 and the latest forecast of outturn for 1988-90.

	1987-88 (Actual outturn) £ million	*1988-89 (Forecast outturn) £ million*
Price guarantees		
Wool	0·7	0·1
Potatoes	—	—
Total	0·7	0·1
Support for capital and other improvements		
Environmentally sensitive areas	2·9	9·1
Agriculture and horticulture development scheme	32·3	25·9
Guidance premiums	2·3	0·8
Farm accounts	0·7	0·5
Farm structures	0·4	0·4
Northern Ireland agricultural development programme	2·0	1·6
Agriculture and horticulture grant scheme	3·6	1·8
Agriculture improvement scheme (EC)	18·9	28·4
Agriculture improvement scheme (National)	9·0	9·0
Others	0·3	0·3
Total	72·4	77·8
Support for agriculture in special areas		
Hill livestock compensatory allowances	121·0	116·7
Additional benefit under AHDS, NIADP, AHGS, AIS (EC) and AIS (National)	20·9	25·9
Others	4·1	8·4
Total	145·9	151·0
Other payments		
Milk outgoers scheme	11·1	11·6
Crofting building grants and loans/net	3·3	4·1
Sheep compensation scheme 1986	1·0	1·1
Storm damage 1987	—	1·7
Co-operation grants	1·7	2·1
Farm diversification:—		
Capital grants	—	2·0
Marketing feasibility grants	—	0·8
Others	1·0	1·0
Total	18·1	24·5
Grand Total	237·1	253·4

Some of this expenditure attracts contributions from the European agricultural guidance and guarantee fund. These are mainly received in the following year. In 1988-89 £44·1 million is expected to be received from the fund compared with £41 million in 1987-88.

The individual figures may not add up to the totals shown due to roundings.

TRANSPORT

Train Times

Mr. Gregory: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what information he has as to how many trains arrived at exactly the scheduled time in the last 12-month period for which figures are available; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Portillo: I regret that the information is not available in the form requested. The punctuality objective for Network South East (NSE) is that 90 per cent. of trains should arrive on time or within five minutes; for the provincial sector, that 85-97 per cent. of trains should arrive on time or within five minutes depending on the service; and for InterCity that 90 per cent. of trains should arrive on time or within 10 minutes. In 1987-88, NSE exceeded the agreed punctuality objective with 92 per cent. of services arriving on time or within five minutes. 97 per

cent. of provincial services achieved the objective, and InterCity performance fell some way short of its target at 87 per cent.

VAT

Mr. Heddle: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what assessments he has made as to the likely effect on *(a)* his Department's capital building programme and *(b)* the rent the Department will pay under occupational leases of implementation of the European Court of Justice's judgment on value added tax on non-domestic buildings.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Implementation of the European Court of Justice's judgment on VAT will have no effect on the Department's capital building programme since compensating adjustments have been made to the relevant expenditure provisions. At this stage, before landlords have decided whether to exercise their option to tax rents, it is not possible to offer estimates of the effects of the judgment on rental costs.

Road Renewal

Mr. Pike: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport (1) how many miles of motorway it is intended to renew in 1988-89;

(2) how many miles of trunk road it is intended to renew in 1988-89;

(3) how many miles of motorway it is intended to renew in each of the three years 1989-90, 1990-91, and 1991-92;

(4) how many miles of trunk road it is intended to renew in each of the three years 1989-90, 1990-91, and 1991-92.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The mileages of motorways and trunk roads renewed this year are likely to be about 52 and 106, respectively. These are lower than planned as a result of the rescheduling of capital maintenance announced on 20 June at column 455.

I am looking to competition between contractors to contain future price increases, so far as possible.

Subject to that, we shall aim to increase the mileages to be renewed each year over the next three years to averages of 84 miles of motorway and 233 miles of trunk road. The maintenance programme for 1989-90 has not been finalised. It will be announced in March as usual.

London Assessment Study

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport which of the options listed in the east London assessment study stage 2a report he has instructed Ove Arup and partners to develop during the east London assessment study stage 2b.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: We have not yet taken any view on the preliminary options produced by the study consultants. This must await the submission of the consultant's report in the summer 1989.

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport (1) how many representations he has received opposing options presented in the stage 2a reports of the London assessment study;

(2) how many representations he has received supporting the general principle of the London assessment study since the publication of the stage 2a reports in August; and from what types of organisations these have been received.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: We have received about 600 representations expressing concern about some of the study options. Organisations supported some options and opposed others.

M1 (Accidents)

Mr. Greg Knight: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many reported accidents have occurred on the M1 between London and Derby, junction 25, for the last period of 12 months for which figures are available; and what were the figures for *(a)* 12 months earlier, *(b)* five years earlier and *(c)* 10 years earlier.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The numbers of injury accidents on the M1 between London, junction 1, and Derby, junction 25, for the requested years are shown in the table.

Injury Accidents on M1: between Junctions 1 and 25: 1977, 1982, 1986, 1987

Year	Accidents
1977	590
1982	616
1986	685
1987	721

Note: Personal injury accidents only

Channel Tunnel

Sir John Stanley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what role he expects the Kent county council to play in specifying the physical and acoustic characteristics of the associated environmental works that would form part of the capital cost of British Rail's proposed high-speed line between London and the Channel tunnel.

Mr. Portillo: I expect British Rail's proposals to be the subject of consultation with Kent county council.

Sir John Stanley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport whether, if British Rail's proposed high-speed line between London and the Channel tunnel is financed in the public sector, the costs of all forms of compensation to the owner of properties affected, both that already paid or to be paid under British Rail's ex-gratia scheme and that to be paid statutorily, will form part of the capital cost of the project for the purpose of calculating the rate of return.

Mr. Portillo: It is normal practice for all the costs associated with British Rail investment proposals to be taken into account for the purposes of assessing the viability of those proposals. The same is true of road schemes.

Traffic Congestion

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what information he has as to the causes of the severe traffic congestion in the east end of London on Friday 2 December.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: A number of incidents contributed to the evening traffic congestion in east London on 2 December.

In particular an accident on the westbound carriageway of A13 Canning Town flyover meant that westbound traffic was restricted to one lane for one and three quarter hours from 3.34 pm.

Manchester Airport

Mr. Alfred Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what progress has been made in the negotiations on the construction of a rail link to Manchester airport; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Portillo: I am awaiting a jointly agreed statement on the financing of this link from Greater Manchester PTE, British Rail, and Manchester international airport.

Atomic Weapons Establishment (Explosion)

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what road closures followed the explosion at the Atomic Weapons Establishment at Burghfield on Friday 2 December.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: There were no road closures.

Level Crossings

Mr. Hanley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what is the recommended period of time before the arrival of a train for the closing of fully manned level crossing gates.

Mr. Portillo: There is no standard recommended time for the closure of fully manned level crossing gates before the arrival of a train. The signalman should, however, close the gates in time to clear the railway signals interlocked with them so that the train approaching the crossing can do so without reducing its speed.

London Regional Transport

Mr. Roger King: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if, when he next meets the chairman of London Regional Transport, he will discuss the practice of making the cheap price capital visitors' card available exclusively to British Rail passengers.

Mr. Portillo: Ticketing is a commercial matter for London Regional Transport.

EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

School Places

Mr. Thurnham: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science how many appeals to local authorities have been lodged so far during 1988 against the allocation of school places; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Butcher: This information is not available. An informal survey of local education authorities carried out by the Department in the late autumn of 1987 indicated that there had been in that year 8,253 appeals against school admission decisions to committees set up by local education authorities under section 7 of the Education Act 1980. 3,177 of these appeals were in respect of primary schools and 5,076 for secondaries. In addition, a total of at least 2,245 appeals against admission decisions were made to committees set up by governors of voluntary-aided and special agreement schools during 1987, 469 in respect of primary schools and 1,776 for secondaries.

Assisted Places Scheme

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretry of State for Education and Science if he will list all the schools which receive pupils paid for in whole or part under the assisted places scheme and the number of assisted place pupils each school had in 1987-88.

Mr. Butcher: The information requested is as follows:

	Number of Assisted Place Holders 1987-88
Abbey School	69
Abingdon School	90
Aldenham School	24
Alice Ottley School	70
Alleyn's School	198
Arnold School	76
Ashford School	43
Bancroft's School	76
Bath High School	90
Batley Grammar School	249
Bedales School	9
Bedford High School	92
Bedford Modern School	136
Bedford School	76
Dame Alice Harpur School	145
Belvedere School	163
Berkhamsted School	29
Berkhamsted School for Girls	28
Birkenhead High school	258
Birkenhead School	245
Bishop's Stortford College	30
Blackheath High School	101
Bolton School (Boys)	262
Bolton School (Girls)	251
Bradford College	0
Bradford Girls' Grammar School	58
Bradford Grammar School	201
Brentwood School	101
Brighton and Hove High School	152
Brighton College	99
Bristol Cathedral School	150
Bristol Grammar School	263
Bromley High School	120
Bruton School for Girls	127
Bury Grammar School (Boys)	198
Bury Grammar School (Girls)	229
Canford School	35
Carmel College	91
Casterton School	43
Caterham School	109
Central Newcastle High School	112
Charterhouse	14
Cheadle Hulme School	129
Chigwell School	70
Churcher's College	112
City of London School	124
City of London School for Girls	104
Clifton College	67
Clifton High School	52
Colfe's Shool	183
Colston's School	89
Colston's Girls' School	145
Coventry Schools	245
Cranleigh School	38
Croydon High School	119
Culford School	46
Dame Allan's Boys' School	142

	Number of Assisted Place Holders 1987-88
Dame Allan's Girls' School	127
Dauntsey's School	54
Denstone College	114
Dulwich College	273
Edgehill College	123
Eltham College	104
Emanuel School	289
Epsom College	30
Exeter School	164
Farnborough Hill School	181
Felsted School	47
Forest School	138
Friends' School	79
Godolphin and Latymer School	182
Gresham's School	10
Haberdashers' Aske's School, Borehamwood	229
Haberdashers' Aske's School for Girls Elstree	137
Hampton School	197
Harrogate College	18
Hereford Cathedral School	233
Highgate School	33
Hulme Grammar (Boys)	203
Hulme Grammar (Girls)	178
Hymers College	152
Ipswich High School	136
Ipswich School	79
James Allen's Girls School	157
John Lyon School	94
Kent College	80
King Edward's School at Bath	128
King Edward's School, Birmingham	281
King Edward VI High School, Birmingham	173
King Edward VII School, Lytham	214
King Edward VI School, Norwich	101
King Edward VI School, Southampton	222
King Edward's School, Witley	76
King's College School	93
King's High School for Girls, Warwick	170
King's School, Chester	94
King's School, Macclesfield	177
King's School, Rochester	57
King's School, Worcester	136
Kingston Grammar School	129
Kingswood School	36
Kirkham Grammar School	63
Lady Eleanor Holles School	74
La Sagesse Convent School	143
Latymer Upper School	291
Leeds Girls' High School	127
Leeds Grammar School	194
Leys School	29
Liverpool College	174
Lord Wandsworth College	78
Loreto Convent Grammer School	71
Loughborough Grammar School	120
Loughborough High School	94
Magdalen College School	117
Malvern College	57
Manchester Grammar School	271
Manchester High School	165
Maynard School	158
Merchant Taylors' School, Liverpool	186
Merchant Taylors' School for Girls, Liverpool	171
Merchant Taylors' School, Northwood	85
Mill Hill School	78
Monkton Coombe School	38
Mount St. Mary's College	59
Newcastle-Under-Lyme School	459
Northampton High School	178
North London Collegiate School	73
Norwich High School	171
Nottingham Girls' High School	188
Northampton High School	89
Notting Hill and Ealing High School	116
Old Palace School	195
Oxford High School	97
Perse School for Boys	57
Perse School for Girls	79
Plymouth College	182
Pocklington School	131
Portsmouth Grammar School	188
Portsmouth High School	149
Putney High School	105
Queen Elizabeth Grammar School, Beckenham	246
Queen Elizabeth Grammar School, Wakefield	153
Queen Elizabeth's Hospital School, Bristol	168
Queen Mary School, Lytham	237
Queen's College, Taunton	63
Queens College, London	68
Queen's School, Chester	84
Ratcliffe College	52
Redland High School	79
Red Maid's School	157
Reigate Grammar School	109
Repton School	45
Rossall School	43
Royal Grammar School, Guildford	116
Royal Grammar School, Newcastle	308
Royal Grammar School, Worcester	185
St. Albans School	124

	Number of Assisted Place Holders 1987-88
St. Albans High School for Girls	59
St. Ambrose College	87
St. Anselm's College	175
St. Bede's College	213
St. Bees School	82
St. Benedict's School	71
St. Catherines's School	36
St. Dunstan's College	160
St. Edmund's College, Ware	65
St. Edward's College, Liverpool	385
St. George's College	28
St. Helen's School	28
St. John's College, Southsea	181
St. John's School, Leatherhead	15
St. Joseph's College, Ipswich	76
St. Joseph's Convent, Reading	121
St. Mary's College, Crosby	246
St. Mary's Convent, Cambridge	95
St. Mary's Hall, Brighton	49
St. Maur's Convent, Weybridge	62
St. Paul's School, Barnes	72
St. Paul's Girls' School, Hammersmith	63
St. Peter's School, York	124
St. Swithin's School, Winchester	3
Salesian College	86
School of St. Helen and St. Katherine	103
Sedbergh School	27
Sheffield high School	99
Shrewsbury High School	85
Sir William Perkins' School	87
South Hampstead High School	64
Stamford School	71
Stamford High School	64
Stockport Grammar School	269
Stonyhurst College	24
Stowe School	5
Streatham Hill and Clapham High School	154
Sutton High School	66
Sutton Valence School	50
Sydenham High School	109
Talbot Heath School	139
Taunton School	50
Tonbridge School	2
Trent College	116
Trinity School of John Whitgift	136
Truro School	110
Truro High School	55
University College School	69
Upton Hall Convent School	153
Ursuline High School	133
Wakefield High School	143
Walthamstow Hall	77
Warwick School	137
Wellingborough School	55
Wellington College	44
Wellington School	199
Wells Cathedral School	66
West Buckland School	52
Westminster School	26
Whitgift School	101
William Hulme Grammar School	207
Wimbledon High School	63
Winchester College	25
Wisbech Grammar School	236
Withington Girls' School	89
Wolverhampton Grammar School	260
Woodbridge School	101
Woodhouse Grove School	113
Wycliffe College	42
Total	26,900

Independent Schools (Costs)

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will list the local education authorities which pay for places for pupils residing in their areas to attend independent schools, excluding special schools; and what are the numbers of pupils each supported in whole or in part during 1987-88.

Mr. Butcher: On the basis of returns made to the Department by local education authorities in January 1988 the numbers of pupils being funded by local education authorities to attend independent schools, excluding pupils either at special schools or receiving special educational treatment, were as follows:

Local education authorities

	Number of pupils
Barking	0
Barnet	4
Bexley	0
Brent	0
Bromley	0
Croydon	8
Ealing	0
Enfield	9
Haringey	0
Harrow	0
Havering	7
Hillingdon	4
Hounslow	0
Kingston-upon-Thames	2
Merton	0
Newham	9
Redbridge	82
Richmond-upon-Thames	1
Sutton	0
Waltham Forest	0
ILEA	78
Birmingham	9
Coventry	0
Dudley	4
Sandwell	2
Solihull	0
Walsall	4
Wolverhampton	4
Knowsley	6

	Number of pupils
Liverpool	5
St. Helens	5
Sefton	0
Wirral	630
Bolton	5
Bury	1
Manchester	0
Oldham	9
Rochdale	3
Salford	4
Stockport	5
Tameside	1
Trafford	1,524
Wigan	9
Barnsley	0
Doncaster	0
Rotherham	0
Sheffield	0
Bradford	0
Calderdale	180
Kirklees	3
Leeds	0
Wakefield	0
Gateshead	0
Newcastle-upon-Tyne	4
North Tyneside	0
South Tyneside	0
Sunderland	0
Isles of Scilly	0
Avon	16
Bedfordshire	0
Berkshire	0
Buckinghamshire	7
Cambridgeshire	26
Cheshire	956
Cleveland	8
Cornwall	0
Cumbria	8
Derbyshire	2
Devon	13
Dorset	3
Durham	4
East Sussex	32
Essex	5
Gloucestershire	31
Hampshire	11
Hereford and Worcester	257
Hertfordshire	13
Humberside	3
Isle of Wight	3
Kent	11
Lancashire	56
Leicestershire	12
Lincolnshire	624
Norfolk	7
North Yorkshire	8
Northamptonshire	0
Northumberland	0
Nottinghamshire	20
Oxfordshire	0
Shropshire	8
Somerset	11
Staffordshire	0
Suffolk	0
Surrey	28
Warwickshire	25
West Sussex	26
Wiltshire	97
Clwyd	15
Dyfed	1
Gwent	1
Gwynedd	20
Mid Glamorgan	0
Powys	0
South Glamorgan	1
West Glamorgan	1

Schools (Status)

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will list in the *Official Report*, specifying in each case the local authorities concerned, the voluntary body concerned and the name, composition and status of the schools, those schools which from 1980 to the latest date for which information is available, have changed from *(a)* independent to voluntary status and *(b)* voluntary to independent.

Mr. Butcher: The information requested could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Children (Special Needs)

Mr. Fatchett: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science whether he has any plans to publish a consultative document on the educational needs of children with a dual sensory impairment.

Mr. Butcher: My right hon. Friend intends to publish a policy statement shortly.

DEFENCE

Expenditure

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what has been the total of United Kingdom defence spending since 1958 up to and including 1988-89 *(a)* in cash and *(b)* at today's prices.

Mr. Freeman: Total defence expenditure since 1958, including Supply Estimates provision for 1988-89, has been £219 billion in cash and £600 billion at 1988-89 prices, using defence-specific price deflators.

Plutonium

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what contingency plans his Department has made for the production of military plutonium following the decommissioning of Chapelcross and Calder Hall nuclear power stations.

Mr. Sainsbury: The long-term future of these reactors and any defence requirement for their replacement will be kept under review as appropriate.

Atomic Weapons Establishment, Burghfield

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence (1) what caused the explosion at the Atomic Weapons Establishment at Burghfield in Berkshire on Friday 2 December; at what time the explosion occurred; if there were any casualties; and what damage was caused to property at Burghfield and in the surrounding area;

(2) if it is normal practice to burn surplus high explosives at Burghfield; and if he will make a statement;

(3) what information was given to the media following the explosion at the Atomic Weapons Establishment at Burghfield on Friday 2 December.

Mr. Sainsbury: A minor unplanned explosion occurred at AWE Burghfield at 0606 on the morning of 2 December. It took place during the routine burning of surplus conventional explosive waste on a special open site, within the main boundary fence, which is normally used for this purpose. There was no personal injury and no danger to the work force or public at any time. Such burning is controlled remotely and is carried out when the work force is not present as an additional safety precaution. The slight damage sustained on site was localised to a few broken windows and, to the best of our knowledge, no damage was caused outside the establishment. No radioactive material was involved or in any way at risk in this incident.

The handling and disposal of the explosives are governed by strict controls laid down by the Defence Safety Services Organisation (DSSO). These regulations and checks cover such matters as safety distances, warnings, demarcation, access, emergency services, procedures and records. The DSSO had licensed AWE Burghfield to carry out explosive disposal in recognition of their compliance with these standards but such work has now been suspended while a detailed enquiry is conducted into the cause of the explosion. Security considerations preclude publication of the enquiry report though the local trades unions will be fully involved.

The site's own emergency services were on hand but were not required to take any immediate action as there was no fire and no continuing emergency. Likewise, the local fire brigade and police were alerted automatically but took no action on arrival. The essential facts were made available to the media promptly.

Hong Kong (Explosion)

Mr. O'Neill: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what was the cause of the explosion in Hong Kong on Monday 5 December which killed two service men.

Mr. Freeman: There was an explosion at Cassino Lines, in the New Territories, Hong Kong, on Sunday 4 December at 11.22 hours local time, in which one officer was killed and another seriously injured. Initial investigations suggested that the explosion was caused by a hand grenade. The Royal Military Police and Royal Hong Kong Police are conducting a joint investigation, and have announced that the case is being treated as murder. There is thought to be little likelihood of terrorist involvement.

OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT

Holiday Visits

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is the approximate cost of holiday visit passages paid in respect of *(a)* children of the Ministry of Overseas Development personnel and *(b)* children of technical co-operation officers in receipt of education allowances for the latest available year.

Mr. Chris Patten: The latest year for which figures are available is 1987-88. In that year, the cost of holiday visit passages for children of staff of the Overseas Development Administration (formerly the Ministry of Overseas Development) was £22,200. For children of all personnel financed from technical co-operation funds, including technical co-operation officers and supplementees, the cost was £990,000.

THE ARTS

Vishnu (Statues)

Mr. Fisher: To ask the Minister for the Arts what steps he has taken to establish the legal provenance of the two statues of Vishnu which were sold at Sotheby's on 14 November.

Mr. Luce: It would be inappropriate for me to interfere in commercial matters. It is for the parties involved to satisfy themselves on the legal position.

Mr. Fisher: To ask the Minister for the Arts whether he will consider the contents of the United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organisation convention of 14 November 1970 on the means of prohibiting and preventing the illicit import and export, and transfer of ownership, of cultural property, in relation to the sale of two statues of Vishnu at Sotheby's on 14 November.

Mr. Luce: Her Majesty's Government are not a party to this convention.

British Library

Mr. Buchan: To ask the Minister for the Arts how many seats the public auditorium in the new British Library building at St. Pancras will have.

Mr. Luce: The auditorium of the new British Library, currently under construction at St. Pancras, will contain 255 seats. Additionally, there will be spaces for five wheelchairs for the disabled.

Mr. Buchan: To ask the Minister for the Arts what was the reason for the cost escalation in the first phase of the Corn Merchant's Stores conversion at the British Library, Boston Spa, from £600,000 in November 1986 to a final cost of £2·309 million in 1988.

Mr. Luce: The figure of £600,000 to which I referred in answer to the question from my hon. Friend the Member for Ruislip-Northwood (Mr. Wilkinson) on 17 November 1986 at column 30 was not an estimate of the cost of the conversion of the Corn Merchant's Stores but was the Government's earmarked funding for the project for 1987-88. This was part of a total Government commitment of £1·6 million over three years, the balance of the cost being contributed by the British Library. There was no material change in the estimated cost of the project between 1986 and 1988.

Mr. Buchan: To ask the Minister for the Arts what is the total area of office accommodation for British Library staff in phase I of the new St. Pancras building.

Mr. Luce: It is planned to build 1,839 sq m of office space in stage 1A of the new British Library building. This area includes all associated circulation space.

Stage 1A is currently under construction and will be completed in 1993. The amount of office accommodation space to be included in the completion phase is not yet known.

Mr. Buchan: To ask the Minister for the Arts when the British Library's strategic plan for business information will be published.

Mr. Luce: I refer the hon. Member to the reply that I gave to the hon. Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell) on 4 July 1988 at column *469*.

Mr. Buchan: To ask the Minister for the Arts whether the open access shelving provisions and reader seats for science and technology readers in the phase I St. Pancras building will be less or more than the present provisions in the Holborn reading rooms.

Mr. Luce: There are in total 144 reader desks in the two science reference and information services (SRIS) building at Holborn; this provision compares with 178 standard reader desks which will be available at St. Pancras by 1993, with some 60 additional desks planned to be available by 1996. In addition, stools are provided at Holborn, but are not yet a formal part of the St. Pancras brief.

The length of open access shelving at Holborn is approximately 11·7 km. This compares with 12·6 km which will be available at St. Pancras in 1993, with some 6 km of additional shelving by 1996.

Reviewing Committee on the Export of Works of Art

Mr. Greg Knight: To ask the Minister for the Arts whether he is able to announce the publication date of the report of the Reviewing Committee on the Export of Works of Art for the year ended 30 June.

Mr. Luce: I have today presented the 34th report of the Reviewing Committee on the Export of Works of Art for 1987-88. Copies have been placed in the Libraries of Parliament.

Arts Support

Mr. Baldry: To ask the Minister for the Arts whether he is satisfied that the present arrangements for the support of the arts through the Arts Council and the regional arts associations in England are adequate to meet changing needs.

Mr. Luce: I believe that the time has come to review the existing structure in the light of recent changes and present developments. After consultation with the chairman of the Arts Council, Lord Rees-Mogg, and his successor designate, Mr. Peter Palumbo, I have invited Mr. Richard Wilding, the present head of the Office of Arts and Libraries who retires from the public service at the end of this month, to conduct a review in consultation with the parties concerned and to report to me by 31 October 1989.

The review will be primarily concerned with the structure of support, and the way in which the various parts of the system fit together. It will be conducted on the basis that the arm's-length principle will continue to govern the allocation of money within a given total and the making of artistic judgments, and that a substantial amount of decision-making should continue to take place at the regional level. Existing arrangements in Scotland and Wales will not be affected by the review.

The thinking that underlies the commissioning of the review and the scope that I wish it to cover are set out at greater length in a letter which I have today sent to Lord Rees-Mogg. I am placing a copy of the letter in the Library.

Mr. Wilding will carry out wide consultations in the course of the review. Any person or body wishing to contribute views or comments is invited to write to him, care of the Office of Arts and Libraries, Horse Guards Road, London SW1P 3AL.

THE ARTS

Public Libraries

Mr. Fisher: To ask the Minister for the Arts (1) when he intends to publish his response to the submissions he has received on his Green Paper on the future financing of public libraries;

(2) whether it is his intention to introduce legislation in this current session of Parliament implementing his proposals on the future financing of public libraries.

Mr. Luce *[holding answer 7 December 1988]:* I expect to make a statement shortly after the Christmas recess.

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Ministers' Pay

Mr. Hanley: To ask the Lord President of the Council if he will make a statement about Ministers' pay.

Mr. Wakeham: The salaries of Ministers and other paid office holders were last increased from 1 January 1988 under the terms of the Ministerial and other Salaries Order 1987, and will remain at these levels until they are changed by a new order. The Government have considered possible changes to ministerial salaries in the light of the increase in the salaries of Members of Parliament that will take place on 1 January 1989 according to the terms of the resolution of 21 July 1987. The Government propose a package of increases averaging 4½ per cent. This is set out in the following table. I have today laid the draft Ministerial and other Salaries Order 1988 to implement these changes.

Minister and other paid office holders

	Current official salary £	*January 1989 official salary* £	*Percentage increase*	*Current total salary (including reduced Parliamentary salary of £16,911)* £	*Total January 1989 salary (including reduced Parliamentary salary of £18,148)* £	*Percentage increase*
Prime Minister[1]	45,787	46,109	0·70	62,698	64,257	2·49
Mr. Speaker	35,887	36,209	0·90	52,798	54,357	2·95
Cabinet Minister (C)	34,157	34,479	0·94	51,068	52,627	3·05
Cabinet Minister (L)	40,438	41,997	3·86			
Minister of State (C)	23,887	24,209	1·35	40,798	42,357	3·82
Minister of State (L)	34,688	37,047	6·80			
Parliamentary Secretary (C)	17,897	18,219	1·80	34,808	36,367	4·48
Parliamentary Secretary (L)	28,688	30,647	6·83			
Attorney General	36,357	36,679	0·89	53,268	54,827	2·93
Solicitor General	29,637	29,959	1·09	46,548	48,107	3·35
Lord Advocate	40,508	42,067	3·85			
Solicitor-General for Scotland	34,956	36,515	4·46			

	Current official salary	January 1989 official salary	Percentage increase	Current total salary (including reduced Parliamentary salary of £16,911)	Total January 1989 salary (including reduced Parliamentary salary of £18,148)	Percentage increase
	£	£		£	£	
House of Commons						
Leader of the Opposition	31,237	31,559	1·03	48,148	49,707	3·24
Chief Whip	28,267	28,589	1·14	45,178	46,737	3·45
Deputy Chief Whip	23,887	24,209	1·35	40,798	42,357	3·82
Opposition Chief Whip	23,887	24,209	1·35	40,798	42,357	3·82
Government Whips and Assistant Government Whips	14,827	15,349	3·52	31,738	33,497	5·54
Assistant Opposition Whips	14,827	15,349	3·52	31,738	33,497	5·54
Chairman of Ways and Means	23,887	24,209	1·35	40,798	42,357	3·82
Deputy Chairman of Ways and Means	20,877	21,199	1·54	37,788	39,347	4·13
House of Lords						
Chief Whip	34,688	37,047	6·80			
Deputy Chief Whip	28,688	30,647	6·83			
Government Whips	25,618	27,377	6·87			
Opposition Leader	28,688	30,647	6·83			
Opposition Chief Whip	25,618	27,377	6·87			
Chairman of Committees	34,688	37,047	6·80			
Principal Deputy Chairman of Committees	31,578	33,537	6·20			

[1] The Prime Minister has elected to receive the same salary as a Cabinet Minister in the House of Commons.

Note: The Lord Chancellor's salary is governed by the Lord Chancellor's Salary Order 1988 and is not affected by this Order. (He receives £87,250 effective from 1 October 1988).

Theft

Mr. Andrew MacKay: To ask the Lord President of the Council how many articles have been reported stolen from the Palace of Westminster during the last 12 months; and if he will list them.

Mr. Wakeham: There have been 40 cases of theft within the Palace of Westminster reported to the police in the last 12 months.

Of these 40 reported, three cases were subsequently classified as "no crime" in that the property mentioned had either been recovered by the losers or found by members of staff. The details of the 37 remaining cases are:

After shave
Wallet and contents
Wine
Chocolates
Cash
Wrist watch
Cheque books
Food
Cap
File and contents
Cigarette lighter
Cordless telephone
Shopping bag
Print
Radio/Recorder
Gents jacket
Twenty (20) 13 amp plugs
Cap
3 half-cases of champagne
Footwear
Wallpaper
Whisky
Personal Radio
Playback machine
Credit and cheque cards
Briefcase
Cleaning fluid
Umbrella
Cigarettes
Briefcase and contents
Kettle
Items of shopping
Camera
Ladies jacket
Books
Correspondence
Umbrella

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Professional Liability

Mr. Heddle: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster when he expects to announce the conclusions of his Department's study to establish the nature, scope, extent and implications of professional liability problems.

Mr. Maude: I expect the report of the studies of professional liability problems to be submitted to me in the spring.

Restrictive Trade Practices

Mr. Heddle: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster when he expects to announce his conclusions of the review into restrictive trade practices policy.

Mr. Maude: In the first part of next year.

British Overseas Trade Board

Sir Dudley Smith: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what reductions in staff of the British Overseas Trade Board there have been in the past two years.

Mr. Alan Clark: The staff allocations in the Department's overseas trade divisions will have increased from 770 on 1 April to 775 on 1 April 1989.

Fuzzy Logic

Mr. Key: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will make a statement on the implications for the computer software industry of developments in fuzzy logic.

Mr. North: Fuzzy logic is potentially valuable in areas of computation which call for "human-like" reasoning based on qualitative or imprecise information, for example speech and vision systems, expert systems technology and database interrogation. Many of the developments are still in their infancy, though a few are now maturing in the expert system and database field. Such concepts can complement other advanced tools and methods to enable the computer software industry to develop novel and powerful applications. I am sure that the industry will take advantage of these opportunities as they present themselves.

Financial Services Industry

Mr. Nicholas Winterton: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what specialist training is given to those officers of his Department who are responsible for the monitoring of the financial services industry.

Mr. Maude: The effect of the Financial Services Act is that monitoring of the financial services industry is a matter for the Securities and Investments Board and the bodies recognised by it. Questions as to the training of officers of those bodies are for the bodies themselves.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what information he has concerning the training and qualifications of the officers and personnel of FIMBRA and other self-regulatory organisations responsible for vetting membership applications for FIMBRA and those other organisations.

Mr. Maude: This is a matter for FIMBRA and the Securities and Investments Board.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster (1) what information he has concerning the proportion of the income of FIMBRA that is allocated to the investigation of the background of those companies seeking membership;

(2) if he will list all those companies or individuals who have been suspended by FIMBRA or any other self-regulatory organisation and indicate in each case the reason for that suspension.

Mr. Maude: This is a matter for FIMBRA.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster how regularly he and the officers of his Department meet with FIMBRA and other self-regulatory organisations.

Mr. Maude: Frequently.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster how many representations his Department has received concerning the work of FIMBRA since its establishment.

Mr. Maude: The information is not available in the form requested.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will make it his policy to require self-regulatory organisations automatically to inform his Department of applications which they receive for membership.

Mr. Maude: No.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he has any plans to review the self-regulatory aspects of the financial services legislation.

Mr. Maude: No.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster on what date his Department first adopted the policy of automatically contacting NASDIM about applicants for licensing by his Department under past financial services legislation; and on what date NASDIM was first recognised as an acceptable alternative to licensing by his Department.

Mr. Maude: The Department maintained a list of bodies which it automatically consulted when it received an application for a licence to deal in securities under the Prevention of Fraud (Investments) Act 1958. NASDIM was added to this list at the beginning of 1985. The order declaring NASDIM a recognised association of dealers in securities under section 15 of the Prevention of Fraud (Investments) Act was made on 28 November 1983 and came into effect on 31 December 1983.

National Engineering Laboratory

Mr. Ingram: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what is the main planning authority for development of the national engineering laboratory site at East Kilbride.

Mr. Maude: The East Kilbride district council is the statutory planning authority for the area in which the national engineering laboratory is situated.

North Peckham Task Force

Ms. Harman: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will specify the feasibility studies undertaken by the north Peckham task force; how much each cost; and what was the outcome of each study.

Mr. Newton: Since 30 November 1988, out of a total of 95 projects approved at a cost to the task force of £2,570,113, the following were undertaken as feasibility studies:

Technobus

£6,250 was paid to South Bank polytechnic for research into the cost of setting up a bus which would deliver new technology training on local estates. The report was completed, and circulated to interested parties, but in view of the setting up and running costs (£120,000 in the first year) the task force decided not to proceed with the scheme.

Peckham Industrial Association

£3,500 was paid to this organisation to look into the viability of converting disused shipping containers into low cost portable units for community use. In the light of the feasibility study the task force took no further action.

Sojourner Truth Youth Association (STYA)

The task force has paid for two studies on behalf of this local black organisation. Community Land and Workspace Ltd. (CLAWS) were given £1,500 to prepare a study into the use of St. Luke's school as a multifunctional base. The results were passed to STYA to use as a basis to support their bid to Southwark council for funds to convert the school. In addition £9,941 went to First Step Associates to look at the

viability of a number of training proposals that STYA intend to run. Discussions with STYA are continuing with a view to developing the training aspects of the project.

City Technology Centre

£13,000 was given to Science City to look into the feasibility of setting up high tech workspace units in the task force area. The report was completed and passed to the task force, and the key proposal of seedcorn investment funding was adopted by the Peckham Enterprise centre, funded by the task force.

URBED

£27,370 was provided to this consultancy to develop a strategy to help reverse the decline of Rye lane as a shopping centre. The report was recently completed and the task force has provided funding to the Peckham Traders Association, one of whose key aims is to implement the URBED recommendations, working closely with the council and other bodies. In addition the task force is talking to URBED about further work.

Southwark Architects

£3,000 was paid to Southwark council to prepare a report into the development of a community training facility in the Gloucester grove estate on behalf of the Gloucester Grove Tenants Association. The report has been prepared, but detailed cosings are still being awaited, before exploring possible funding avenues.

Forest of London

£4,500 has been approved to this group to look into the feasibility of running a training project in arboriculture and landscaping. The task force awaits the final report.

Southwark Chamber of Commerce

£1,000 was paid to this group for research into the costs and possible funding sources of setting up a tourist information centre in Southwark. Subsequently, with help from the City action team, a tourist information centre was established in north Southwark.

LENTA

£27,000 was paid to LENTA to carry out a study into four sites in the Peckham area (The Spike, Melon road, the LEB sub-station, the Lomond grove business centre) with potential for use as managed workspace. Of these sites, the task force is still pursuing Melon road and the Spike in consultation with the council and other bodies; the Lomond grove centre became the Camberwell business centre under the direct control of LENTA; the task force decided not to take any further action on the LEB building.

Ms. Harman: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster for how long the north Peckham task force will be continuing with its work.

Mr. Newton: The task force continues to make good progress. In common with all Government task forces it is not intended to be permanent. There are however no plans at present for its closure.

Ms. Harman: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what is the budget of expenditure on local projects by the north Peckham task force in *(a)* 1988-89, *(b)* 1989-90, *(c)* 1990-91 and *(d)* 1991-92.

Mr. Newton: The north Peckham task force in common with the other Government task forces does not have an individual budget. It does, however, have access to a common budget for all task forces which is £16 million for 1988-89 and has been set at £18·5 million for 1989-90. Figures for 1990-91 and 1991-92 will remain at similar levels.

Ms. Harman: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster (1) if he will list in respect of the north Peckham task force *(a)* the local projects supported, *(b)* the amount of money committed to each project and *(c)* the amount of committed money spent on each project;

(2) if he will state in respect of each project supported by the north Peckham task force the amount of money *(a)* committed and *(b)* spent by (i) the task force, (ii) other government sources, (iii) the London borough of Southwark, (iv) the Inner London Education Authority, (v) the Housing Corporation, (vi) English Heritage, (vii) any other public sources and (viii) any other private sources.

Mr. Newton: I will write to the hon. Member.

Ms. Harman: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what were the objectives of the north Peckham task force when it was first set up; and whether those objectives have been changed during the course of its work.

Mr. Newton: The main objectives, which the north Peckham task force shares with the other 16 task forces, are to:

—provide more jobs for local people by identifying and removing impediments to their recruitment by local employers, and by encouraging local enterprise development.

—encourage and facilitate enterprise by local people through the provision of enterprise training, financial and managerial assistance.

—improve the employability of local people, including those about to enter the labour market, by training programmes aimed at specific employment opportunities or identified gaps in the labour market.

—support initiatives designed to improve the environment, the provision of community services and to reduce the level of crime where these can be linked to the reintegration of local people into local economic activity.

The objectives have not been changed.

Ms. Harman: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will give the names and biographical details of each member of *(a)* the north Peckham task force community forum and *(b)* the north Peckham task force community forum working party.

Mr. Newton: These organisations are independent bodies which are not related to the north Peckham task force. The information requested is a matter for the organisations themselves.

Wool

Mr. Madden: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he plans to continue the levy upon the wool textile industry for export promotion administered by the Wool Textile Export Corporation; how much has been raised by the levy in each of the last five years; what representations he has received about any proposal to abolish the levy; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Atkins: It was announced in the White Paper "Releasing Enterprise" (Cm. 512) on 2 November that there would be consultation on the future of the wool textile industry (export promotion) levy. A consultation period lasting three months, ending on 31 January 1989, has now begun. Thereafter, Ministers will reach a decision on whether the levy should continue in its current statutory form and, if appropriate, lay proposals before Parliament. Representations have been received by

officials from the National Wool Textile Export Corporation. The following amounts have been raised by the levy in the last five financial years:

Year ending 31 March	£
1984	331,136
1985	346,406
1986	380,103
1987	405,045
1988	424,811

British Steel

Mr. Nigel Griffiths: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster why certain households were excluded from the direct mailing shot giving details of the British Steel share offer.

Mr. Atkins: The direct mail shot for the British Steel offer was sent to existing shareholders in major United Kingdom companies. All members of the public were able to receive information by registering with the Share Information Office.

Landfill

Mr. Butterfill: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what steps the Government are taking to promote and encourage landfill projects; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Trippier: I have been asked to reply because my Department is responsible for policy on the reclamation and reuse of derelict and vacant land in England.

Urban development corporations have been established to take concerted action in some of the areas worst affected by vacancy and dereliction. City grant can support private sector reclamation in the inner cities. Derelict land grant is available to the private sector outside the inner cities and to local authorities throughout England. Local authorities' inner area programmes, supported by urban programme grants, also make a contribution to reclamation in the inner cities. Together, these four regimes are expected to spend some £200 million on reclamation projects in the current financial year.

NORTHERN IRELAND

School Visits

Mr. John D. Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland which of the primary schools in the city of Armagh organised visits to the following locations during the past academic year *(a)* site of the battle of Benburb, *(b)* site of the battle of the Diamond, *(c)* Navan fort, *(d)* Armagh planetarium, *(e)* county museum, The Mall, Armagh, *(f)* Regimental museum, College hill, Armagh, *(g)* St. Patrick's cathedral, Armagh and *(h)* St. Patrick's Roman Catholic cathedral, Armagh.

Dr. Mawhinney: The information is as follows:

	Navan Fort	Armagh Planetarium	Armagh County Museum	St. Patrick's Cathedral	St. Patrick's Roman Catholic Cathedral
Armagh Christian Brothers	—	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Armstrong	—	Yes	Yes	Yes	—
Drelincourt Infants	—	—	Yes	—	—
Mount St. Catherine's Convent	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
St. Malachy's Boys'	Yes	—	Yes	—	—
St. Patrick's	Yes	—	Yes	Yes	Yes

No schools visited the sites of the battles of Benburb or the Diamond or the Regimental museum.

Police

Mr. John D. Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what is the level of community policing in the West Winds estate, Newtownards; what are the proposals for the future of policing in this estate; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Ian Stewart: Deployment of the RUC is a matter for the Chief Constable, but I understand that a neighbourhood constable is assigned to this estate who will continue to give attention to it, and that attention is also given by divisional mobile patrols.

Mr. John D. Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what is the period each day that Comber Royal Ulster Constabulary station is operational; what proposals there are for the future of this Royal Ulster Constabulary station; and if he will make a statement on policing in Comber district.

Mr. Ian Stewart: The future of Comber RUC station is a matter for the Chief Constable. I understand that the station is open to the public from 9 am to 11 am and from 5 pm to 7 pm each day, and that attention is also given to the Comber area by divisional mobile patrols.

Short Brothers plc

Mr. Jim Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will estimate the likely effects of the proposed privatisation of Shorts on the company's FJX short-haul jet project; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Viggers: The decision on whether or not to proceed with the development of the FJX will be a matter for the purchaser of the company. There is not yet enough information available from the company on the FJX project for decisions to be made. The future of the project will be decided within the context of privatisation.

Myalgic Encephalomyelitis

Mr. Jim Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if the Department of Health and Social Services intends to issue guidance to doctors in Northern Ireland on the treatment of myalgic encephalomyelitis; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Needham: No. It is not the Department's practice to issue directions on clinical practice to doctors.

Floods

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what sums of public money were expended on repairs to Housing Executive dwellings which were needed as a result of damage caused by the floods of October 1987.

Mr. Needham: This is a matter for the chairman of the Northern Ireland Housing Executive who has advised me that approximately £315,000 was spent on repairs to Executive dwellings, largely in Strabane and Omagh.

Rathlin Island

Mr. Hume: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland whether consideration has been given to the possibility of a joint electricity and telephone cable link between Rathlin island and the mainland; and what conclusions have been reached.

Mr. Viggers *[holding answer 7 December 1988]:* No. I understand that such a link would not be practicable; amongst other reasons, the electricity cable would be likely to cause interference to any telephone cable laid in close proximity.

Mr. Hume: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he has received a report of the results of Northern Ireland Electricity's survey regarding the possible supply of mains electricity to Rathlin island; and what further discussions he has had with Northern Ireland Electricity regarding the implications of the results.

Mr. Viggers *[holding answer 7 December 1988]:* No. This is a matter in the first instance for consideration by the board of Northern Ireland Electricity. I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply given to a question by the right hon. Member for Strangford (Mr. Taylor) on 7 December 1988, at column *195*.

Mr. Hume: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement on what consideration is being given to funding a scheme to provide Rathlin island with mains electricity; and whether such consideration includes the possibility of European regional fund assistance.

Mr. Viggers *[holding answer 7 December 1988]:* Various methods of providing Rathlin island with a mains supply are currently being examined by Northern Ireland Electricity. Consideration of the economic viability of these will take account of the possibility of European regional development fund assistance.

PRIME MINISTER

Security Services

Q16. **Mr. Allen:** To ask the Prime Minister whether she has any plans to bring forward legislation to put MI6, military intelligence and other security services other than MI5, on a statutory footing.

The Prime Minister: The Government have no plans to introduce further legislation covering the security and intelligence services.

Vice-President (European Commission)

Q53. **Mr. Dalyell:** To ask the Prime Minister why and in what particular respects considerable experience of Cabinet Office forms has been a factor in the nomination for vice-president of the European Commission.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave on 1 December 1988 at column *345*.

Sunday Trading

Q88. **Mr. Teddy Taylor:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will raise at the next meeting of the European Council the implications for parliamentary sovereignty of the decision of the European Court of Justice to hear cases on the legality of the United Kingdom's Sunday trading laws; and if she will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: No.

"The Green Gauntlet"

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Prime Minister what response she plans to make to the 30 point plan for environmental improvement in the United Kingdom set out in "The Green Gauntlet" document launched collectively by the Worldwide Fund for Nature, Friends of the Earth and Greenpeace on 20 November.

The Prime Minister: We shall consider the views expressed in "The Green Gauntlet" alongside those of other interests as we take forward our policies of safeguarding the environment for those who come after us.

Engagements

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 8 December.

Mr. Mans: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 8 December.

Mr. Anthony Coombs: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 8 December.

Mrs. Clwyd: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 8 December.

Mr. Andrew Smith: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 8 December.

Mr. Mullin: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 8 December.

Mr. Stern: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 8 December.

Ms. Ruddock: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 8 December.

Mr. Pike: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 8 December.

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 8 December.

Mr. Cran: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 8 December.

Mr. Ian Taylor: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 8 December.

Mr. Sumberg: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 8 December.

Mr. Macdonald: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 8 December.

Mr. Barry Field: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 8 December.

Mr. Riddick: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 8 December.

The Prime Minister: The Soviet ambassador called on me to deliver a message from President Gorbachev this morning. Later I presided at a meeting of the Cabinet and had meetings with ministerial colleagues and others. In addition to my duties in the House I shall be having further meetings later today, and will be addressing the annual meeting of the Per Cent Club.

Advisers

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Prime Minister if, pursuant to her reply of 1 December, *Official Report*, columns *345-48*, she will state the current salary or, where appropriate, expenses of each of the full and part-time advisers attached to her office.

The Prime Minister: I have nothing to add to the answer that I gave the hon. Member on 1 December 1988 at column *347*.

Foreign Visits

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Prime Minister (1) pursuant to her reply of 1 December, *Official Report*, column *347*, which of her visits abroad in the current year still have open accounts because payments are awaited from media organisations for the cost of their representatives travelling with her on official transport;

(2) pursuant to her reply of 1 December, *Official Report*, column *347*, which of her visits abroad still await the closure of accounts.

The Prime Minister: For practical reasons, accounts relating to my visits overseas remain open for a reasonable length of time. This is because delays in receiving bills or claims or minor queries about the details of transactions, make it impractical to close these accounts too soon.

Downing Street (Furnishings and Decoration)

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Prime Minister, what, pursuant to her answer of 1 December, *Official Report*, column *347*, would be the cost of providing an answer to the question asking her to provide an analysis of the £213,318 spent from public funds in 1988-89 to date on furnishings and decoration in No. 10 Downing street.

The Prime Minister: I have nothing to add to the reply I gave to the hon. Member on 1 December 1988 at column *347*.

Official Gifts

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Prime Minister how much has been expended from public funds for the provision of official gifts by her office in each year since 1979-80.

The Prime Minister: Information before 1 April 1983 is not available except at disproportionate cost. Since 1 April 1983 the following amounts have been spent on official gifts.

Financial year	*Amount £*
1983-84	14,450
1984-85	16,678
1985-86	21,524
1986-87	10,176
1987-88	18,496
[1]1988-89	11,192

[1] Actual to date.

Policy Unit

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Prime Minister how many staff are employed in her policy unit; and how many were employed in 1979-80.

The Prime Minister: There are at present nine members of staff employed in my policy unit. In 1979-80 there were two members of staff.

Questions (Costs)

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Prime Minister what is the current expenditure limit for replying to parliamentary written questions beyond which she maintains cost as being disproportionate.

The Prime Minister: Any parliamentary question likely to cost more than £250 is referred to the responsible Minister before significant resources are committed.

Travel Restrictions

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Prime Minister (1) what restrictions on travel to *(a)* the Soviet Union and *(b)* Comecon Eastern bloc countries apply to retired Atomic Weapons Research Establishment, Aldermaston, staff;

(2) what restrictions on emigration to *(a)* the Soviet Union and *(b)* other Comecon Eastern bloc countries apply to former government civil servants who worked at (i) the Ministry of Defence, (ii) the Atomic Weapons Research Establishments, (iii) MI5 and (iv) Government communications headquarters at Cheltenham.

The Prime Minister: Certain retired staff from the Ministry of Defence, the Atomic Weapons Establishment and Government Communications Headquarters, and all retired members of the security service, are asked to seek the permission of their former employers before visiting these countries.

Security Screening

Mr. David Howell: To ask the Prime Minister what progress has been made in implementing the recommendation contained in the Security Commission's report on the case of Geoffrey Prime, Cmnd 8876, that there should be a pilot study to test the feasibility of polygraph security screening in the intelligence and security agencies; and if she will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: The first phase of the pilot study included the examination of staff of the security service and of senior staff of the Government Communications Headquarters (GCHQ). Following completion of that phase and before deciding on a starting date for the second phase, which was intended to cover the testing of a random sample of the staff of GCHQ, the Government

commissioned a review of the scientific literature relating to the validity of the polygraph. This was conducted by Dr. A. B. Levey, a senior psychologist in the Medical Research Council. Dr. Levey delivered his report, which was based on an examination of 372 professional and scientific papers from which 100 were selected for a more detailed analysis earlier this year. I am placing a copy in the Library.

Dr. Levey's conclusion from the literature is that the polygraph is probably incapable of achieving a high level of accuracy and reliability when used for screening purposes and, moreover, that individuals trained in the use of counter-measures would have a good chance of escaping detection. Against this background the Government concluded that there would be no advantage in implementing the second phase of the pilot study, but before reaching a final decision, the Government felt it right to consult the Security Commission again.

The Security Commission has considered Dr. Levey's report and has taken further evidence from the director general of the security service and the director of GCHQ. In the light of their evidence the Security Commission accept that there would, in present circumstances, be no point in continuing the study. The commission believes, however, that the possibility of introducing the polygraph should not be ruled out for all time. In the light of the Security Commission's comments, the Government have decided that, while scientific research on the validity of the polygraph should continue to be monitored the pilot study should not proceed further.

ENVIRONMENT

Owner-occupation

Mr. Oppenheim: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many homes in Derbyshire are privately owned; and by how many this figure has increased since 1983.

Mr. Trippier: There were 282,202 homes in private ownership as at 1 April 1988 according to housing investment programme returns submitted by Derbyshire district councils. This figure is about 24,000 more than that for 1983.

Manchester Council for Voluntary Service

Mr. Alfred Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what recent representations his Department has received from the Manchester Council for Voluntary Service; what reply is being sent; if any action is to be taken; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gummer: A series of representations about rate reform has been received in recent months from the Manchester Council for Voluntary Service both direct and via the right hon. Member for Manchester, Gorton (Mr. Kaufman), the hon. Member for Stretford (Mr. Lloyd) and the right hon. Member for Manchester, Wythenshawe (Mr. Morris). The latest letter from the council asks a number of detailed questions about the community charge and will be answered shortly.

I have recently agreed to a request by the hon. Member for Manchester, Withington (Mr. Bradley) for a meeting with representatives of Greater Manchester voluntary groups.

Building Regulations

Mr. Dover: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement on the outcome of the consultation process on building regulations parts F (ventilation) and L (conservation of fuel and power), including the timetable for publishing approved documents and bringing into force of any new regulations.

Mr. Trippier: A consultation paper setting out proposals for amending the requirements and guidance relating to parts F (ventilation) and L (conservation of fuel and power) of the building regulations was issued in July of this year. Comments have been received from over 100 organisations and individuals, and these are still being considered. The Building Regulations Advisory Committee will be consulted on the outcome early next year, but it is too early to say when a revised approved document is likely to be published or when any amendments to the regulations themselves are likely to be brought into operation.

Polycarboxylates

Dr. Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what information his Department has on the use of polycarboxylates in detergents; and what studies have been carried out into the envionmental implications of their use.

Mr. Ridley: Polycarboxylates are used at very low levels, generally less than 2 per cent., in detergents. Studies on the environmental implications of their use have been carried out by the detergent industry. These studies compare the results of toxicological and environmental test data with potential or predicted environmental concentration. In addition, a review of their behaviour and use has been published by Imperial college.

Fauna, Flora and Habitats

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment why Her Majesty's Government expressed objections on 24 November to the proposal to introduce a new European Community directive to protect threatened fauna, flora and habitats.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: At the Environment Council in Brussels on 24 November, all member states unanimously rejected the rigid and bureaucratic directive that the Commission had proposed. There was general support for the United Kingdom's view that the Community could most usefully assist member states, where appropriate, to implement the relevant existing international conventions, particularly the Bern convention.

East Thames-side Study

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment why the comments invited from the London borough of Newham were excluded from the east Thames-side study published on 23 November.

Mr. Trippier: As not all of the boroughs concerned had submitted comments when the consultants' report was due to be printed, it was decided not to include an incomplete set in that report. However, we will take careful account of

submissions from Newham and other boroughs, along with the consultants' report, as we consider the findings of the study.

Rented Housing

Mrs. Mahon: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what plans he has to encourage the independent rented sector, other than registered housing associations, to make adequate provision for a continuation of the principles of mobility as embraced in the national mobility scheme.

Mr. Trippier: The Housing Act 1988 should increase the supply of private rented accommodation, and this will improve job mobility. The principles of the tenants' guarantee as they relate to mobility will apply to all landlords approved under tenants' choice and for large-scale voluntary transfers of public sector housing.

Defective Dwellings

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) what estimate he has of the number of households with properties affected by mundic-type concrete block;

(2) what estimate his Department has of the value of properties affected by being built of mundic-type concrete block;

(3) what estimate he has, by county, of the number of properties suffering from deterioration or potential deterioration as a result of being built from mundic-type concrete block.

Mr. Trippier: Virtually all mundic block properties appear to have been built within the private sector, and there are therefore no reliable statistics on the numbers and values involved.

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) what research his Department is carrying out into the numerical extent of the problem of properties built with mundic-type concrete block;

(2) what research his Department is carrying out into geographical extent of the problem of properties built with mundic-type concrete block;

(3) what research his Department is carrying out into possible cures to the problem of properties afflicted with decaying mundic-type concrete block; and what is the status of that research.

Mr. Trippier: The Building Research Establishment has carried out research into the caues of mundic block failure within its continuing overall work on the behaviour of concrete aggregates. We have no plans to commission specific research on numbers and location, but I understand that private lending institutions are considering commissioning research into appropriate tests; this could lead to the development of remedial treatments for affected properties.

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what financial assistance is available to the owners of properties with problems caused by mundic-type concrete blocks; and what changes he is proposing.

Mr. Trippier: At present, some owners of mundic block houses may be eligible for discretionary improvement grants. However, we intend to bring forward proposals in the next housing Bill to streamline the grants system; this may bring more owners within the scope of grant aid for repairs, subject to their particular circumstances.

Rates

Mr. Battle: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is the amount in cash terms, by which he estimates Leeds city council will have to spend below the Government's grant-related expenditure allocation level in 1989-90 in order to produce a rate increase in line with inflation, based on the information contained in the rate support grant consultation paper for 1989-90 issued on 11 November.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: It is estimated that if Leeds city council uses the same amount of balances as in 1988-89, a 5 per cent. increase would finance expenditure about £13 million below its GRE.

Rating Reform

Dr. Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will place in the Library the papers produced for the following groups of officials and local authority association representatives *(a)* the new systems working group, *(b)* the rates working party, *(c)* the community charge working group, *(d)* the community charge implementation sub-group and *(e)* the capital programmes working party.

Mr. Ridley: I am placing in the Library copies of the papers circulated for the most recent meetings of these working groups and working parties.

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how he proposes to meet the loss of £10 million income from the introduction of the uniform business rate in Nottingham.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: If the uniform business rate had been introduced in 1988-89, business in Nottingham would have benefited from a 15 per cent. reduction in rates, and some £10 million less would have been raised locally from business rates. This does not necessarily mean that the local authorities would have been any worse off. Broadly speaking, provided that a local authority is spending sensibly, its total income from business rates and grant combined should be no less under the uniform business rate than under the present system.

Local Government Finance

Dr. Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will publish a summary of the responses to "Capital Expenditure and Finance: A Consultation Paper."

Mr. Ridley: No. A list of those responses which respondents have agreed can be released is being placed in the Library of the House. Copies of those responses can be obtained through the Library.

Dr. Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what responses he received to "Capital Expenditure and Finance: A Consultation Paper", from financial institutions; what points they made; and whether he responded to them.

Mr. Ridley: Certain brokers, banks, and market makers asked that local authorities should be permitted to place surplus funds in a wider range of investments than was proposed in the consultation paper. Receipt of their representations has been acknowledged.

Housing

Mrs. Ray Michie: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is the total stock of dwellings for England and Wales by tenure expressed by local authority area.

Mr. Trippier: Local authorities in England report the number of dwellings by sector of ownership in their annual Housing Investment Programme returns. The latest information, for 1 April 1988, is contained in column A11 (local authority), A12 (housing association), A13 (other public sector) and A14 (private sector) of the "1988 HIP1 All Items Print", which is in the Library. For corresponding information about Welsh authorities I refer the hon. Member to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales.

The 1981 census provides the most recent information, by local authority areas, of the split of households in private sector dwellings between owner-occupiers and renters. This information is shown in table 17 of "Census 1981, Key Statistics for local authorities, Great Britain", also in the Library.

Mrs. Ray Michie: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) what is the total number of local authority dwellings in England and Wales expressed by house type; (2) what has been the average weekly unrebated local authority rent in England and Wales for the financial years 1979-80 to 1989-90, expressed by local authority area.

Mr. Trippier: Average weekly unrebated local authority rents at 1 April and of local authority dwellings by type are published in an annual survey by the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy. Copies of the latest edition "Housing Rent Statistics at April 1988" and those for earlier years are in the Library.

Crown Suppliers

Mr. Leigh: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what further progress has been made towards the privatisation of the Crown Suppliers.

Mr. Chope: As a step towards privatisation, I have authorised Crown Suppliers to commence selling to the private sector. This activity will be controlled in accordance with a business plan which will provide for sales and costs to be monitored by Ministers with the aim of ensuring that there is no cross-subsidisation of the sales to the private sector. The arrangement will enable Crown Suppliers to test its ability to trade with the private sector, which will be a feature of privatisation.

In addition, I have received a report by Coopers and Lybrand on the organisation of Crown Suppliers during its move towards privatisation. The report recommends that there should be three divisions operating as discrete businesses: product supply and services, a transport division and a buying agency. I am considering these recommendations which are aimed at putting the Crown Suppliers' operations on to a more commercial footing in preparation for its move into the private sector.

Housing Investment Programmes

Mr. Patnick: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he will make the allocations to local authorities in England for their housing investment programmes in 1989-90.

Mr. Trippier: My right hon. Friend announced on 1 November 1988 that gross provision for capital expenditure by local authorities on housing in 1989-90 will be £3,303—£395 million (13·5 per cent.) higher than previous plans. This is the fourth successive year in which it has been possible to increase provision, thanks to the continuing success of the right to buy policy. Through the receipts which this provides, local authorities have a growing source of spending power to supplement their capital borrowing.

The gross expenditure provision allows for a total housing investment programme (HIP) allocation of £920 million. This represents new borrowing consents for local authorities. Each housing authority is today being informed of its initial HIP allocation for 1989-90. Copies of the letters to local authorities and the schedule of initial allocations have been placed in the Library and the Vote Office.

The local authority associations have been consulted about the distribution of HIP allocations. After considering their comments, and bearing in mind his obligation to make allocations in relation to need, my right hon. Friend has decided to make the distribution on the following basis:

£873·5 million is available for main HIP allocations. Every authority will receive at least 75 per cent. of its corresponding allocation for the current year.

£11·5 million is available for the homes insulation scheme, of which £8 million is being distributed with the main HIP allocations; £2·5 million will be reserved for further allocations under the scheme in accordance with demand, and the remaining £1 million will be used to defray local authorities' administrative costs.

£20 million is available for the private sector area renewal initiative. The 29 authorities receiving allocations are being informed today of the details.

£15 million is being reserved for additional allocations at a later date to authorities which face particular difficulties in meeting their obligations under the housing defects legislation.

Only the initial allocations are being made today. The letters being sent to local housing authorities describe the procedure under which they can apply for additional allocations.

Tenants' Choice

Mr. Cash: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what consultations are proposed with interested parties as part of the implementation work on tenants' choice.

Mr. Trippier: When the Housing Act was in Parliament the Government undertook to invite views on how tenants should be consulted and vote on a tenants' choice application, and on the terms on which flats should be leased back to a public sector body after any transfer. The Department has now issued two consultation papers, which set out our proposals on these matters. They are being circulated to interested parties with a request for comments by 20 January 1989. Copies are available in the Library.

Carbon Dioxide Emissions

Mr. Speller: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) what estimate he has of the carbon dioxide emissions resulting from energy used in domestic buildings, from *(a)* coal, gas, electricity and oil sources, and *(b)* space heating, lighting, water heating, fridges/freezers, washing machines and other electrical appliances;

(2) what research he has commissioned or he intends to commission on the potential of energy efficiency measures in the housing stock for reducing carbon dioxide emissions contributing to the greenhouse effect; and if he will make it his policy to summarise the results of such research and make copies available in the Library.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The Warren Spring laboratory and the Building Research Establishment have made preliminary estimates of the carbon dioxide emissions resulting from energy use in domestic buildings in 1987 as follows:

	Millions of tonnes CO_2
(a) by fuel delivered to households: (WSL)	
Coaland other solid fuels	25
Natural gas	55
Electricity (including all forms of generation)	88
Oil	6
Total	174
(b) Percentage break down by end use: (BKE)	*Per cent.*
Space heating	45
Lighting	4
Water heating	21
Fridges/freezers	9
Washing machines	2
All other appliances (including cookers)	19
Total	100

The Department is currently considering how further studies of domestic efficiency and its carbon dioxide emission reduction potential can best be carried out. Where appropriate, results of such work will be made available in the Library of the House.

Water Companies (Foreign Interests)

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will be seeking emergency legislation to stop foreign companies mounting take-over bids for British water companies; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Moynihan: No, European Community law does not allow discrimination against investment by nationals of other community members. Competition and merger law applies to all takeovers where there is a threat to the public interest.

River Pollution

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will instigate legislation similar to the Rivers (Prevention of Pollution) (Scotland) Act 1951 in respect of the River Don and similar rivers affected by pollution caused by poisonous effluents coming from abandoned mines; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Moynihan: I am aware of the difficulties caused by discharges from abandoned mines, particularly from long abandoned workings. The costs of dealing with discharges can be considerable and in many cases it would be unreasonable to make the present landowners liable. Making such discharges an offence along the lines of the 1951 Act would not solve the problem of liability.

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many miles of Yorkshire's prime game and coarse fishing rivers have become unsuitable for fishing since 1979 due to river pollution; and if he will make a statement on the report by Yorkshire Water's scientific services department which show a sharp decline in catches due to heavily polluted water.

Mr. Moynihan: Yorkshire water authority reported that about 12 miles of river length providing satisfactory fisheries in 1979 are now considered as unsatisfactory because of the effects of pollution. Over the same period 14 miles of river length have improved. However, I understand that the recently reported declines in catches on the Wharfe, Nidd and Ouse are considered to be normal variations brought about by rainfall, river flow, temperature and disease cycles rather than the results of river pollution.

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many times since the Control of Pollution Act 1974 has been implemented it has been tested in the courts in respect of breaches of river pollution; and if he will list such occasions in date order.

Mr. Moynihan: This information is not held by the Department. However, the new National Rivers Authority will in future enforce water pollution controls on a national and more consistent basis and information of this nature should then be more readily available.

Water Authorities

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is his policy on the recommendations in the Environment Select Committee Report concerning the introduction of new prohibitive powers enabling water authorities or other independent bodies to stop dischargers releasing effluent and to revise effluent permits without financial penalty.

Mr. Moynihan: The Water Bill will empower my right hon. Friend to direct the National Rivers Authority to revoke or modify particular discharge consents with immediate effect, where this is necessary for the protection of public health or of flora or fauna dependent on the aquatic environment. Compensation would arise in those circumstances only where the authority in granting the consent could reasonably have been expected to foresee the threat to public health or the aquatic environment.

Mr. Wray: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will *(a)* list all the local authorities which, under present legislation, have lost lands given to the present water authorities, *(b)* indicate the location and size of such land and *(c)* list the cases in which local authorities received proper and direct compensation for that loss of land.

Mr. Moynihan *[holding answer 5 December 1988]:* Information is not available in the form requested on land

transferred from local authorities to water authorities in the 1974 reorganisation. The local authorities concerned, or their successors, were relieved of the debt liabilities associated with the land transferred.

Mr. Livsey: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what amount of income in cash terms each water authority in England and Wales raised from land drainage precepts, direct charges for abstraction and impoundment licences, fishing rod licences and navigation licences in 1987-88, broken down by region.

Mr. Moynihan *[holding answer 5 December 1988]:* Information on land drainage precepts and charges for abstractions is shown in the annual reports and accounts of the water authorities laid before Parliament each year and available in the Library. This information is brought together in Waterfacts, published annually by the Water Authorities Association and also available in the Library. The remaining information requested by the hon. Member is not available centrally.

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what information he possesses concerning the asset value of all property, plant, including sewers, and machinery relating to disposal of used water currently owned by regional water authorities; and what is the basis of valuation.

Mr. Moynihan *[holding answer 7 December 1988]:* Analyses by service of the net asset value of water authorities' tangible fixed assets are set out in the historic cost and current cost sections of the authorities' published annual accounts. The basis of the figures is explained in notes to the accounts.

Business Property (Revaluation)

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is his Department's assessment of the impact of the revaluation of business property in 1990 *(a)* upon business in Nottingham and *(b)* upon the uniform business rate.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: We do not yet have sufficiently detailed forecasts of the likely effects of the revaluation on business property to be able to predict the effect in Nottingham. We would expect businesses in Nottingham to share in the benefit of reduced rate bills which businesses in the North and midlands generally will enjoy as a result of revaluation and the introduction of a uniform business rate.

The uniform business rate will be set at the level necessary to raise nationally broadly the same amount in rates in 1990-91, in real terms, as is raised in 1989-90. So whatever the overall increase in rateable values on revaluation, the uniform business rate will be reduced proportionately.

Disabled Persons (Staff)

Mr. Sean Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what percentage of his Department's staff are classed as disabled.

Mr. Ridley: As at 1 December 1988, the percentage of staff classed as disabled was 1·50 per cent., including 1·27 per cent. registered disabled persons.

Death in Service

Mr. McCrindle: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) what is the current maximum death-in-service benefit under local government superannuation schemes; if he has any plans to increase the maximum benefit payable; and if he will make a statement;

(2) if he has any plans to remove the 20 years pensionable service qualification for the maximum death-in-service benefit under local government superannuation schemes; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The grant payable to the personal representatives of an employee who dies in service is one year's salary or three-eightieths of his pensionable remuneration multiplied by the length of his pensionable service, whichever is the greater. We have no plans to increase these benefits without an increase in the contributions payable by employees.

Planning Decisions

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he collects statistics on the length of time taken by London borough local authorities to reach planning decisions; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Chope: The Department collects and publishes quarterly statistics on development control performance of local planning authorities in England. The table shows the number of planning decisions issued by London borough councils in the first quarter of 1988 (the latest priod for which figures are available), and the percentage of those decisions issued within eight weeks and within 13 weeks of the application being received. Five authorities failed to provide the relevant information. The Government believes that local planning authorities should be able to decide 80 per cent. of all planning applications within eight weeks.

London boroughs: Planning decisions in the 1st quarter of 1988

Planning authority	*Total decisions*	*Percentage within eight weeks*	*Percentage within thirteen weeks*
Barking and Dagenham	196	74	90
Barnet	947	39	72
Bexley	568	26	78
Brent	641	36	62
Bromley	768	75	92
Camden	562	17	37
City of London	152	35	58
City of Westminster	1,458	19	35
Croydon	760	28	60
Ealing	648	4	9
Enfield	—	—	—
Greenwich	254	57	81
Hackney	224	36	58
Hammersmith and Fulham	1,083	33	55
Haringey	—	—	—
Harrow	533	46	77
Havering	605	33	59
Hillingdon	599	27	50
Hounslow	462	56	82
Islington	322	25	39
Kensington and Chelsea	593	51	78
Kingston upon Thames	455	33	62
Lambeth	357	30	47
Lewisham	—	—	—
Merton	328	54	86
Newham	449	39	59
Redbridge	606	31	57

Planning authority	Total decisions	Percentage within eight weeks	Percentage within thirteen weeks
Richmond upon Thames	855	67	78
Southwark	369	46	69
Sutton	—	—	—
Tower Hamlets	331	18	53
Waltham Forest	—	—	—
Wandsworth	542	20	62

Conferences (EC)

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list the European Economic Community environment conferences held at ministerial level since the date on which he became Secretary of State; and if he will list those Ministers who have attended each one to represent Her Majesty's Government.

Mr. Ridley: Since I became Secretary of State for the Environment, the United Kingdom has been represented at European Community meetings of Environment Ministers as follows:

1986
12 June
Environment Council
The Hon. William Waldegrave
24 November
Environment Council
The Hon. William Waldegrave
(United Kingdom Presidency)
Lord Skelmersdale
(United Kingdom delegation)

1987
19-20 March
Environment Council
The Hon. William Waldegrave
21 May
Environment Council
The Hon. William Waldegrave
21 July
Environment Council
Lord Belstead
3 December
Environment Council
Lord Belstead

1988
26-27 February
Informal Council
The Earl of Caithness
21 March
Environment Council
The Earl of Caithness
16 June
Environment Council
The Earl of Caithness
28 June
Environment Council
Mr. Colin Moynihan
1-2 October
Informal Council
The Earl of Caithness
24 November
Environment Council
The Earl of Caithness

The United Kingdom is among a small minority of member states to have been represented at Ministerial level at all these meetings.

Water Privatisation

Mr. Wray: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how his proposals for water privatisation will *(a)* reinforce, *(b)* amend or *(c)* suppress present controls for the protection of water authority lands (i) of outstanding natural beauty, (ii) serving urban or rural communities as spaces of recreation or environmental value and (iii) declared national parks.

Mr. Moynihan *[holding answer 5 December 1988]:* Clause 7 of the Bill would carry forward the present conservation and recreation duties of the water authorities and apply them with certain amendments and extensions to water and sewerage undertakers, the National Rivers Authority and internal drainage boards. The principle change is to impose on the authority a wider duty than currently applies to water authorities, to promote conservation and the recreational use of all inland waters and associated lands.

Mr. Wray: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what financial compensation will be given to local authorities under his proposals for water privatisation in the case that the future water companies sell land which was originally owned by such local authorities which subsequent legislation gave to water authorities without any compensation.

Mr. Moynihan *[holding answer 5 December 1988]:* None, because none is due. The regional water authorities took on the debt liabilities associated with the local authority assets transferred to them in 1974.

Mr. Wray: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what specific *(a)* local authorities, *(b)* rural and urban community organisations, *(c)* consumer associations and *(d)* industry and business organisations he consulted prior to deciding that water privatisation should be carried out.

Mr. Moynihan *[holding answer 5 December 1988]:* The White Paper proposals and consultation paper on the National Rivers Authority have been widely publicised. The opportunity to comment has not been confined to a specific list of organisations.

Mr. Allen McKay: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is his estimate of the amount of financial assistance which will be lost to regions from the European regional development fund following the privatisation of the water industry.

Mr. Moynihan *[holding answer 6 December 1988]:* The EC Commission agreed last year to continue to consider applications for aid from the European regional development fund in respect of investments in infrastructure by privatised bodies in the United Kingdom.

National Rivers Authority

Mr. Livsey: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what cash amount it is assumed that the National Rivers Authority would generate itself through its income generation powers for each of the years 1989-90, 1990-91 and 1991-92 in anticipating grant in aid payments to the National Rivers Authority of £40 million, £71 million and £65 million for each of those years, respectively.

Mr. Moynihan *[holding answer 5 December 1988]:* The assumptions about grant-in-aid for these years are based on financial projections which anticipate that the National

Rivers Authority's income from direct charges will be £32·0 million in 1989-90, £58·0 million in 1990-91 and £73·0 million in 1991-92. It is assumed that the increased income in 1991-92 will be generated from the provision in the Water Bill to enable the NRA to charge dischargers the costs of administering water pollution control and enforcement. The projections do not take into account income or expenditure relating to the NRA's land drainage work, which is funded by a combination of capital grants, for which my right hon. Friend the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food takes public expenditure provision, and precepts on local authorities.

Cumbria (Coastline)

Mr. Campbell-Savours: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what progress has been made towards the full implementation of the European Economic Community directive on the quality of bathing water along the coastline of Cumbria.

Mr. Moynihan *[holding answer 5 December 1988]:* There are 16 identified bathing waters in Cumbria, many of which already meet the directive's standards. The North West water authority plans to bring the remaining waters up to the EEC standard by 1995. Work on this task is in hand.

Water Meters

Mr. Allen McKay: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether Government funding will be made available to meet the costs of the installation and provision of water meters in domestic property in full or in part.

Mr. Moynihan *[holding answer 6 December 1988]:* Whether to adopt metering for domestic water customers after privatisation will be a matter for each water undertaker to decide. Apart from the limited contributions to the present programme of metering trials, there will be no Government funding of the costs of metering.

Mr. Allen McKay: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether customers will be expected to pay the costs of the provision and installation of water meters in domestic households following water industry privatisation.

Mr. Moynihan *[holding answer 6 December 1988]:* The Public Utility Transfers and Water Charges Act requires the cost of installing meters compulsorily to be met by the water undertaker. The cost is therefore recovered from customers as a whole, with two exceptions. Customers who opt under the present voluntary scheme to pay by measure will be expected to pay for a meter and its installation. After 1 April 1989, water undertakers will be able to require the developers of newly built or converted domestic properties to pay for, or install, a meter as a condition of connecting a supply.

Mr. Allen McKay: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what will be the position with regard to the inspection provisions of water metering and weights and measures legislation following the installation of water meters in domestic property.

Mr. Moynihan *[holding answer 6 December 1988]:* Regulations made under the Public Utility Transfers and Water Charges Act 1988 enable householders, on the payment of a fee, to ask their water undertaker to test the accuracy of the meter. The fee will be returned if the meter is found to be inaccurate. The test would be carried out in accordance with weights and measures regulations. Alternatively, householders can ask for a test by a local authority weights and measures inspector.

Land Development

Mr. Thurnham: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what restrictions he has received during 1988 about the drawing up of covenants restricting development on open land; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Chope *[holding answer 6 December 1988]:* Section 52 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1971 permits the making of agreements between the local planning authority and any person with an interest in the land for the purpose of restricting or regulating the development or use of land. My right hon. Friend has received representations that such agreements are sometimes required where they are not necessary for the development to proceed, and the Government are considering issuing further policy guidance to curtail abuse of these powers.

Sewers

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what studies he has made of areas where urban sewers and drains are the property of private companies; and what conclusions he reached in respect of each such study.

Mr. Moynihan *[holding answer 7 December 1988]:* None.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Rape (Sentencing)

Mr. Jack: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many appeals against the length of sentencing in rape cases have been made since July 1988.

Mr. John Patten: Information for 1988 is not yet available, but 96 persons appealed in 1987 against the sentence given to them for a rape offence.

Prisons (Psychiatric Patients)

Mr. Grocott: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) at the latest date for which statistics are available, what proportion of persons detained in Her Majesty's prisons had previously been patients in either psychiatric hospitals or pyschiatric wards; and what were the corresponding figures for the same date in each of the past 10 years;

(2) at the latest date for which statistics are available, what proportion of persons detained in Her Majesty's prisons had previously received psychiatric treatment; and what were the corresponding figures for each of the past 10 years;

(3) at the latest date for which statistics are available, what proportion of persons detained in Her Majesty's prisons were either undergoing psychiatric treatment or had undergone such treatment in the course of their sentences.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The number of inmates who have received or are undergoing psychiatric treatment is not recorded centrally.

Mortgage Fraud

Mr. Sean Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) whether he will make it his policy to publish separate figures for mortgage fraud in the annual criminal statistics;

(2) what statistics are currently available for the incidence of mortgage fraud in England and Wales; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John Patten: The information is not available centrally and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost. I have no plans to collect and publish more detailed figures on offences of fraud in "Criminal Statistics".

Inter-city Trains (Radio Telephones)

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make central funds available to British Rail to assist in resourcing the provision of radio telephones on inter-city trains as a means of crime prevention.

Mr. John Patten: I understand that British Rail is already installing telephones on inter-city trains as an extra service for passengers.

Music (Drugs)

Mr. Heddle: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he has any plans to obtain regular reports from the chief officers of police as to whether all public places of entertainment and night clubs in particular are being surveyed to ensure that the music played does not offend the Obscene Publications Act or other legislation aimed at reducing both the supply of and the demand for drugs.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: We have no plans to do so.

Animals (Experiments)

Mrs. Clwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many of the current project licences permiting cosmetic and toiletry experiments upon animals were granted prior to the implementation of the Animals (Scientific Procedures) Act 1986.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: None. Project licences were introduced by the 1986 Act.

Mrs. Clwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many project licences have been granted for regulated procedures which involve the testing of cosmetic and toiletry preparations since the Animals (Scientific Procedures) Act 1986 came into force; and how many of these applications were placed before the Animal Procedures Committee for consideration before being granted.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Six project licences have been granted, all of which received prior consideration by the APC.

Mrs. Clwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many applications for project licences for cosmetic experiments have been refused on the advice of the Animal Procedures Committee since 1 January 1987.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: None; but following consideration by the APC, modifications have been made to some project licences.

Mrs. Clwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many personal licences are subsisting under those project licences granted for cosmetic experiments since 1 January 1987.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: This information is not available centrally since personal licence holders are not generally restricted to working on a particular project.

Mrs. Clwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will consider requiring the labelling of products to state whether or not they are tested on animals.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: No. The Home Secretary is responsible for the licensing of scientific procedures on living animals, but not for any requirements for substances to be tested on animals or for the labelling of substances which have been tested.

Child Care

Miss Lestor: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he intends to make police records available to voluntary organisations dealing with children who wish to check on potential employees.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: We intend to establish before next summer pilot schemes for the disclosure of police information about those seeking to work with children in the voluntary sector.

Metropolitan Police

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the annual cost, for each year since 1987, of the public relations branch of the Metropolitan police.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: I understand from the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis that staffing and accommodation costs and spending on publicity and recruitment advertising by the directorate of public affairs was £4,555,000 for 1987-88. The estimate for 1988-89 is £5,321,000.

Satellites (Crashes)

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if any emergency plans are being prepared for the possibility of the Solar Maximum satellite crashing on *(a)* London or *(b)* elsewhere in the United Kingdom.

Mr. John Patten: I understand that current assessments indicate that there is no risk of Solar Maximum, which is not nuclear powered, crashing on the United Kingdom and specific plans are not therefore being prepared.

Road Vehicles (Construction and Use) Regulations 1986

Mr. Bowis: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many prosecutions have been brought

under regulation 61 of the Road Vehicles (Construction and Use) Regulations 1986 and how many convictions obtained; and what steps he is taking to ensure the enforcement of this legislation.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Separate information is not collected centrally on court proceedings for offences under regulation 61, but is combined with a variety of other offences relating to vehicles in dangerous or defective condition. The available information is published annually in "Offences relating to motor vehicles, England and Wales, Supplementary tables" (table 5 of the issue for 1987, which will be published soon). Since 1 October 1986, the police have been able to issue fixed penalty notices for these offences as an alternative to prosecution. All forces now also operate vehicle defect rectification schemes by which drivers can avoid prosecution for certain offences if they produce evidence that defective vehicles have been repaired or scrapped.

Further information is given in Home Office statistical bulletin 32/88, table 13 of which suggests that in 1987 there was a large rise in the enforcement of vehicle defect offences generally, as a result of these new methods of enforcement.

Lenient Sentences

Mr. Hind: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he has any plans to issue a commencement order for section 36 of the Criminal Justice Act 1988 to give the Attorney-General the power to refer lenient sentences to the Court of Appeal; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John Patten: We plan to bring section 36 into effect on 1 February.

Royal Ordnance Factory, Burghfield

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what emergency services attended the Royal Ordnance factory, Burghfield, following the explosion on Friday 2 December; if any casualties were sustained amongst emergency personnel; and at what time outside emergency services arrived at Burghfield.

Mr. John Patten: I understand that the police and the fire brigade attended. No casualties were reported among emergency personnel. The police arrived at the incident at 06.20 hours and the fire brigade at 06.24 hours.

Armley Prison

Mr. Battle: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how long on average prisoners remanded to Armley remain in prison before being brought to trial.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Information is not available centrally on the average time spent on remand in individual establishments. The information available relates to the average time spent on remand in all prison service establishments by untried and convicted unsentenced prisoners and is published annually in "Prison Statistics, England and Wales" (tables 2(c) and 2 (d) of the latest issue for 1986, Cm. 210, a copy of which is in the Library). The 1987 issue will be published shortly.

Mr. Battle: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many people are in Armley prison as a result of not paying bills or fines.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: On 31 October 1988, the latest date for which information is readily available, there were 18 fine defaulters and no prisoners held for non-payment of debts in Leeds prison.

Mr. Battle: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many prisoners there were in Armley prison on 1 December; how many were *(a)* in cells of their own and *(b)* in the hospital wing; and how many were on remand.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: On 1 December 1,291 prisoners were held in Her Majesty's prison, Leeds. Of these, 613 were untried and 107 had been convicted and awaited sentence. 33 prisoners were located in the hospital wing. On 13 November, the most recent date for which cell-occupancy figures are available, 62 prisoners were accommodated in cells of their own.

Mr. Battle: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many prisoners in Armley prison go to education classes *(a)* every day or *(b)* every week.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The readily available information is as follows. It is planned that for 5-9 December there will be an average of 182 education places available for prisoners per day, and 498 individual prisoners will attend education classes.

Mr. Battle: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many people have died in Armley prison since January; and how many of those deaths have been classified as suicides by coroners' inquests.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Six inmates have died in Armley prison, Leeds, since January. Of these deaths, three have been confirmed as suicide by coroners' inquests, and two as deaths by natural causes. One inquest has yet to take place.

Justices' Clerks

Mr. Bermingham: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list the reponsibilities of a clerk to the justices for a petty sessional area; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John Patten: The principal reponsibilities are as set out in sections 28 and 29 of the Justices of the Peace Act 1979.

Mr. Bermingham: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will set out the scale of salaries for a clerk to the justices for a petty sessional area *(a)* in London, *(b)* in the shire counties, and *(c)* in the metropolitan counties; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John Patten: The salary payable to a clerk to the justices outside inner London ranges from £16,005 (rising to £17,598 by increments) to £30,978 (rising to £34,638 by increments) according to the population of the petty sessions area concerned. In inner London the principal chief clerk has a salary of £35,370 and the chief clerks have an incremental salary scale of £27,819-£30,747. The above figures all exclude London weighting where payable. Increases in pay are now subject to arbitration.

Mr. Bermingham: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the level of London weighting

allowance awarded to a clerk to the justices for a petty sessional area; if he has any plans to review present arrangements; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John Patten: The London weighting allowance payable to a clerk to the Justices is as follows:

	£
(1) Magistrates courts service (excluding inner London)	
(i) Greater London	792
(ii) Inner Fringe	357
(iii) Outer Fringe	243
(2) Inner London Magistrates courts service	1,500

London weighting is under review as part of the current pay negotiations.

Magistrates' Courts (Staff)

Mr. Bermingham: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he has any proposals for the recruitment of additional staff in the magistrates' courts in order to deal with the growing backlog of cases; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John Patten: There is provision for 200 additional court posts in the next financial year, and we shall obviously have local operational difficulties in mind in considering applications for increases in complement. We shall keep the position under review in the light of the outcome of the arbitration on the current pay negotiations. We also hope to increase, through the provision of training, the number of staff from within the courts service qualified to act as court clerks.

Terrorism

Ms. Mowlam: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is *(a)* the tonnage of explosives and *(b)* the number of firearms found as a ration of houses searched under the Prevention of Terrorism (Temporary Provisions) Acts 1974, 1976 and 1984 for each year from 1974 to the latest available date.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The information is not available and could not be obtained except at disproportionate cost.

Ms. Mowlam: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) what has been the total number of people *(a)* detained, *(b)* charged and *(c)* convicted under the Prevention of Terrorism (Temporary Provisions) Act in each year since 1974; and if he will provide a breakdown of the figures between men and women;

(2) if he will provide a breakdown of the people arrested under the Prevention of Terrorism (Temporary Provisions) Act for each year since 1974 *(a)* at ports; *(b)* at airports; *(c)* in their homes and *(d)* in other places; and if he will provide a breakdown of these figures between men and women detainees.

Mr. Hurd: The readily available information on those detained under the prevention of terrorism legislation in Great Britain is published quarterly in Home Office statistical bulletins which are placed in the Library; the latest, Issue 29/88, gives information on those detained up to the third quarter of 1988. Information on the outcome of charges following detention under this legislation is published in the end of year bulletins in this series; tables 6 and 7 of Issue 11/88 give the figures for those detained over the period of the current legislation. Figures relating to earlier legislation can be obtained from corresponding earlier bulletins in this series.

Extradition

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will publish in the *Official Report* the numbers of extradition requests made to the Republic of Ireland in each year since 1967, indicating how many of those requests were for crimes of a terrorist nature and how many requests were for other types of crime, and show for each year the number of those extradition requests which were granted for *(a)* crimes of a terrorist nature and *(b)* other types of crimes and how many were refused for each class of crime; if he will indicate for each of those years, and each class of crime, how many extradition requests and warrants were found by the Irish authorities and the Irish courts to be unacceptable; if he will also publish in the *Official Report* the same information for extradition requests made to the United Kingdom by the Republic of Ireland; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John Patten: The readily available information on extradition requests between England and Wales and the Republic of Ireland is given in the following tables. This is based mainly on information provided by police forces. Requests involving terrorist offences are specified where known.

Requests made by England and Wales for return of persons from the Republic of Ireland

	Requests made	*Requests granted*	*Requests refused*	*Requests not acted on for other reasons*[3]
1982	41	17	1	23
1983	31	11	—	20
1984	29	15	—	14
1985	23	5	—	18
1986	[1]12	1	[1]1	10
1987	5	1	2	2
1988	[2]7	1	—	[2,4]6

Requests received in England and Wales for the return of persons to the Republic of Ireland

	Requests received	*Requests granted*	*Requests refused*	*Requests not acted on for other reasons*[3]
1982	9	7	—	2
1983	15	11	—	4
1984	31	24	—	7
1985	29	18	—	11
1986	15	5	3	7
1987	20	14	—	6
1988	Not yet available			

[1] includes 1 case involving terrorist offences
[2] includes 2 cases involving terrorist offences
[3] e.g. because the fugitive could not be traced
[4] some cases pending

Parliamentary Constituencies

Mr. Riddick: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether the Boundary Commission for England intends to conduct any further interim reviews of parliamentary constituencies.

Mr. Hurd: The commission has told me of its intention to conduct a review of the Buckingham and Milton Keynes county constituencies.

Police and Criminal Evidence Act

Ms. Mowlam: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the total number of people *(a)* detained, *(b)* charged and *(c)* convicted under the Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984 in each year since 1984 to the latest available date; and if he will provide a breakdown of the figures into men and women.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Most of the provisions of the Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984 were implemented on 1 January 1986. Home Office statistical bulletins have been published regularly since then, the latest, Issue 14/88, giving figures for 1987. These bulletins cover the operation of those sections of the Act on which chief constables are required to publish statistics, ie stops and searches, road checks, detentions beyond 24 hours without charge and intimate searches.

The only criminal offence created by the Act relates to the improper disclosure of information by a member, officer or servant of the Police Complaints Authority (section 98). There have been no convictions under this section.

Information on all persons convicted, including separate figures for men and women, is published in "Criminal Statistics, England and Wales, 1987" (Cm. 498) and in a companion set of five supplementary volumes. All the publications referred to are in the Library.

Data Protection Act

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether he will publish the terms of reference of the interdepartmental group reviewing the workings of the Data Protection Act; to what extent the group is initially concentrating its efforts on reporting on registration requirements; and whether it is intended that the group shall recommend changes to strengthen data subjects rights or the registrar's powers under the Act.

Mr. Renton: The terms of reference of the interdepartmental review committee on the Data Protection Act 1984 are:

> "To review the Data Protection Act 1984 in the light of experience gained during its implementation, with particular reference to the impact on data users of the registration requirements; and to make recommendations."

The committee will review the Act as a whole and will recommend such changes as it considers necessary on any aspect of the Act.

SCOTLAND

Radioactivity

Mr. Home Robertson: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what has been the cost to date of analysing water, vegetation, soil and food samples for radioactivity levels and of administering measures to control contaminated food and to compensate affected farming businesses, since the Chernobyl accident.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The total costs incurred by the Scottish Office are estimated to be in the region of £3·2 million comprising about £1 million for staff and associated administration costs, about £0·5 million in relation to analysis and monitoring and about £1·7 million for compensation to farmers in the restricted areas.

National Council for Vocational Qualifications

Mr. Allan Stewart: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he has considered the responses to the consultative paper on whether the remit of the National Council for Vocational Qualifications should extend to Scotland; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Rifkind: I have decided that the advantages to be gained by individuals and employers in Scotland from the development of nationally recognised vocational standards can be achieved without extension of the remit of the National Council for Vocational Qualifications to Scotland at present. The Scottish Vocational Education Council (SCOTVEC) will continue to work closely with employers, examining bodies, and the training agency in the United Kingdom to ensure that its qualifications meet the needs of British as well as Scottish employers. I look forward to SCOTVEC continuing to maintain and develop its constructive relationship with the NCVQ, which I will keep under review.

Teachers (Premature Retirement)

Mrs. Margaret Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list in the *Official Report* the total number of school-teachers, by age and by sex, who were granted premature retirement during the academic session 1987-88.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: I refer the hon. Member to the reply that I gave her on Thursday 3 November which set out the available information.

School Rolls

Mrs. Margaret Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list in the *Official Report* the total number of school-pupils at the most recent available date in attendance at nursery, primary, secondary and special schools in each local education authority, giving the breakdown by region and by division.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The numbers of pupils in education authority schools in September 1987 are given in the table.

	Nursery	*Primary*	*Secondary*	*Special*
Borders	400	8,160	6,330	180
Central	2,510	23,520	18,380	380
Dumfries and Galloway	440	12,300	9,800	160
Fife	4,280	30,550	22,450	630
Grampian	2,700	43,040	31,910	1,000
Highland	620	19,280	14,350	400
Lothian	8,020	54,360	41,190	1,550
Strathclyde	17,730	201,510	153,290	4,200
Tayside	2,400	31,110	24,000	480

	Nursery	Primary	Secondary	Special
Orkney	90	1,790	1,340	10
Shetland	110	2,370	1,660	10
Western Isles	—	2,930	2,480	30
ALL SCOTLAND	39,290	430,920	327,170	9,020
Argyll and Bute	—	5,720	4,420	90
Ayr	2,540	33,440	26,180	490
Dunbarton	2,020	30,320	22,920	450
Glasgow (City)	8,360	54,760	37,910	1,790
Lanark	2,310	46,360	37,070	840
Renfrew	2,510	30,910	24,790	550

PIEDA Report

Mr. Macdonald: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what was the cost of producing the Planning, Industrial and Economic Development Advisers' report.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The cost of the PIEDA report was £20,597.

Mr. Macdonald: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will publish the Planning, Industrial and Economic Development Advisers' report.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: No. My right hon. and learned Friend will not publish the PIEDA report. It is a confidential report prepared for Government.

Glasgow Western Infirmary

Mr. Galloway: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what plans there are for the future of the accident and emergency service at the Glasgow Western Infirmary; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Greater Glasgow health board is currently conducting a strategic review of all accident and emergency services in Glasgow and has no plans to alter the level of accident and emergency services provided at Glasgow Western Infirmary. However, as a result of an earlier staffing review the senior medical staffing level has been strengthened. A full-time consultant in accident and emergency has taken up post and an appointment for a second full-time consultant has recently been made.

Electricity

Mr. Hood: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list the types of plants at each of the South of Scotland Electricity Board areas and the North of Scotland Hydro-Electric Board areas and their respective output capacity each year since 1979, showing these figures in percentage terms of the overall output.

Mr. Lang: The information, provided by the Scottish electricity boards on the same basis as their annual reports and accounts for the years in question, is as follows:

Generation Type as Percentage of Total Output (Based on Net Units sent out)
North of Scotland Hydro Electric Board Area

Per cent.

	1978-79	1979-80	1980-81	1981-82	1982-83	1983-84	1984-85	1985-86	1986-87	1987-88
Hydro	79	88	82	82	53	42	24	72	57	48
Pumped Storage	−3	−3	−1	0	−1	−1	−1	−1	1	1
Fossil	7	3	7	4	42	54	68	2	24	32
Diesel	9	9	8	8	4	3	2	6	4	4
Gas Turbine and Wind	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0
Dounreay	7	2	4	5	1	2	6	20	14	14
Sundry	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	1	1	1
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100

South of Scotland Electricity Board Area

Per cent.

	1978-79	1979-80	1980-81	1981-82	1982-83	1983-84	1984-85	1985-86	1986-87	1987-88
Coal and Slurry	65·2	69·2	65·7	66·6	50·7	48·2	22·0	53·1	42·8	52·0
Heavy Fuel Oil	11·9	6·1	1·1	1·0	—	−0·1	27·9	0·1	5·3	—
Nuclear[1]	21·9	23·4	31·7	31·2	47·7	50·5	49·2	45·5	50·5	46·4
Hydro and Sundries	1·0	1·3	1·5	1·2	1·6	1·4	0·9	1·3	1·4	1·6
Total	100·0	100·0	100·0	100·0	100·0	100·0	100·0	100·0	100·0	100·0

[1] Nuclear output includes Chapelcross Power Station owned and operated by British Nuclear Fuels Ltd.

Local Authority Rents

Mrs. Ray Michie: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what has been the average weekly local authority rent in Scotland for each of the financial years 1979-80 to 1989-90, expressed as a percentage of average male manual earnings.

Lord James Douglas Hamilton: The information requested is set out in the table:

Finance Year	Rent[1] as a percentage of earnings[2]
1979-80	5·7
1980-81	5·8
1981-82	6·7
1982-83	7·3
1983-84	7·3
1984-85	7·3
1985-86	7·4
1986-87	7·8
1987-88	8·4

[1] Average unrebated local authority rent per dwelling per week as at 30 September, based on local authorities' statistical returns to the

Scottish Development Department.

[2] Average weekly earnings of full-time (male and female) adult employees in major production and transport industries, based on Department of Employment surveys. Separate figures for earnings of male adult employees are not available.

Note:

Average earnings figures are not available for 1988-89 or 1989-90.

Mrs. Ray Michie: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what has been the average weekly unrebated local authority rent in Scotland for each of the financial years 1979-80 to 1989-90, expressed by local authority area.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The information requested is set out in the table. Local authorities have yet to set their rent levels for 1989-90.

Average weekly unrebated local authority rent in Scotland at 30 September

	1979-80 £	*1980-81* £	*1981-82* £	*1982-83* £	*1983-84* £	*1984-85* £	*1985-86* £	*1986-87* £	*1987-88* £	*1988-89* £[1]
Scotland	4·92	5·66	7·69	9·02	9·86	10·46	11·55	12·99	14·58	16·23
Berwickshire	5·87	6·94	8·91	11·01	11·55	12·75	13·77	14·40	15·34	16·81
Ettrick and Lauderdale	5·25	5·89	6·44	10·15	11·00	13·22	13·14	13·14	13·88	14·47
Roxburgh	5·79	6·83	9·46	11·38	12·42	13·43	14·72	16·38	16·87	18·23
Tweeddale	4·31	6·07	8·33	10·51	11·33	11·28	11·34	12·69	13·14	14·10
Clackmannan	4·62	5·33	7·19	9·33	10·25	11·21	11·66	12·86	14·34	16·32
Falkirk	3·95	5·31	6·68	8·96	10·17	10·68	11·61	12·54	13·89	15·38
Stirling	4·39	5·71	6·88	7·82	9·28	9·29	11·55	13·62	15·07	16·04
Annandale and Eskdale	5·30	6·38	8·55	10·21	11·68	12·9;	13·85	15·22	16·49	18·29
Nithsdale	3·83	4·80	7·11	8·76	9·60	10·50	11·48	13·13	13·86	15·45
Stewartry	5·20	6·57	9·57	11·92	12·65	13·96	14·09	15·45	16·45	18·08
Wigtown	4·88	6·13	8·53	10·68	11·99	14·17	15·79	16·69	16·70	17·51
Dunfermline	4·79	5·74	8·47	10·63	11·66	12·16	12·15	13·46	14·70	16·67
Kirkcaldy	4·64	5·63	8·08	9·61	10·45	11·60	12·60	13·85	15·32	17·02
North East Fife	4·94	6·93	9·56	11·26	12·73	12·65	13·82	15·87	17·07	17·02
Aberdeen	4·73	5·62	5·97	6·96	7·92	8·89	11·21	12·55	14·69	16·02
Banff and Buchan	5·14	5·46	7·72	9·96	11·25	12·43	13·80	14·98	15·61	17·13
Gordon	6·16	6·68	8·23	10·17	11·41	11·91	13·63	14·91	15·11	16·41
Kincardine and Deeside	4·41	5·35	7·54	9·46	10·52	11·80	13·01	13·85	14·34	14·70
Moray	5·34	6·79	7·76	8·02	10·35	11·64	13·58	14·03	15·66	17·35
Badenoch and Strathspey	4·95	6·54	8·44	9·88	11·52	12·56	13·50	15·35	15·32	16·90
Caithness	4·19	5·02	6·89	8·41	9·67	11·75	12·65	13·69	14·84	16·48
Inverness	5·69	6·37	9·60	9·80	10·54	11·28	13·19	14·02	15·96	18·01
Lochaber	4·43	4·74	8·23	10·65	11·36	12·28	12·98	14·29	16·03	16·96
Nairn	4·84	5·22	7·50	9·97	11·23	12·15	13·53	14·68	15·79	17·28
Ross and Cromarty	5·12	6·27	8·25	9·75	10·75	11·99	12·73	14·73	15·85	17·46
Skye and Lochalsh	4·96	7·02	8·07	10·41	11·08	13·02	14·91	17·13	14·97	17·45
Sutherland	5·56	6·31	8·72	9·79	10·76	11·83	12·80	14·17	14·43	15·56
East Lothian	4·88	5·70	7·30	8·55	10·23	11·10	12·39	13·36	14·71	16·16
Edinburgh	6·52	7·63	9·54	11·04	12·28	13·53	13·35	13·39	15·23	17·10
Midlothian	4·76	5·72	7·19	9·03	9·90	10·77	11·83	12·76	13·71	14·71
West Lothian	4·36	5·29	8·18	9·76	10·48	10·98	11·78	12·63	13·53	14·85
Argyll and Bute	5·44	6·87	9·73	11·84	13·43	14·61	15·32	15·31	15·80	18·14
Bearsden and Milngavie	5·49	5·85	8·85	10·25	10·87	11·45	12·17	14·23	16·58	18·15
Clydebank	4·03	5·43	7·04	8·52	9·04	10·04	12·19	15·04	17·06	19·29
Clydesdale[2]	4·59	6·07	7·51	9·22	9·69	10·70	12·15	13·02	13·85	15·66
Cumbernauld and Kilsyth	4·90	6·32	8·93	10·13	10·12	10·61	12·74	14·75	16·42	18·11
Cumnock and Doon Valley	4·02	5·10	7·46	8·85	9·89	10·39	11·11	12·15	13·61	14·97
Cunninghame	5·17	5·17	7·14	8·01	8·84	8·85	8·85	10·50	13·01	14·80
Dumbarton	4·02	4·70	7·49	8·51	8·56	9·38	9·38	11·68	14·60	18·08
East Kilbride	4·63	6·49	8·34	10·56	11·43	12·44	13·49	15·55	16·53	17·48
Eastwood	5·14	6·06	8·50	9·96	10·52	11·02	11·50	11·94	12·45	13·74
Glasgow	5·33	6·45	8·39	9·10	9·61	9·63	10·65	12·61	14·63	16·95
Hamilton	4·17	4·86	6·26	8·28	9·33	10·03	10·95	12·80	14·86	15·93
Inverclyde	5·29	5·93	7·30	7·81	8·31	9·08	11·30	12·40	13·33	14·36
Kilmarnock and Loudoun	4·39	5·71	7·96	8·58	9·08	9·59	10·59	12·42	13·85	14·84
Kyle and Carrick	5·27	5·30	6·25	8·59	9·61	10·42	12·18	13·37	14·38	15·57
Monklands	4·39	5·23	6·57	8·34	9·30	9·30	11·32	13·68	15·50	16·93
Motherwell	4·36	5·20	7·40	7·91	8·91	9·91	11·27	12·46	14·10	15·09
Renfrew	4·43	5·34	7·19	8·10	8·33	8·81	9·81	11·50	12·99	14·11
Strathkelvin	4·34	5·68	8·54	9·22	9·69	10·57	11·62	14·18	15·31	17·15
Angus	4·73	5·12	8·03	9·05	10·74	11·70	12·66	13·77	14·58	14·73
Dundee	5·08	5·91	5·91	7·26	8·07	8·80	9·82	11·63	13·61	16·18
Perth and Kinross	4·01	5·19	7·66	10·54	10·78	10·77	11·93	12·93	13·88	14·67
Orkney Islands	5·65	6·75	7·93	9·33	10·12	11·00	13·16	14·49	15·99	17·49
Shetland Islands	4·75	5·60	8·00	10·43	10·57	10·52	13·43	14·97	15·93	17·40
Western Isles	5·32	7·19	9·48	12·12	13·04	14·88	15·47	16·50	17·52	18·63

[1] 1988-89 figures taken from Rating Review Estimates of Income and Expenditure published by the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy.

[2] Prior to 1980 this was Lanark District.

Housing

Mrs. Ray Michie: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will produce figures for the total stock of dwellings for Scotland by tenure; and if he will express those figures by local authority area.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Estimates of the dwelling stock in Scotland by tenure are published quarterly in "Housing and Construction Statistics". The numbers of domestic subjects on the valuation roll by tenure for each local authority area in Scotland are published annually in "Rating Review: Estimates of Income and Expenditure Summary Volume" by the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy. Copies of both publications are available in the Library.

Mrs. Ray Michie: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what is the number of local authority dwellings in Scotland, expressed by house type.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The available information is set out in the table.

Estimated local authority dwelling stock by house type, Scotland 1988

Dwelling type	*Number of dwellings (thousand)*
House	332
Highrise flat	54
Tenement flat	94
Other flat/maisonette	315
Type not known	32
Total	827

Mrs. Ray Michie: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how much subsidy in terms of housing support grant and rate fund contribution has been paid and is estimated to be paid in respect of local authorities for each of the financial years 1979-80 to 1989-90, both in total, and expressed as a subsidy per dwelling for the total number of dwellings in local authority control and in respect of those authorities in receipt of subsidy.

Lord James Douglas Hamilton: The information requested is set out in the table:

Financial year	*Total subsidies £ million*	*Subsidies per dwelling*[1] *£*	*Subsidies per dwelling*[2] *£*
1979-80	286·324	320·50	320·50
1980-81	307·603	343·68	343·68
1981-82	268·175	300·21	300·21
1982-83	229·341	259·28	264·02
1983-84	195·331	223·80	228·24
1984-85	206·230	239·07	243·79
1985-86	162·572	180·08	200·28
1986-87	120·777	135·42	151·29
1987-88	82·966	102·96	104·79
1988-89	76·588	94·75	99·13
1989-90[3]	63·854	82·45	243·00

Notes:

[1] Calculated on the basis of the total number of dwellings held on local authority housing revenue accounts.

[2] Calculated on the basis of the numbers of dwellings held on local authority housing revenue accounts to which subsidy credited during that year.

[3] As estimated by the Scottish Development Department.

Extradition

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will publish in the *Official Report* the numbers of extradition requests made to the Republic of Ireland in each year since 1967, indicating how many of those requests were for crimes of a terrorist nature and how many requests were for other types of crimes, and show for each year the number of those extradition requests which were *(a)* granted *(b)* refused for (i) crimes of a terrorist nature and (ii) other types of crimes and how many were refused for each class of crime; if he will also indicate for each of these years, and each class of crime, how many extradition requests and warrants were found by the Irish authorities and the Irish courts to be unacceptable; if he will also publish in the *Official Report* the same information for extradition requests made to the United Kingdom by the Republic of Ireland; and if he will make a statement.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Information in respect of requests made to the Republic of Ireland prior to 1987 is not available centrally and cannot be ascertained. However, it is known that between 1967 and 1987 two requests were made in respect of a person accused of crimes of a terrorist nature. In 1973 a request was refused following an appeal to the High Court in Dublin. A request made in 1984 is still outstanding after the failure of the accused person to appear at an appeal hearing.

In 1987, requests were sent to the Republic of Ireland in three cases. None of these was in respect of crimes of a terrorist nature. In the current year, no requests have fallen to be made. In the period since the beginning of 1987, no requests have been refused.

Information as to requests for the extradition of persons resident in Scotland from the Republic of Ireland is not available centrally and cannot be obtained except at disproportionate cost, but I understand that such requests are likely to have averaged two or three per annum and, so far as can be ascertained, they have been granted.

EC (Regional Assistance)

Mr. McLeish: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will give the total amount of European social fund moneys allocated to Scotland in each of the years 1983 to 1987, inclusive, and for each assisted area and function so designated to receive such funds.

Mr. Cope *[holding answer 1 December 1988]:* I have been asked to reply. We do not have information on what amounts were allocated specifically to Scotland for 1983 to 1984 under the European social fund.

For each of the years since 1985, the European Commission allocated to Scotland the following:

Year	*ESF allocations in £ millions*
1985	17·21
1986	14·05
1987	17·28

The allocation to the Scottish areas of high and long term unemployment and/or the industrial and sectoral restructuring (i.e. priority regions as defined by the European Commission) per year was:

Priority ESF regions and allocations in £'s

Regions	*1985*	*1986*	*1987*
Borders	210,257	—	—
Central	239,299	834,116	881,123
Dumfries and Galloway	52,103	136,661	134,416
Fife	1,074,297	238,155	844,738
Grampian	238,461	—	—
Highlands	223,960	334,008	370,022
Lothian	3,052,829	2,420,722	—
Strathclyde	10,893,009	8,737,971	9,338,236
Tayside	436,220	689,854	1,740,136
Western Isles	151,131	—	—

Because of the way the ESF Guidelines, which are the perogative of the European Commission, are drawn up, certain areas of Scotland will have had priority in one year but not in another.

NATIONAL FINANCE

Press Briefings

13. **Mr. Winnick:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer when he next plans to hold a briefing meeting with journalists; and what subjects he intends to discuss.

Mr. Major: I have nothing to add to the answer that the hon. Member received from my right hon. Friend on 11 November at columns *358-59*.

17. **Mr. Dalyell:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will take steps to ensure that his future interviews with the press are recorded by two or more tape-recorders.

Mr. Major: I have nothing to add to the answer that I gave to the hon. Member for Walsall, North (Mr. Winnick) earlier today.

IMF

14. **Mr. Murphy:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer when he next expects to meet M. Michel Camdessus, the managing director of the International Monetary Fund; and what matters will be discussed.

73. **Mr. Rogers:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer when he next expects to meet M. Michel Camdessus, the managing director of the International Monetary Fund; and what matters will be discussed.

Mr. Lawson: I expect to see M. Camdessus at the Interim Committee meeting in Washington in April, when a wide range of matters will be discussed.

Inflation

15. **Mr. Martlew:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make a statement on the current rate of inflation.

Mr. Norman Lamont: The retail price index rose by 6·4 per cent. in the year to October 1988.

31. **Mr. Hinchliffe:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make a statement on the current rate of inflation.

Mr. Lilley: The retail price index rose by 6·4 per cent. in the year to October 1988.

68. **Mr. Win Griffiths:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what assessment he has made of the principal factors increasing the inflation rate during the last year.

Mr. Lilley: Inflation has risen as a consequence of the very strong growth in demand this year. Recent tightening of monetary policy will ensure that inflation falls in 1989.

75. **Mr. Alton:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what action he intends to take to make up the shortfall on spending experienced by Departments committed to projects whose costs have risen through increased inflation.

Mr. Major: New plans were announced by my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer in his Autumn Statement on 1 November. Although the expected level of inflation was a factor that was considered when setting these plans, public expenditure is planned in cash terms and in general there is no automatic adjustment for higher prices. The planning total for 1989-90 remains £167·1 billion, the same level published in the last public expenditure White Paper. Within that unchanged total there is provision for substantial increases in spending on priority programmes.

84. **Mr. Bellingham:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what further steps he plans to take to reduce inflation.

Mr. Lilley: The progressive tightening of monetary conditions since the summer will exert downward pressure on inflation.

Balance of Payments

18. **Mr. Cabom:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what information he has as to the balance of payments deficits of *(a)* the United State of America and *(b)* the United Kingdom, expressed as a proportion of the gross national product.

33. **Mr. Illsley:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what information he has as to the balance of payments deficits of *(a)* the United States of America and *(b)* the United Kingdom, expressed as a proportion of the gross national product.

48. **Mr. Michael:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what information he has as to the balance of payments deficits of *(a)* the United States of America and *(b)* the United Kingdom, expressed as a proportion of the gross national product.

53. **Mr. Gareth Wardell:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what information he has as to the balance of payments deficits of *(a)* the United States of America and *(b)* the United Kingdom, expressed as a proportion of the gross national product.

Mr. Lilley: In the latest 12 months for which figures are available, the current account deficit as a proportion of the gross national product was 2·0 per cent. in the United Kingdom compared with 3·1 per cent. in the United States of America.

29. **Mr. Doran:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make a statement on the current balance of payments position.

36. **Mr. McAvoy:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make a statement on the current balance of payments position.

39. **Mr. Clelland:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make a statement on the current balance of payments position.

72. **Mr. Ted Garrett:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make a statement on the current balance of payments position.

Mr. Major: Recent import figures and other indicators have shown that domestic demand has been growing rather too fast. Appropriate action has been taken.

Treasury Income

19. **Mr. Canavan:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what has been the total income to the Treasury since May 1979 from *(a)* North sea oil revenue and *(b)* the sale of publicly owned assets.

Mr. Norman Lamont: For the period from 1979-80 to 1987-88, North sea oil revenues amounted to some £62 billion. For the period from 1979-80 to the end of 1988-89, net privatisation proceeds are estimated to amount to some £23·5 billion.

Interest Rates

21. **Mr. Skinner:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer when he expects the level of interest rates to fall; and if he will make a statement.

49. **Dr. Moonie:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what estimate he has made of future movement in interest rates over the next year.

85. **Mr. Martyn Jones:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what estimate he has made of future movement in interest rates over the next year.

Mr. Lilley: Base rates are currently 13 per cent. I never comment on future movements in interest rates.

38. **Mr. Worthington:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make a statement on the current level of interest rates.

47. **Mr. Jack Thompson:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make a statement on the current level of interest rates.

69. **Mr. Darling:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make a statement on the current level of interest rates.

Mr. Lilley: Bank base rates are 13 per cent.

43. **Ms. Armstrong:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what assessment he has made of the impact of continuing high interest rates on the international competitiveness of the pound sterling.

74. **Mr. Steinberg:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what assessment he has made of the impact of continuing high interest rates on the international competitiveness of the pound sterling.

Mr. Lilley: The sterling exchange rate is one of the factors taken into account in the continual and comprehensive assessment of monetary conditions.

61. **Mr. Knox:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will assess the impact of current levels of interest rates on the economy.

Mr. Lilley: Higher interest rates will increase downward pressure on inflation and thereby provide the basis for our continued economic success.

Ms. Quin: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what assessment he has made of the impact of continuing high interest rates in the international competitiveness of the pound sterling.

Mr. Lilley: The sterling exchange rate is one of the factors taken into account in the continual and comprehensive assessment of monetary conditions.

Unleaded Petrol

20. **Mr. Kirkwood:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what representations he has received regarding increases in the tax concession on unleaded petrol; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lilley: In his last Budget, my right hon. Friend increased the tax differential in favour of unleaded petrol to nearly 11p per gallon so that at the pump it now sells at 5 or 6p cheaper than four-star.

22. **Mr. Matthew Taylor:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he has any plans to increase the tax concession on unleaded petrol; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lilley: This is a matter for my right hon. Friend's Budget.

Growth

23. **Mr. Moss:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what has been the growth between 1981 and 1987 of *(a)* consumer expenditure, *(b)* exports and *(c)* investment in the British economy.

64. **Mrs. Roe:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what has been the growth between 1981 and 1987 of *(a)* consumer expenditure, *(b)* exports and *(c)* investment in the British economy.

Mr. Major: Between 1981 and 1987 consumers' expenditure grew by 23 per cent. compared with growth of 28 per cent. for exports of goods and services and 33 per cent. for investment.

45. **Sir Michael McNair-Wilson:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the latest figure for the growth of output in the economy.

Mr. Major: The output measure of gross domestic product is estimated to have grown by 5 per cent. in the year to 1988, third quarter.

46. **Mr. Stevens:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what has been the average annual growth of productivity in the United Kingdom economy since 1980.

Mr. Major: Whole economy productivity has grown by an average of 2¾ per cent. a year since 1980, a rate similar to that of Japan and faster than all other major industrial countries.

"Residence in the United Kingdom"

24. **Mr. Barry Field:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what responses he has received to the consultative document entitled "Residence in the United Kingdom".

Mr. Norman Lamont: At 30 November, the date by which comments were requested, 168 responses had been received expressing a wide range of views.

Pensioners

25. **Mr. Morley:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer when he last met representatives of national pensioners' organisations to discuss the fiscal regime for pensioners.

65. **Mr. Patchett:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer when he last met representatives of national pensioners' organisations to discuss the fiscal regime for pensioners.

67. **Mr. Sean Hughes:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer when he last met representatives of national pensioners' organisations to discuss the fiscal regime for pensioners.

Mr. Andrew Smith: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer when he last met representatives of national pensioners' organisations to discuss the fiscal regime for pensioners.

Mr. Norman Lamont: My right hon. Friend has not met representatives of national pensioners' organisations, but my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Social Security meets representatives from time to time and passes on their concerns.

Privatisation

26. **Mr. Andrew Mitchell:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many major businesses have been privatised since 1979; and how many of their employees have bought shares as a consequence.

80. **Mr. Arnold:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many major businesses have been privatised since 1979; and how many of their employees have bought shares as a consequence.

Mr. Norman Lamont: Nineteen major businesses have been privatised since 1979; 90 per cent. of eligible employees have participated in Government share sales.

58. **Mr. Baldry:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the total estimated yield to the Exchequer in corporation tax of those companies which have been privatised since 1979.

Mr. Norman Lamont: The companies privatised since 1979 paid a total of £1½ billion in corporation tax in the financial year 1987-88.

Environment

27. **Mr. Malcolm Bruce:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will institute a review of the impact of the taxation system on the environment.

Mr. Norman Lamont: We have no plans for a separate review, but environmental issues are, of course, taken into account where appropriate in considering changes to the tax system.

Profitability

28. **Mr. Tim Smith:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make a statement on the level of profitability in the British economy.

Mr. Major: Chart 2.9 of the forecast presented in the Autumn Statement indicates that in 1988 the net rate of return of non-North sea industrial and commercial companies should rise for the seventh successive year, to its highest level since the early 1960s.

Personal Taxation

30. **Mr. Beith:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make a statement on the progress of his Department's plans for the reform of personal taxation.

Mr. Norman Lamont: The new system of independent taxation for husband and wife will be introduced in April 1990. The Inland Revenue already has preparations well in hand.

Investment

32. **Mr. Bright:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make a statement on the level of investment in the economy.

Mr. Major: Total real fixed investment in the first half of 1988 was at its highest level ever, having grown by 9·6 per cent. on the same period a year earlier.

Group of Seven

34. **Mr. Henderson:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what information he has as to the current inflation rates of the member states of the Group of Seven industrialised countries.

35. **Mr. Morgan:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what information he has as to the current inflation rates of the member states of the Group of Seven leading industrialised countries.

Mr. Lilley: I refer the hon. Members to the answer that my right hon. Friend the Financial Secretary gave to the hon. Member for Redcar (Ms. Mowlam) earlier today.

CBI

37. **Mr. Ron Davies:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer when he next expects to meet representatives of the Confederation of British Industry; and what matters will be discussed.

57. **Mr. Flynn:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer when does he next expect to meet representatives of the Confederation of British Industry; and what matters will be discussed.

Mr. Major: I refer the hon. Members to the reply that my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer gave earlier today to the hon. Member for Wolverhampton, South-East (Mr. Turner).

Contingency Fund

40. **Mr. Tom Clarke:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he expects to allocate any resources from the contingency fund in 1989-90 to *(a)* pensions and *(b)* education.

Mr. Macdonald: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he expects to allocate resources from the contingency fund in 1989-90 to *(a)* pensions and *(b)* education.

Mr. Major: I refer the hon. Member to the reply that I gave earlier today to the hon. Member for Blyth Valley (Mr. Campbell).

Child Tax Allowances

41. **Mr. George Howarth:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he has any plans to reintroduce child tax allowances.

42. **Mr. Battle:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he has any plans to reintroduce child tax allowances.

50. **Mr. McCartney:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he has any plans to reintroduce child tax allowances.

52. **Mr. Wareing:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he has any plans to reintroduce child tax allowances.

Mr. Norman Lamont: No.

Taxation (Incentives)

44. **Mr. Grocott:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will publish any information his Department possesses on the incentive effects of the reduction in tax rates from 60 per cent. to 40 per cent. in his last Budget.

Mr. Norman Lamont: Estimates of the direct revenue costs of the reductions in income tax rates were published in the Financial Statement and Budget Report on Budget day. Notwithstanding those reductions, provisional figures suggest that income tax receipts in the first seven months of 1988-89 are 5 per cent. higher than in the corresponding period in 1987-88 as a result of the growth in employment and earnings. It is not possible to isolate the effects of the Budget measures on these factors.

Tax Thresholds

51. **Mr. Sumberg:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many people have been taken out of paying income tax as a result of the raising of tax thresholds over the past five years.

Mr. Norman Lamont: Over 820,000 fewer single people and married couples are liable to income tax in 1988-89 compared with those who would be liable under the tax regime in 1983-84 with allowances and thresholds indexed for inflation to 1988-89.

Charitable Giving

54. **Mr. Fishburn:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what are the figures for the level of charitable giving.

66. **Mr. Hanley:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what are the latest figures for the level of charitable giving.

Mr. Norman Lamont: I regret that comprehensive information on charitable giving is not available from official sources. Available information is as follows. Covenanted giving to charities amounted to some £450 million in 1985-86, £500 million in 1986-87 and is estimated at about £650 million in 1987-88. The available information on gifts to charities on death relates only to estates above the value at which capital transfer tax or inheritance tax would be payable in the absence of exemptions. For these estates the amounts are provisionally estimated at £300 million in both 1985-86 and 1986-87.

Public Sector Debt

55. **Mr. Butterfill:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what was the total public sector debt repayment for the year 1987-88; what was the equivalent figure for 1979; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lilley: The public sector debt repayment was £3·6 billion in 1987-88, ¾ per cent. of GDP. In 1978-79 there was a public sector borrowing requirement (PSBR) of £9·2 billion, 5¼ per cent. of GDP, equivalent to a PSBR of £22·3 billion at 1987-88 levels of GDP.

European Monetary System

56. **Mr. Steel:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer when he last met his fellow European Community Ministers to discuss the European monetary systems.

Mr. Lawson: I meet my fellow European Finance Ministers regularly to discuss a wide range of economic matters.

Adult Unemployment

59. **Mr. Patrick Thompson:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what assessment has been made of the effect upon the economy of the fall in adult unemployment since 1981.

Mr. Major: The seasonally adjusted unemployment rate has decreased from 9.0 per cent. at the end of 1981 to 7·7 per cent. in October this year. This has been accompanied by an increase in the workforce in employment of more than 1·6 million, which together with an exceptionally strong increase in productivity, has been reflected in a rate of growth of output since 1980 faster than that in any other major EC country.

Take-home Pay

60. **Mrs. Maureen Hicks:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what has been the increase in the real take-home pay of a married man on average earnings with two children since 1978-79.

Mr. Norman Lamont: A married man with two children on average male earnings will have received a real increase in take-home pay of more than 29 per cent. between 1978-79 and 1988-89.

Expenditure

62. **Mr. John Ward:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the proportion of gross domestic product represented by general Government expenditure; and what was the comparable figure in 1982-83.

Mr. Major: The Autumn Statement gave a forecast of 39¾ per cent. for the ratio of general Government expenditure (excluding privatisation proceeds) to gross domestic product in 1988-89. The corresponding figure for 1982-83 was 46¼ per cent.

70. **Mr. Hayward:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make a further statement on the outlook for public expenditure in 1989-90.

Mr. Major: As my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer told the House in his Autumn Statement on 1 November, the public expenditure planning total for 1989-90 will remain at £167·1 billion, the level published in the last public expenditure White Paper. Further details of the public expenditure plans will be given in the 1989 public expenditure White Paper, to be published in the new year.

76. **Dr. Bray:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer by what percentage the level of the price index or gross domestic product deflator for 1989-90 assumed in the autumn statement 1988 in table 1.1 on trends in public expenditure exceeds that assumed for 1989-90 in the autumn statement for 1987 in table 2.2.

Mr. Major: In the 1988 Autumn Statement the GDP deflator is assumed to rise by 5 per cent. in 1989-90. This is 1¼ per cent. higher than the corresponding figure assumed in 1987.

EC (Contributions)

63. **Mr. Teddy Taylor:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is his latest estimate of the United Kingdom's contribution to the European Economic Community in 1987-88; and if this figure includes a proportion of the payment made to the European Economic Community in respect of its overspending in 1988.

Mr. Brooke: The United Kingdom's net payment to European Economic Community institutions in 1987-88 was £1,664 million. This figure does not include any amount in respect of our contribution to the 1988 IGA (assuming that is what my hon. Friend is referring to).

National Debt

71. **Mr. Chapman:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is his latest estimate of the cost to public funds in servicing the national debt in 1988-89; and what have been the comparable figures for the amount and percentage of total public expenditure over the past 10 years.

Mr. Lilley: The table below shows general Government gross debt interest payments for the year 1978-79 to 1991-92.

General Government Gross Debt Interest Payments

	£ billion	*Percentage of General Government Expenditure*
1978-79	7·4	9·9
1979-80	9·4	10·5
1980-81	11·4	10·5
1981-82	13·3	11·0
1982-83	13·9	10·5
1983-84	14·5	10·4
1984-85	16·1	10·7
1985-86	17·7	11·2
1986-87	17·6	10·7
1987-88	17·5	10·2
1988-89[1]	17·7	9·75
1989-90[1]	17·0	8·75
1990-91[1]	16·0	8
1991-92[1]	15·5	7·75

[1] Autumn Statement 1988 projections.

Negative Income Tax

77. **Mr. Colvin:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is his current estimate of the cost of introducing a system of negative income tax.

Mr. Norman Lamont: It is not possible to estimate the cost since my hon. Friend has not provided sufficient information about the tax system that he has in mind.

Disposable Income

78. **Dr. Twinn:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what are the latest figures for real personal disposable income in the British economy.

Mr. Major: In the first half of 1988 real personal disposable income was 3 per cent. higher than in the first half of 1987.

Business Start-ups

79. **Mr. Couchman:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what are the latest figures for the number of business start-ups on the basis of value added tax registrations.

Mr. Lilley: The number of VAT registrations and de-registrations processed by Customs and Excise in the period April to October 1988 is:

	Number
New registrations	139,494
De-registrations	99,519
Net increase	39,975

This represents a record average increase in the size of the VAT register of well over 1,000 a week.

Capital Investment

81. **Mr. Cran:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer by what proportion he expects fixed capital investment to rise in 1988 over 1987.

Mr. Major: Total fixed capital investment was forecast in the Autumn Statement to grow in real terms by 12 per cent. in 1988.

Vehicle Excise Duty

82. **Mr. Riddick:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make a statement on the Government's intentions as to future rates of car tax.

Mr. Lilley: I cannot anticipate my right hon. Friend's next Budget Statement.

Private Rented Housing

83. **Mr. Harris:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make a statement on the implementation of the extension of the BES to private rented housing.

Mr. Norman Lamont: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply that I gave on 30 November 1988 to my hon. Friend the Member for Wyre (Mr. Mans) at column *273*.

Roads (Taxation)

Mr. Prescott: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how much money was received by the Treasury from road user taxes, broken down into *(a)* fuel duty, *(b)* vehicle excise duty, *(c)* car tax, *(d)* value added tax on vehicles and *(e)* value added tax on fuel in each year since 1974-75.

Mr. Lilley *[holding answer 5 December 1988]:* The following information is available:

£ million

	Fuel duty[1]	*Vehicle excise Duty*[2]	*Car tax*	*VAT on vehicles*[3]	*VAT on road fuel*[4]
1974-75	1,430	520	120	..	240
1975-76	1,430	770	180	..	460
1976-77	1,960	810	220	..	280
1977-78	2,210	1,050	290	..	300
1978-79	2,210	1,090	380	480	290
1979-80	2,670	1,160	520	1,030	490
1980-81	3,340	1,360	480	970	620
1981-82	4,430	1,620	510	1,060	760
1982-83	5,030	1,840	600	1,260	840
1983-84	5,410	2,000	700	1,390	920
1984-85	5,870	2,260	740	1,450	980
1985-86	6,250	2,430	860	1,650	1,040
1986-87	7,300	2,520	960	1,900	950
1987-88	7,670	2,600	1,130	2,300	1,020

Notes:

[1] Excise duty receipts from petrol and DERV.
[2] Vehicle excise duty on all types of road vehicle.
[3] VAT on vehicles has been estimated from consumers' purchases of cars and motor cycles, and businesses' purchases of cars (on which tax is not deductible). Information is not available before 1978-79.
[4] VAT on fuel has been estimated from consumers' expenditure on fuel (including oil).

Child Benefit

Sir Ian Gilmour: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many and what proportion of those families with children who receive more in child benefit than they pay in income tax are out of work.

Mr. Lawson *[holding answer 29 November 1988]:* In 1988-89, it is estimated that some 2 million families with children will receive more in child benefit than they pay out in income tax. About one quarter of heads of these families are unemployed. These estimates are based on projections of the results of the 1986 Family Expenditure Survey and are subject to revision.

EMPLOYMENT

YTS

Mr. Cummings: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what is the percentage of school leavers in each local education authority area *(a)* entering YTS and *(b)* remaining unemployed since the YTS began.

Mr. Cope: The information is not available in the form requested. Figures from the youth cohort study (England and Wales) for the regions of England and Wales for the years 1985 to 1987 are provided in the table:

Youth Cohort Study (England and Wales)
Percentage of School Leavers on YTS or Out of Work at the time of the survey.

Region	*1985*[1]		*1986*[2]		*1987*[3]	
	On YTS	*Out of Work*	*On YTS*	*Out of Work*	*On YTS*	*Out of Work*
North	31	30	57	13	56	15
Yorkshire and Humberside	31	26	47	18	50	16
North West	28	28	51	17	51	16
East Midlands	27	24	47	15	47	12
West Midlands	32	26	57	15	55	14
East Anglia	24	22	44	12	41	11
Greater London	18	20	25	21	23	16
South East	20	19	34	14	34	10
South West	27	17	50	11	42	12
Wales	37	28	55	16	55	15
Percentage Total	27	24	46	16	45	14

[1] 12,500 1984 summer school leavers surveyed in summer 1985.
[2] 20,000 1985 summer school leavers surveyed in spring 1986.
[3] 20,000 1986 summer school leavers surveyed in spring 1987.

Employment Training

Ms. Short: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will outline the overall budget for funding the underpinning agreements given to ET training managers broken down by region; how much has so far been claimed; and if he will make a statement on the progress of the underpinning arrangements.

Mr. Nicholls: The underpinning arrangements are funded from the overall resources available for employment training and there are no separate regional budgets for this purpose. So far some £836,000 has been claimed by training managers and these arrangements will continue to operate in a cost-effective way.

Disabled Persons (Staff)

Mr. Sean Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what percentage of his Department's staff are classed as disabled.

Mr. Lee: At 1 June 1988, 2·23 per cent. of the Employment Department group's staff were registered as disabled. In addition, the group employs staff with disabilities who chose not to register.

Data Protection Act

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment why members of his Department are on the interdepartmental group looking at the workings of the Data Protection Act; and whether he will define the concerns of his Department in respect of the Data Protection Act.

Mr. Cope: Many of the views expressed to the Data Protection Registrar in his informal consultation review on the workings of the Data Protection Act have been put by small firms and by organisations representing their interests. I have responsibility for representing the views of the small firms sector within Government.

Teachers (Pay)

Mr. Fatchett: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment whether he will set out a table showing current figures for pay in real terms of teachers and the top quartile of non-manual average earnings over the same dates and for the same categories of teachers.

Mr. Lee: The latest available information, for April 1988 is published in table 1 of part A of the report on the new earnings survey 1988 for all non-manual employees, and in tables 50 and 51 of part B for male and female teachers. A copy of the report is in the Library.

Restart

Mr. Nellist: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment pursuant to his answer to the hon. Member for Coventry, South-East, *Official Report*, 1 December, columns *370-71*, in what form the information relating to restart interviews is held; if he will provide an approximate breakdown of the costs involved in obtaining it; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lee: Information on restart interviews is collected on individual record cards which are completed for every person contacted by the programme. These records are summarised on monthly returns for employment service offices, areas, regions and Great Britain. They contain information on the number of people contacted, the number interviewed and the outcome.

It is not possible to isolate from other administrative work the costs of collecting the information.

Coal Industry (Accidents)

Mr. Illsley: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment whether he has any intention to postpone the proposed amendments to the Mines and Quarries Act 1984 in view of the poor accident rates of contractors to British Coal.

Mr. Nicholls: No. The proposed new legislation to replace the 1954 Act is intended to improve or maintain safety standards for all persons employed at mines including contractors.

Businesses

Mr. Grylls: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will list the actions taken by the Government since the beginning of this Parliament to encourage small and medium-sized businesses.

Mr. Cope *[holding answer 5 December 1988]:* Since June 1987, the Government have continued in their efforts to promote a more vigorous enterprise culture and stimulate the development of small and medium sized businesses (SMEs).

Information and Advice

The small firms service (SFS) has increases its links with other agencies in the small firms support network. Its database of national information is now available to other organisations advising small businesses.

In 1987-88 the SFS answered over 266,000 inquiries, helped over 27,000 small businesses by counselling, and held over 39,000 counselling sessions.

The service has opened six inner city offices and is appointing inner city business advisers to promote self-employment and small business development in inner city areas. In December 1987 the service opened a centre for European business information in London.

The recent pilot for Government business shops will be expanded in 1989 with plans for four more in England, two of which will be sited in small firms centres. They will provide information on tax, national insurance and VAT, to help tackle Government rules and regulations at a single point.

Further details of the service's achievements are contained in the small firms service 1987-88 annual report, a copy of which is in the Library.

The local enterprise agency grant scheme was introduced on 1 April 1986 to encourage greater private sector support for the agencies. £2,713,856 was paid to 186 agencies in 1987-88. A local enterprise agency project scheme (LEAPS) commenced on 1 July 1988 to support projects providing special help to inner city businesses. To encourage private sector support for LEAs, the Government made provision in the Income and Corporation Taxes Act 1988 (section 79) for tax relief on contributions to approved agencies by a company or unincorporated business.

The Rural Development Commission provides rural small businesses with advice through 33 business service offices. On 13 January the Department of Trade and Industry introduced the "enterprise initiative", a national programme which aims to raise the performance of management by promoting the use of best practice. The key element in the enterprise initiative is the six consultancy initiatives, covering marketing (including export marketing), design, quality, manufacturing systems, business planning, and financial and information systems. The other initiatives cover research and technology, enterprise and education, regional assistance and export.

Single European Market

The DTI has run a campaign to persuade firms of all sizes to prepare for the completion of the single European market in 1992.

Finance

Use of the loan guarantee scheme has increased following the introduction of simplified administrative procedures for loans up to £15,000. On 22 June 1988, as part of the action for cities initiative, an increase in the guarantee to 85 per cent. was introduced for businesses based in, or working to be based in, inner city task force areas.

The Business Expansion Scheme

In his Budget statement my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer announced a ceiling of £500,000 on investments under the business expansion scheme in any one company in any period of 12 months.

By the end of October 1988, over 390,000 people had taken part in the enterprise allowance scheme. Greater emphasis is now being placed on counselling and training applicants.

Taxation

The basic rate of income tax has been reduced from 27 per cent. to 25 per cent. and the small companies' rate of corporation tax has been reduced from 27 per cent. to 25 per cent. Capital gains tax has been rebased to 1982 so that only gains on losses accrued since 31 March 1982 are brought forward into account. Retirement relief has been extended to include 50 per cent. of the gains between £125,000 and £5,000. The inheritance tax threshold has been raised from £90,000 to £110,000 and the previous four rates reduced to a single rate of 40 per cent. The VAT registration threshold has been increased to £22,100. The rules for registration of voluntary and intending traders have been relaxed. Following a review of the Finance Act 1985 VAT penalties, a number of changes have been made to the regulations including the introduction of a more flexible penalty system for late registration.

Training

Since the introduction of employment training (ET) in September this year, the provision of training for enterprise programmes has been split between ET, for those wishing to start up in business, and programmes dealing with growth and development of existing small firms.

Employment training provides training for people who want to become self-employed and they can enter the programme without having to satisfy the usual ET eligibility criteria. A full range of enterprise training is available throughout the country on ET including enterprise assignments, counselling, skills training, enterprise rehearsal and formal start-up training through business enterprise programme (BEP) courses.

The Department of Employment Training Agency also runs a number of programmes aimed at equipping existing entrepreneurs with the skills and knowledge required to manage and develop a small business succesfully.

Purchasing

The Government have improved small firms' access to information about purchasing departments, their procedures, requirements and points of contact. A Department of Employment booklet, "Tendering for Government Contracts," has been supplemented by some individual Departments' own publications and information published on Prestel. Tendering and approval procedures have been simplified by exempting suppliers to most Government Departments from normal approval procedures for contracts under £10,000, by allowing non-approved firms to tender for non-urgent contracts subject to subsequent approval and by encouraging Departments to make regular reviews of tender lists to encourage new suppliers.

MOD Initiatives

MOD has continued to pursue the small firms initiative launched in November 1986. On 30 November 1988 the small firms advice division was expanded into the newly established MOD new suppliers service but the new service still retains within it a small firms group. A new and expanded edition of the booklet, "Selling to the MOD," has been published. These latest initiatives will encourage more companies of all sizes to compete for MOD business.

Innovation

The small firms merit award for research and technology—SMART—was run for the first time in 1986 to encourage small firms and potential entrepreneurs to put forward innovative ideas that cannot attract existing sources of funding. The Department of Trade and Industry, which runs this scheme, is evaluating the second competition which was run this year. It was extended to 140 awards in a broad range of technologies.

The support for innovation schemes was introduced in 1981 by the Department of Industry to offer firms assistance with research and development projects. Small firms have a simplified appraisal process and so far 50 per cent. of participants in the scheme have been small firms.

The teaching company scheme was set up by the Science and Engineering Research Council and the Department of Trade and Industry in the mid-1970s. In 1977-78 total funding for the scheme was around £15 million split between DTI, the research councils and industry. The scheme has led to the recruitment of high quality graduates into small companies, especially those with no previous graduate employees. The Department of Trade and Industry announced earlier this year that the scheme is being substantially increased with a target of 500 projects by 1992-93. The DTI will also put greater emphasis on the projects of small and medium sized firms, which should comprise 60 per cent. of all projects by 1992-93.

Inner Cities

As part of the Government's action for cities programme announced on 7 March, new initiatives have been introduced to extend the wide range of help available to new and existing small businesses in inner city areas and to make services to small firms more accessible.

Marketing

In 1987, my Department, together with the then Manpower Services Commission and Lloyds Bank, sponsored a series of workshops designed to show managers of small firms how to improve their competitiveness by the implementation of practical marketing techniques. COSIRA (now merged with the Development Commission), with funds provided by my Department offered grant to assist small rural businesses to improve their marketing and sales to trade buyers.

Wales

The Secretary of State for Wales instigated the gateway network initiative for small businesses in October 1987. It provides a high quality advice service to businesses in Wales through co-operation between member organisations. In July 1988 the local investment initiative ("local link") was launched. This scheme fosters contact between local businesses and investors.

In October 1988 a one-stop shop (Government Business Shop) was launched with the purpose of enabling businesses to get advice on tax and other Government regulations under one roof.

Northern Ireland

In Northern Ireland initiatives have included:

—introduction of new arrangements for enterprise training, covering those setting up new small businesses;

—upgrading of support to SMEs to help them improve their marketing and export activities;

—a programme to increase the awareness of local businesses of the opportunity to supply public sector purchasing requirement.

Scotland

The Government continue to provide substantial assistance to small firms in Scotland through the wide range of services delivered on an integrated basis by the Scottish Development Agency, including the consultancy initiative and the small firms information service and business counselling service; through the Highlands and Isles Development Board; and through the Industry Department for Scotland.

The year 1987 saw a net increase of 2,500 registered companies in Scotland. Many of these received Government assistance. Scotland was the first area in the United Kingdom to open a Government business shop to provide small companies with advice on Government regulations.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

School Fees

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will list in the *Official Report* the number of allowances and the total amount paid by the Government for day school fees in both the United Kingdom and overseas for the education of the children of *(a)* members of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, *(b)* members of the Diplomatic Service communications division and *(c)* the Overseas Development Administration including children of technical co-operation officers, for the latest year for which figures are available.

Mr. Waldegrave: There is no provision to pay day school fees in the United Kingdom.

Total costs of day school education overseas for the financial year 1987-88 was £1,540,000 made up as follows:

(a) FCO £1,114,000.

(b) Diplomatic Service Communications Division £51,000.

(c) ODA £375,000.

A record of the number of children involved is not maintained.

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will list in the *Official Report* the schools from which receipted bills were submitted in the last convenient year to facilitate the payment of allowances for the education of the children of diplomatic staff; and if he will state the number of children attending each school.

Mr. Waldegrave: The allowance paid to children of Diplomatic Service officers who attend boarding schools in the United Kingdom is based on an average of the fees of all boarding schools on the headmasters' conference list.

Only limited information is kept on schools used overseas. Each mission maintains its own list of authorised schools which offer education of a kind available without cost under the state system in Britain.

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will list in the *Official Report* the number of allowances and the total amount paid by the Government for boarding school fees in both the United Kingdom and overseas for the education of the children of *(a)* members of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, *(b)* members of the Diplomatic Service communications division and *(c)* the Overseas Development Administration including children of technical co-operation officers for the latest year for which figures are available.

Mr. Waldegrave: Fees are not paid for children to attend overseas boarding schools.

Expenditure on allowances paid to enable children to attend boarding schools in the United Kingdom in the financial year 1987-88 was as follows:

(a) FCO £7,031,000
(b) Diplomatic Service (DS) communications division £753,000
(c) ODA £1,500,000

The number of children at boarding school will vary during the course of the year. The numbers currently attending are:

(a) FCO 989 children
(b) DS communications division 111 children
(c) ODA 447 children

Diplomatic Service officers retain their right to boarding school allowance while serving in the United Kingdom in recognition of their liability to further overseas postings. In these circumstances the allowance is taxable and is grossed up to take account of the tax liability. The cost figures above take account of this.

Holiday Visits

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is the approximate cost of holiday visit passages paid in respect of *(a)* children of Foreign Office personnel being educated in the United Kingdom and in receipt of education allowances and *(b)* members of the Diplomatic Service communications division being educated in the United Kingdom and in receipt of education allowances and of any further travelling expenses paid for the latest available year.

Mr. Waldegrave: The cost of fares paid to enable children to rejoin their parents overseas during the three school holidays was £977,000, made up as follows:

(a) FCO £920,000
(b) Diplomatic Service Communications Division £57,000

In addition, the sum of £51,000 (£48,000 plus £3,000) was spent as a contribution towards the cost of travel between school and airports in the United Kingdom.

These figures include costs of journeys made by children aged 18 to 21 who are in full-time further education and not, therefore, in receipt of education allowances.

Tjeluvyo Mgedezi

Mr. Hood: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make immediate representations to the South African Government to appeal for clemency for Tjeluvyo Mgedezi, the miners' leader who has been sentenced to be hanged.

Mrs. Chalker: It is not our normal practice to intervene in such cases. We do so only exceptionally, when all other avenues have been exhausted. Our criteria are that the case must be clearly political, and there must also be strong extenuating circumstances or grounds to doubt the fairness of the judicial process. Our embassy in Pretoria has spoken with Mr. Mgedezi's lawyers and understands that he intends to petition President Botha for clemency.

Mrs. Molly Maher

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs why officials from his Department advised Mrs. Molly Maher of 28 Singleton road, Brighton, that they had no power to obtain or provide local assistance in interpretation facilities or provide advice and assistance to British citizens contemplating civil actions abroad; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Waldegrave: Formal interpretation/translation services overseas are not provided by consular officials, although at times they are able to assist informally. Consular officials cannot give legal advice to British citizens in general or specific terms on civil actions abroad. It is for the individual's own lawyers to recommend whether a case should be instituted and how it should be carried through.

In this instance Mrs. Maher's lawyer elected to serve papers through legal rather than diplomatic channels. However, Mrs. Maher has been in regular contact both with the Foreign and Commonwealth Office and the British embassy, Madrid, which has been checking and advising her of progress.

Disarmament

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what policy decisions have been taken by Her Majesty's Government on the definition of the phrase "at an early date" in article 6 of the 1968 nuclear non-proliferation treaty, with regard to the process of negotiated nuclear disarmament.

Mr. Waldegrave: Article VI of the treaty on the non-proliferation of nuclear weapons requires the parties to it to pursue negotiations on effective measures connected with nuclear disarmament. Since the United States and the Soviet Union possess between them the overwhelming preponderance of nuclear weapons it is universally recognised that the primary responsibility for negotiations falls to them. The United States and Soviet Union are currently engaged in such negotiations which aim at 50 per cent. reductions in their strategic nuclear weapons.

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how his Department was represented, in terms of papers presented or observers sent, at *(a)* the workshop on the verification of nuclear and conventional arms reductions at St. Bartholomew's hospital medical college from 30 November to 2 December and *(b)* the international scientists symposium, "Ways out of the Arms Race," at Imperial college of science and technology, in London from 2 to 4 December.

Mr. Waldegrave: A member of the arms control and disarmament research unit of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office attended both the workshop on the verification of nuclear and conventional arms reductions at St. Bartholomew's hospital medical college and the international scientists' symposium at Imperial college as an observer. He was joined by another member of the unit for the symposium.

Nuclear Tests

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what steps Her Majesty's Government intend to take to fulfil their undertakings under the partial nuclear test ban treaty 1963, to set a date for the ending of all nuclear testing.

Mr. Waldegrave: The 1963 partial test ban treaty does not require the parties to it to set a date for the ending of all nuclear tests. The parties to the treaty state as their principal aim the speediest possible achievement of an agreement on general and complete disarmament. The cessation of nuclear testing is clearly linked with this. For as long as we rely for our security on deterrence based in part on the possession of nuclear weapons we will need to test them at a minimum level. The cessation of nuclear testing, therefore, remains a long-term goal.

WALES

Water Rate

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will publish in the *Official Report* the average equated water rate poundage for each water authority in Wales.

Mr. Grist: The information requested by the hon. Member is set out in the table:

Average equated water rate 1988-89

Water authority	*Water supply*	*Sewerage services*	*Environmental services*	*Pence total*
Severn Trent[1]	22·6	27·6	0·75	50·95
Welsh Water	52·11	49·02	1·87	108·00

Source: Water authority returns.

[1] The geographical area which Severn Trent serves extends into mid-Wales. However, it is not possible to break the figure down on a purely Welsh basis.

Elderly Patients

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what percentage of patients visit general practitioners for treatment according to the number of appointments made for treatment within the following age bands *(a)* under 65 years, *(b)* between 65 and 74 years and (c) *over 75 years.*

Mr. Grist: Information on the numbers of appointments with GPs is not available centrally.

Disabled Persons (Staff)

Mr. Sean Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what percentage of his Department's staff are classed as disabled.

Mr. Peter Walker: 1·4 per cent.

Value Added Tax

Mr. Heddle: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what assessments he has made as to the likely effect on *(a)* his Department's capital building programme and *(b)* the rent the Department will pay under occupational leases, of implementation of the European Court of Justice's judgment on value added tax on non-domestic buildings.

Mr. Peter Walker: Implementation of the European Court of Justice's judgment on value added tax will have no effect on my Department's capital building programme, since compensating adjustments have been made to the relevant expenditure provisions. At this stage, before landlords have decided whether to exercise their option to tax rents, it is not possible to offer meaningful estimates of the effects of the judgment on rental costs.

Pesticides

Mr. Geraint Howells: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make a statement detailing the funding of research into the effect of pesticides used in the Welsh agricultural industry.

Mr. Peter Walker: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply given to the hon. Member for Bridgend (Mr. Griffiths) on 1 December 1988, at column *328*, by my hon. Friend the Parliamentary Secretary to the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food.

Industry (Ownership)

Mr. Geraint Howells: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what estimate he has of the likely pattern of ownership of industry in Wales over the next five years; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Walker: I have made no such estimate.

Special Waste

Mr. Gareth Wardell: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will publish in the *Official Report* figures for each of the last five years of the volume of special waste imported into, and exported out of, Wales.

Mr. Ian Grist: This information is not maintained centrally.

Skill Shortages

Mr. Roy Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what is the level of skill shortages in *(a)* Newport, *(b)* Gwent and *(c)* Wales.

Mr. Peter Walker: Information on skill shortages is not held centrally. Area offices of the Training Agency collect local information on the CALLMI system (computer assisted local labour market intelligence).

Mr. Roy Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what information he has on how many manufacturing companies are having difficulties recruiting skilled manual labour in *(a)* Newport, *(b)* Gwent and *(c)* Wales.

Mr. Peter Walker: Information is not available centrally on the number of manufacturing companies having difficulties recruiting skilled labour. Any problems are dealt with locally by the area office of the Training Agency.

Employment Training

Mr. Roy Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many people in *(a)* Newport, *(b)* Gwent and *(c)* Wales are participating in training and retraining programmes.

Mr. Peter Walker: The number of people participating in training and retraining programmes is as follows:

	YTS	*Employment training*	*Residual community programe job training scheme*
Newport	1,295	586	12
Gwent	4,317	1,894	25
Wales	26,083	12,225	4,760

Figures are not available for miscellaneous smaller training programmes such as training for enterprise; local grants to employers and the wider opportunities training programme.

Council House Tenants

Mr. Roy Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many council house tenants in *(a)* Newport, *(b)* Gwent and *(c)* Wales receive benefit of some kind.

Mr. Grist: The numbers of council tenants in receipt of housing benefit in 1987-88 were as follows:

	Tenants
Newport	10,700
Gwent	37,508
Wales	189,745

Source: Department of Social Security.

Information on the number of council tenants in receipt of other benefits could not be obtained without incurring disproportionate costs.

Housing

Mr. Roy Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales (1) how many repossession orders there have been in *(a)* Newport, *(b)* Gwent and *(c)* Wales since the housing benefit changes last April; and how many there were in 1987;

(2) how many cases of homelessness there have been in *(a)* Newport, *(b)* Gwent and *(c)* Wales since the housing benefit changes last April; and how many there were in 1987;

(3) how many cases of eviction there have been in *(a)* Newport, *(b)* Gwent and *(c)* Wales since the housing benefit changes last April; and how many there were in 1987.

Mr. Ian Grist: Information on homelessness resulting from eviction and repossession in 1987 is given in the following table. Statistics for the period following the housing benefit changes are not yet available.

	Cases accepted as homeless	*Cases of eviction*			*Cases of repossession action by mortgagee*
		Action by local authority	*Action by other landlord*	*Total evictions*	
1987					
Newport	625	7	150	157	94
Gwent	1,503	47	269	316	160
Wales	5,683	158	1,030	1,188	859

SOCIAL SECURITY

Family Credit and Housing Benefit

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security (1) how many people he expects to be eligible for family credit and housing benefit in 1989-90, with a breakdown of their tenure;

(2) how much he expects to spend on family credit in 1989-90; and how much of this is attributable *(a)* to the notional compensation for free school meals and milk and *(b)* to the freezing of child benefit.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Estimates of the average number of people likely to receive family credit and housing benefit in 1989-90 along with the estimate of expenditure on family credit will be published in the public expenditure White Paper early in the new year.

Pensioners

Mr. Andrew Bowden: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what is the total number of pensioners overseas currently in receipt of United Kingdom pensions; and what are *(a)* the numbers in each country, *(b)* the number in countries where annual increments apply and *(c)* the number in countries where annual increments do not apply.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: I refer my hon. Friend to my hon. Friend's reply to him on 19 May 1988 at columns *551-54*. More up to date figures are not available.

Mr. Andrew Bowden: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what is the average income of those 75 years of age and over; and what is the real term increase in the incomes of those aged 75 years and over since 1979.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: In 1986 the average net income of those aged 75 and over was £78·08. This represents a 26·9 per cent. real increase since 1979.
Source: Family Expenditure Survey 1986.

Mr. Andrew Bowden: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security (1) at what level of income the earnings rule has operated in respect of retirement pensions in each year from 1984-85 to the present date;

(2) if he will list the value of the earnings rule for retirement pensions as a percentage of (i) gross and (ii) net average earning for each year since 1984.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The information requested is as follows:

Uprating dates	Earnings rule	Average weekly earnings of all male manual workers[1]				Earnings rule as a percentage of gross and net earnings			
		Single person		Married couple		Single person		Married couple	
		gross	net	gross	net	gross	net	gross	net
	£	£	£	£	£	per cent.	per cent.	per cent.	per cent.
November 1984	70·00	159·60	108·90	159·60	115·50	43·9	64·3	43·9	60·6
November 1985	75·00	168·70	115·60	168·70	122·80	44·5	64·9	44·5	61·1
July 1986	75·00	176·70	122·60	176·70	129·90	42·4	61·2	42·4	57·7
April 1987	75·00	185·50	131·30	185·50	138·40	40·4	57·1	40·4	54·2
April 1988	75·00	200·60	144·90	200·60	152·10	37·4	51·8	37·4	49·3

[1] Estimates of average weekly earnings for full-time employees, seasonally adjusted.

Mr. Winnick: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he has any plans to improve the arrangements for payment to pensioners on income support of assistance for fuel costs during the winter months.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: General help with fuel costs is provided within income support allowances. The income support premiums target extra help to vulnerable groups including pensioners.

In addition, the social fund cold weather payments scheme provides help with extra heating costs incurred when the weather is particularly cold. A number of improvements to this scheme have already been announced which will increase the number of payments which can be made.

Housing Benefit

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security, pursuant to his answer of 30 November, how the estimated 1988-89 annual expenditure on housing benefit in Nottingham was calculated.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: It is largely a matter for the local authority to determine the basis for calculating the annual housing benefit expenditure estimate. In making an estimate the authority should take account of the effect of changes to the scheme and local factors such as increases in rate and rent levels. Actual expenditure for the financial year is, of course, subject to audit by the district auditor.

VAT

Mr. Heddle: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what assessments he has made as to the likely effect on *(a)* his Department's capital building programme and *(b)* the rent the Department will pay under occupational leases of implementation of the European Court of Justice's judgment on value added tax on non-domestic buildings.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Implementation of the European Court of Justice's judgment on VAT will have no effect on the Department's capital building programme since compensating adjustments have been made to the relevant expenditure provisions. At this stage, before landlords have decided whether to exercise their option to tax rents, it is not possible to offer meaningful estimates of the effects of the judgment on rental costs.

Disabled Persons (Staff)

Mr. Sean Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what percentage of his Department's staff are classed as disabled.

Mr. Scott: Separate figures for the Department of Social Security are not available, but the June 1988 percentage for the Department of Health and Social Security was 1·42.

Languages

Mr. Andrew Bowden: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security which of his Department's publications are produced in languages other than English; and which are the additional languages used.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The following list details all of the forms currently available, or which will be available by the end of January, in Welsh.

Family Credit
FC1 and FC2.
Social Fund
SF100, SF200, SF101, SF102, SF103 and SF113.
General
BF134.
National Insurance
NI255 and RD3A.

An up-to-date version of leaflet FB2 entitled "Which Benefit", which gives details of the Social Security benefits available, is currently in preparation in Urdu, Bengali, Gujerati, Hindi, Punjabi, Chinese and Turkish. A revision of the previous leaflet has been necessary following the Social Security changes in April 1988. It is hoped to publish the amended version by the end of the year.

Benefit Forms

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will list the forms which have to be filled in for each benefit administered by his Department; and how many pages and how many questions are found in each.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: A list of the principal claim forms for benefits administered by the Department is as follows. The other information requested is not readily available and could be supplied only at disproportionate cost.

Main Benefit	Form No.	Details
Income Support	B1	*Income Support* for people who are unemployed
	B1 (Student)	*Income Support* for Students who are unemployed (during long vacations)
	B71D	*Income Support* for people involved in Trade Disputes
	SP1	*Income Support* for people who are over retirement age
	A1	*Income Support*—for people who are sick or looking after children or sick or elderly relatives
Social Fund	SF100	*Maternity Payment*—postal claim form

Main Benefit	Form No.	Details
	SF200	*Funeral Payment*—postal claim form
	SF300	Application for *Budgeting Loan* or *Community Care Grant*
	SF400	*Crisis Loan* application form
Widows Benefits	BW1	Application for *Widows Pension, Widows Payment* and/or *Widowed Mothers Allowance*
Retirement Pensions	BR1	Application for *Retirement Pension*
Child Benefits	CH2	Initial Claim for *Child Benefit* including *One Parent Benefit* if appropriate
	CH12	Claim for *Child Benefit* for additional children
	BG1	Claim for *Guardians Allowance* if a person takes an orphaned child into the family
Incapacity Benefits	SC1	Claim for *Statutory Sick Pay* (SSP) or *Sickness Benefit* self certificated sickness
	SSP1(E)	Claim for *Sickness or Invalidity Benefit* for people who do not qualify for SSP from work
	SP1(T)	Claim for *Sickness or Invalidity Benefit* when SSP from work runs out
	SDA1 part of leaflet NI252	Claim for *Severe Disablement Allowance* (for people below retirement age who cannot work because of illness or disablement)
Maternity pay	MA1	Claim for *Statutory Maternity Pay* (SMP) from work or *Maternity Allowance*
Family Credit	FC1	*Family Credit*—postal claim form
Agency Benefits	AG1	Claim for help with National Health Service charges and travelling expenses
Attendance Allowance	NI251	*Attendance Allowance*
	NI212	*Invalid Care Allowance*—for people looking after someone who has *Attendance Allowance*
Injury and Disability	BI104	*Constant Attendance Allowance* for people who need constant attention because of the effects of an industrial accident or disease
	BI103	*Reduced Earnings Allowance* for people who cannot return to their former occupation because of the effects of an industrial accident or disease
	BI100A	IIDB for *Industrial Accidents*
	BI100(OA)	IIDB for *Occupational Asthma*
	BI100B	IIBD for a *Prescribed Industrial Disease*
	BI100C	Claim for further award of *Unemployability Supplement*—the initial award does not need a separate claim form
	BI100(OD)	IIDB for *Occupational Deafness*
	BI100P	IIDB for *Pneumoconiosis* (certain cases only)
	BI100Pn	IIDB for *Pneumoconiosis, Byssinosis, Silicosis and Asbestosis*
	WS1	Claim for *Workmens Compensation Supplement*—for people who contracted industrial diseases before 5 July 1948
	PN1A	*Pneumoconiosis, Byssinosis and Miscellaneous Disease Benefit* for people who contracted the relevant diseases as a result of employment before 5 July 1948
	NI225	Claim for *Mobility Allowance*

Centrepoint, Soho

Sir George Young: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security (1) if he will increase his grant to Centrepoint, Soho to enable them to accommodate 16 to 17-year-olds;

(2) what steps he intends to take to ensure continuity of funding for Centrepoint, Soho's work with homeless 16 to 17-year-olds in the west end of London.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The Department makes an annual contribution towards the costs of the Centrepoint hostel under paragraph 4 of schedule 5 of the Social Security Act 1980.

An application for increased funding is currently under consideration.

Sir George Young: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will instruct his officials to meet representatives of Centrepoint, Soho urgently following the withdrawal of benefit entitlement fronm 16 to 17-year-olds.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Discussions have taken place at local level about operational arrangements. Officials in headquarters will, however, arrange to meet representatives of Centrepoint to discuss more widely issues arising from the general withdrawal of entitlement to income support from 16 and 17-year-olds.

Family Income Supplement

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will indicate the average cost of providing family income supplement prior to April 1988 and family credit since that date.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: In 1985-86, the latest date for which information on administrative costs is available, it is estimated that the average weekly cost per family income supplement beneficiary was approximately 45p. Figures for 1986-87 will be published in the public expenditure White Paper early in the new year. Comparable figures for family credit are not available. In June 1987, the average award of family income supplement was approximately £15 per week. Indications are that current awards of family credit average over £25 per week.

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will provide additional information for the most recent comparable period before April stating the average delay between receipt of a claim for family income supplement and the determination of the claim; and if he will indicate how many claims were then awaiting determination.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The average clearance time for claims cleared during the four weeks ending 11 March 1988 was just over 16 working days. On 11 March, there were 29,044 claims awaiting determination.

Family Credit

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will give details of the current budget for publicising and promoting family credit and provide information in a comparable form for the previous budget for publicising family income supplement; and what plans he has to raise awareness of family credit.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The advertising budget for family credit is over £3 million in the current financial year. Family income supplement was last advertised in 1983-84 when some £½ million was spent. Both figures exclude expenditure on leaflets and posters where direct comparisons are not possible. For details of current and future publicity I refer the hon. Member to my reply to my hon. Friend the Member for Brentwood and Ongar (Mr. McCrindle) on 4 November at column *810*.

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will indicate the current level of average delay between receipt of a claim for family credit and the determination of a claim; and how many claims are awaiting determination at present.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: For clearance time, I refer the hon. Member to my reply to my hon. Friend the Member for Hereford (Mr. Shepherd) on 6 December. At the end of November there were 46,773 family credit claims outstanding. Of these, about 32,000 were awaiting replies to inquiries, mainly to employers or the claimant.

YTS

Mr. Roger King: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what benefits are available to Terry Flowers of Coventry aged 17 years, who is registered for YTS but unable to obtain a placing and whose bridging allowance has expired; and if he will entertain a claim from Mr. Flowers for payment of benefit on the grounds of hardship.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Claims for income support under the severe hardship provision will be entertained from any 16 or 17-year-old. However, we can consider making payments only to young people who are actively pursuing a YTS place.

Multi-occupied Properties

Mr. Rooker: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will make it his policy that his Department's local offices inform local authorities and fire authorities of hostels and other multi-occupied properties which claimants give as addresses for benefit.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Information supplied by benefit claimants is held in strict confidence. The staff in local offices may, however, consult local authority social services and/or fire prevention officers in confidence when in their view there are serious risks to the life or health of an individual claimant arising from the condition of a home or hostel.

Mr. Rooker: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if his local office staff recommended to claimants the 24 bed hostel in Hay Mills, Birmingham.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: No. Local office staff do not recommend addresses to claimants.

Unemployment Benefit

Mr. Nellist: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security, pursuant to his answer to the hon. Member for Coventry, South-East on 1 December, *Official Report*, col. *389*, concerning unemployment benefit, what information is available and over what range he will answer questions; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Information relating to age, sex, benefit status and duration of unemployment is collected in respect of a 5 per cent. sample of claimants for unemployment benefit on a particular day at six-monthly intervals. It is not collected in respect of all claimants making claims at a particular unemployment benefit office (UBO).

The only information collected on the basis of individual UBOs is the number of claims made each month. Information is not collected on how many of those claims satisfy the necessary conditions of entitlement yet result in disqualification for benefit.

To collect the kind of detailed information requested by the hon. Member would entail mounting a special exercise. This would be disproportionately costly.

Invalidity Benefit

Mrs. Beckett: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security by what percentage the addition to invalidity benefit for a dependent child, including child benefit, is to be increased in April 1989; and what was the percentage increase in prices over the 12 months to September 1988.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The child dependency increase payable with invalidity benefit is to be uprated by the best of both worlds approach which my right hon. Friend explained to the House on 27 October. The child dependency increase will rise by slightly more than 6·5 per cent. from April 1989. The addition to invalidity benefit for a dependent child, including child benefit, will be increased by 3·5 per cent. The percentage increase in the published RPI over the 12 months to September 1988 was 5·9 per cent.

ENERGY

Wind Turbine Generators

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he will list the number of three-bladed steel wind turbine generators that have been given planning permission and their locations; how many are awaiting planning permission and what are their locations; and if he will make a statement about the relative merits of this source of energy.

Mr. Michael Spicer: The Department of Energy does not keep records on applications for, or awards of, planning permission for wind turbines.

However, large three-bladed wind turbines have been or are being constructed in the following locations:

Shetland	Caithness
Orkney	Aberdeen

Ayrshire
Northumberland
Yorkshire
Dyfed
Cornwall
Devon
Kent

Conservation Funding

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy (1) what funding he has made available for *(a)* domestic and *(b)* industrial energy conservation measures;

(2) what has been the total of Government expenditure on energy conservation measures in industry, public sector housing and private sector housing for the years 1979 to 1988; and what are the projected expenditure levels for energy-saving initiatives for the years 1988 to 1991.

Mr. Peter Morrison: Many of the energy efficiency programmes operated by my Department have been cross-sectoral, so information on total expenditure by sector is not readily available. The programmes of a number of other Government Departments contribute to the improvement of energy eficiency, but it is normally not possible to attribute expenditure between the energy efficiency and the other objectives of the programmes. The table gives expenditure by my Department on energy efficiency programmes, expenditure by the Department of the Environment, the Scottish Office and the Welsh Office on the homes insulation scheme, and an estimate of expenditure by the Departments of Employment and Social Security on the community insulation programme (these payments also contribute towards employment and social policy objectives).

£ millions

	Energy efficiency programmes[1]	*Homes insulation scheme*[2]	*Community insulation programme*[3]
1979-80	2·4	15·9	—
1980-81	4·5	16·5	—
1981-82	6·9	24·3	—
1982-83	9·4	30·0	—
1983-84	11·4	25·5	5·4
1984-85	17·5	25·3	8·3
1985-86	22·5	28·0	18·5
1986-87	24·5	25·6	35·5
1987-88	18·6	[4]21·6	44·1
1988-89	[5]20·8	—	—

[1] Expenditure by the Department of the Environment and the Department of Energy.
[2] Expenditure by the Scottish and Welsh Offices.
[3] Estimated expenditure by the Departments of Employment and Social Security. The community insulation programme began in 1981-82, but figures for employment and social security payments which were taken up by community insulation projects in 1981-82 and 1982-83 are not available.
[4] Provisional.
[5] Provision.

Electricity Industry (Privatisation)

Mr. Adley: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what further proposals for the electricity industry he has to ensure the continuing existence of the national grid.

Mr. Michael Spicer: The benefits of the national grid will be maintained. It will be established as a separate company owned by the distribution companies who will have the statutory obligation to supply. As the holder of the transmission licence it will have a clear statutory duty to develop and maintain an efficient, co-ordinated and economical system of electricity transmission.

Mr. Andrew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy who will pay for the costs and major risks of the nuclear programme, after the privatisation of electricity.

Mr. Michael Spicer: The Government will be taking powers in the Electricity Bill to enable them to contribute towards certain unforeseen nuclear back end costs. All other nuclear costs and risks will be shared, as they are now, between the company and the customer.

Plutonium

Mr. Home Robertson: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what quantities of plutonium originated at the Hunterston Magnox reactors have been exported to the United States under the 1958 mutual defence agreement on atomic energy, as amended in 1959.

Mr. Michael Spicer: Plutonium produced in the generating boards' Magnox reactors was consigned to the United States before 1971 under the United States/United Kingdom defence agreement and, as stated by the then Prime Minister on 21 April 1964 at columns 1097-98, has been used by the United States for civil purposes. Because of the barter arrangements under which plutonium was consigned, it would not be in the national interest to publish the figures.

Mr. Home Robertson: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what proportions of the plutonium created in the Magnox reactors at Hunterston since they were commissioned are now *(a)* still at the reactor site in spent fuel, *(b)* at Sellafield in unreprocessed spent fuel, *(c)* in separate form in store at Sellafield, *(d)* re-used in the United Kingdom civil or research nuclear fuel, *(e)* exported under safeguards and *(f)* exported without safeguards.

Mr. Michael Spicer: I refer the hon. Member to the annual plutonium figures published by my Department on 13 October 1988, copies of which have been placed in the Library of the House.

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he will make it his policy to ensure that provision for the privatisation of present Electricity Board Magnox reactors includes assurances that no plutonium owned by or created in reactors operated by private companies can be used for military purposes under any circumstances, including those encompassed by national security requirements.

Mr. Michael Spicer: Following privatisation, plutonium will continue to be handled as securely as it is at present. All existing controls on the export and transport of nuclear material will continue to apply. In addition, all civil nuclear material will continue to remain subject to Euratom safeguards and to the terms of the United Kingdom/Euratom/IAEA safeguards agreement. The Government have no plans to transfer any of this material to defence use.

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy how often the Central Electricity Generating Board provides information on the isotopic quality of its plutonium to Euratom.

Mr. Michael Spicer: Information on the isotopic composition of plutonium contained in CEGB irradiated fuel is reported to Euratom at the beginning of the month following its dispatch from the power station concerned.

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what physical verification of plutonium is conducted by Euratom safeguards inspectors at the material balance area 3 at British Nuclear Fuels Limited, Sellafield.

Mr. Michael Spicer: The main elements of the safeguards inspection arrangements for Sellafield agreed with Euratom were given by my right hon. Friend the Member for Worcester (Mr. Walker) in reply to a question from my hon. Friend the Member for Penrith and the Border (Mr. Maclean) on 4 June 1986 at columns *594-95*.

Spent Magnox Fuel

Mr. Home Robertson: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what proportion of spent Magnox fuel from Hunterston reprocessed at Sellafield was co-processed with spent fuel from the military reactors at Calder Hall and Chapelcross.

Mr. Michael Spicer: The co-processing of civil and non-civil material at Sellafield has been phased out. Since 1986, separate civil and non-civil reprocessing operations have been carried out sequentially, rather than simultaneously.

VAT

Mr. Heddle: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what assessments he has made as to the likely effect on *(a)* his Department's capital building programme and *(b)* the rent the Department will pay under occupational leases, of implementation of the European Court of Justice's judgment on value added tax on non domestic buildings.

Mr. Parkinson: The Department does not have a capital building programme. It is not possible to estimate the effect of the judgment before landlords have decided whether to exercise their option of charging VAT on rents.

Advanced Gas-Cooled Reactors

Mr. Jack: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy when he last met the chairman of the Central Electricity Generating Board; and if they reviewed the board's plans to overcome its current operating problems with advanced gas-cooled reactors.

Mr. Michael Spicer: My right hon. Friend and I meet regularly with the chairman of the Central Electricity Generating Board and discuss a wide range of issues. The board has work in hand which is aimed at overcoming the operating problems of the AGR's.

Mr. Frank Cook: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy (1) what estimates he has of *(a)* the costs incurred by the Central Electricity Generating Board directly because of the necessity to close down each of the Heysham and Hartlepool reactors for a period of several days before refuelling is undertaken, *(b)* the nett loss of efficiency of these reactors because of this requirement, *(c)* the total losses of generation and *(d)* the costs associated therewith to date; and if he will make a statement;

(2) what was the original design intent as to whether the advanced gas cooled reactors at Heysham A and Hartlepool are to be capable of refuelling whilst in a full operational condition; what is the current operational intent; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Spicer: This is an operational matter for the Central Electricity Generating Board. I have asked the chairman to write to the hon. Member.

Energy Saving

Mr. Stern: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he will publish a guide to energy-saving schemes proposed by individual electricity boards.

Mr. Peter Morrison: This is a matter for the area boards.

Nuclear Power

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy (1) what volumes of carbon dioxide gas *(a)* in pure form and *(b)* radioactively contaminated have been discharged from each of the Central Electricity Generating Board magnox advanced gas-cooled reactor and nuclear plants, respectively, in each year since 1979; and if he will list in the *Official Report* the volumes and dates of the gas releases;

(2) what estimate he has made of the contribution to the greenhouse effect of gas build-up from carbon dioxide released from the coolant circuits of nuclear power plants in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Michael Spicer: These are matters for the CEGB. I have asked the chairman to write to the hon. Member.

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what will be the cost to public funds of decommissioning the nuclear plants at Calderhall and Chapelcross.

Mr. Michael Spicer: The decommissioning of the nuclear power plants at Calderhall and Chapelcross is the responsibility of the operator, British Nuclear Fuels plc. To the extent that Government programmes have benefited from the operation of these plants Government will contribute an appropriate share towards the costs of decommissioning.

Argon 41

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what information he has on the half-life of argon 41; what types of radiation argon 41 emits; and what are their energy levels.

Mr. Michael Spicer: I am advised by the National Radiological Protection Board that the radioisotope Argon 41 has a half-life of 1·83 hours. The energies of its principal emissions are:

beta particles:
1·198 mega electronvolts
gamma rays:
1·294 mega electronvolts

Electricity Charges

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy whether he will publish figures in the *Official Report* showing the domestic charge for a unit of electricity as a percentage of the price charged to large industrial users in the United Kingdom and West Germany for the latest period for which figures are available.

Mr. Michael Spicer: From the Electricity Council "Survey of International Prices", a copy of which is

available in the Library, the latest information comparing prices in England and Wales with West Germany is as follows:

Pence/KWh	*Domestic price*	*Industrial price*	*Domestic as percentage of industrial*
England and Wales	6·81	3·37	202
West Germany	9·41	4·43	212

Notes:
1. The domestic price is for a consumer with an annual requirement of 3,300 KWhrs.
2. The industrial price is for a large consumer with an annual maximum demand of 10 MW at a load of 80 per cent.
3. The comparison is of prices as at 1 July 1988.

Disabled Persons (Staff)

Mr. Sean Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what percentage of his Department's staff are classed as disabled.

Mr. Parkinson: At 1 December 1988 1·15 per cent. of the staff of my Department were registered disabled persons.

Magnox Plant, Sellafield

Mr. Frank Cook: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy whether, in the past or currently, the British Nuclear Fuels Ltd. Magnox fuel reprocessing plant at Sellafield has been utilised for the production of the reprocessing or irradiated fuels to yield fissile plutonium for the atomic weapons programme; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Spicer: The facility referred to handles materials for civil and defence purposes as required. Any defence work would be conducted separately from the civil programme.

Power Stations

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he will list those redundant Central Electricity Generating Board power stations thought to be capable of being recommissioned.

Mr. Michael Spicer: This is a matter for the Central Electricity Generating Board. I have asked the chairman to write to the hon. Member.

Gas and Electricity Prices

Mr. Nigel Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what was the average price paid *(a)* per therm of gas and *(b)* per kilowatt hour of electricity by domestic consumers in Britain in 1979, 1987 and 1988 at constant prices deflated by the retail prices index.

Mr. Michael Spicer: The average prices paid by domestic consumers in Great Britain, deflated to 1987 constant prices using the retail prices index, are shown in the following table. Data for this year is not yet available.

Electricity pence per kilowatt hour		*Gas[1] pence per therm*	
1979	5·35	1979-80	33·6
1987	5·50	1987-88	41·7

[1] Prices for gas are available only for years ended 31 March.

Mr. Nigel Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what was the annual cost of heating a small semi-detached standardised house in England, Scotland and Wales by *(a)* gas, *(b)* electricity, *(c)* coal and *(d)* oil in 1979 and 1987; and what are the projected costs for 1988.

Mr. Peter Morrison: I refer the hon. Member to the answer given to my hon. Friend the Member for Langbaurgh (Mr. Holt) on Monday 7 November 1988 at columns *22-24;* this provided the costs of heating a standardised two bedroom house in four regions of the United Kingdom as at April 1988. The four regions were, the West Country, the South-East, the North-East and Scotland. Comparative figures for Wales as of the same date are as follows:

Calculated costs of heating a two bedroom house by fuel in Wales

Gas £	*Electricity £*	*Coal £*	*Oil £*
115-200 (190-280)	133-245 (205-320)	123-230 (265-370)	95-165 (156-225)

Figures in brackets include water heating.

Indices showing the change in the average United Kingdom costs of heating a house with different fuels (taking April 1988 as 100) measured in real terms are as follows:

Indices of real energy costs domestic sector (April 1988 = 100)

	Gas	*Electricity*	*Coal*	*Oil*
1979	84	97	92	115
1987	105	100	105	114
1988 (April)	100	100	100	100

Atomic Energy Research Establishment, Harwell

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy whether *(a)* all buildings and *(b)* all nuclear materials stored or processed at the United Kingdom Atomic Energy Authority's Atomic Energy Research Establishment at Harwell have been under full safeguards by (i) the International Atomic Energy Agency and (ii) Euratom since 1979.

Mr. Michael Spicer: All civil nuclear material in the United Kingdom is subject to Euratom safeguards and the terms of the United Kingdom/Euratom/IAEA safeguards agreement. Harwell carries out contract R and D work for MOD which involves the presence of unsafeguarded material. This is entirely consistent with the United Kingdom's international safeguards obligations. The details cannot be disclosed for national security reasons.

Molten Salt Fast Burner Reactor

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what research has been conducted on the molten salt fast burner reactor.

Mr. Michael Spicer: There has been no significant research on this subject in the United Kingdom.

Inertial Confinement Fusion Technology

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what evaluation has been made of the problems of safeguarding inertial confinement fusion technology against diversion to military use.

Mr. Michael Spicer: My Department does not fund research into inertial confinement fusion technology.

Fiddler's Ferry Power Station

Mr. Bermingham: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what information he has about current proposals for the erection of the desulphurisation plant at Fiddler's Ferry power station; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Spicer: This is a matter for the Central Electricity Generating Board. I have asked the chairman to write to the hon. Member.

Piper Alpha

Mr. Gerald Bowden: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he has reached a final decision on the abandonment programme for Piper Alpha.

Mr. Peter Morrison: As I told the House on 30 November at column 757, my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State had, that morning decided that subject to conditions, he was prepared to approve, under section 4 of the Petroleum Act 1987, the abandonment programme for Piper Alpha submitted by Occidental and its co-venturers. This proposed the use of explosive charges to topple the remains of the installation outwards on to the sea bed, away from the existing pile of debris, leaving at least 75m of clear water above all remains.

I also explained that the co-venturers had the right under the Petroleum Act to make written representations about the proposed conditions. They have now informed my right hon. Friend that they do not wish to make representations and he has approved their programme.

The conditions attached to my right hon. Friend's approval include requirements for surveys of the toppled remains and surrounding sea bed to establish the position of debris and to monitor for leakage of oil or gas. They also require sediment samples to be obtained and examined for the presence of polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs) and radioactivity. The conditions provide for repetition of these surveys and of sediment sampling at such times as the Secretary of State may subsequently direct. They also provide for debris to be moved or removed as he may direct, for any leakage of oil or gas to be sealed to his satisfaction and for steps to be taken to deal with any unacceptable levels of pollution.

The installation was so badly damaged by the fire and explosions of 6 July as to be beyond preservation. If it is not toppled in a controlled way its collapse is inevitable, and could occur soon but probably during the coming winter. If it does collapse under natural forces, it is likely to fall inwards upon existing debris rendering any further removal or recovery operations impossibly difficult and dangerous and creating a serious hazard to shipping, as it would lie just below the surface.

To take the platform down piece by piece would mean first removing the remaining module. Because of the precarious condition of the module itself, and of the structure supporting it, Occidental and its co-venturers submitted, and the Department's safety directorate accepts, that such an attempt would involve unacceptable hazard to the personnel involved.

The possibility that a toppling operation might destroy evidence which would otherwise assist the technical investigation or the public inquiry has been carefully considered also. However, the visible remains have been inspected and it seems unlikely that any useful evidence would be lost. The toppled structure in its final position should not make access to the central debris pile, and such evidence as it may contain, any more difficult than is already the case. Toppling the jacket would however eliminate a hazard which could otherwise hamper diving and other work on the existing debris. Both Lord Cullen and the Procurator Fiscal, have been advised of Occidental's proposal, and neither has any objection in principle.

ATTORNEY-GENERAL

Magistrates

Mr. Bermingham: To ask the Attorney-General how many full-time stipendiary magistrates were assigned to the courts on 1 January of each year from 1985 to 1988, inclusive, and if he will make a statement.

The Attorney-General: The number of full-time stipendiary magistrates on 1 January in each of the following years was:

Year	*Number*
1985	60
1986	62
1987	60
1988	61

Mr. Bermingham: To ask the Attorney-General how many acting stipendiary magistrates were assigned to the courts on 1 January of each year from 1985 to 1988, inclusive; and if he will make a statement.

The Attorney-General: The number of persons approved to sit as acting stipendiary magistrates on 1 January in each of the following years was:

Year	*Number*
1985	91
1986	69
1987	71
1988	68

Crown Prosecution Service

Mr. Bermingham: To ask the Attorney-General if he will list the responsibilities of a branch Crown prosecutor ; and if he will make a statement.

The Attorney-General: The responsibilities of a branch Crown prosecutor will vary depending on the characteristics of the branch for which he is responsible and the duties delegated to him by the chief Crown prosecutor for the area. They will include responsibility for the management of staff and other resources within the branch, and responsibility for all casework allocated to the branch.

A branch Crown prosecutor may have responsibility for some 10 to 35 lawyers and a similar number of support staff. The additional responsibility involved in running a large branch is recognised by a higher Civil Service grading and by support from assistant branch Crown prosecutor posts.

The numbers of staff managed by branch Crown prosecutors and the grading of their duties are currently the subject of internal review.

Mr. Bermingham: To ask the Attorney-General if he will set out the scale of salaries for a branch Crown prosecutor *(a)* in London, *(b)* in the shire counties, and *(c)* in the metropolitan counties; and if he will make a statement.

The Attorney-General: In London and most metropolitan areas branch Crown prosecutors posts are held by officers at grade 5 level; elsewhere they are held by officers at grade 6 level. The relevant salary scales for all areas except the shire counties of Hertfordshire and Bedfordshire are as follows:

Grade 5	
effective from	
1 October 1988	*1 April 1989*
27,087	28,170
28,154	29,280
29,255	30,425
30,387[1]	31,602[1]
31,536[2]	32,826[2]
32,784[2]	34,095[2]
23,053[2]	35,415[2]
35,371[2]	36,786[2]
Grade 6	
19,905	21,633
20,801	22,606
22,715	23,624
24,805	25,797
27,087[1]	28,170[1]
28,154[2]	29,280[2]
29,255[2]	30,425[2]
30,387[2]	31,602[2]
31,563[2]	32,826[2]

Grade 6 branch Crown prosecutors in the shire areas of Hertfordshire and Bedfordshire are paid at the following rate:

effective from	
1 October 1988	*1 April 1989*
22,226	23,624
23,226	24,686
24,805	25,797
27,087	28,170
28,154[1]	29,280[1]
29,255[2]	30,425[2]
30,387[2]	31,602[2]
31,563[2]	32,826[2]
32,784[2]	34,095[2]

London weighting allowance is payable where appropriate.
[1] Scale maximum.
[2] Performance points.

Mr. Bermingham: To ask the Attorney-General what is the level of London weighting allowance given to a branch of Crown prosecutor; if there are any plans to review the present position; and if he will make a statement.

The Attorney-General: The relevant scales of London weighting allowance payable to branch Crown prosecutors are as follows:

	£ per annum
Inner London	1,750
Intermediate London	1,000
Outer London	725

Levels of London weighting are determined centrally for the Civil Service as a whole and are subject to regular review.

HEALTH

Midwives

Mr. Tony Lloyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will make a statement on the progress of the midwives' regrading exercise.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: The grading outcomes which I published on 28 November show that midwives have benefited even more than nurses from the new structure. Nine out of ten staff midwives have received increases of around 25 per cent. more. Three out of four midwifery sisters have received increases of at least 16 per cent., or £1,925. The average value to midwives of this year's award following the regrading is over 20 per cent. Midwives have now been told their new grades and the vast majority received the new rates of pay in their November pay packets. Back pay from April should be paid before Christmas.

At my meeting with the Royal College of Midwives on 7 December I agreed to repeat to health authorities previous guidance on particular issues affecting grading in order to help inform some appeals.

Incontinence Pads

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what advice has been given to district health authorities concerning the supply of incontinence pads to very dependent elderly people in both local authority and private residential nursing homes.

Mrs. Currie: Health authorities have discretion to supply incontinence pads to people living in residential care homes. They were advised in 1974 that they might provide pads free of charge for the residents of such homes but not for patients in private nursing homes.

Cervical Smear Tests

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will give the current average waiting times for women in North Staffordshire district health authority waiting for the results of cervical smear tests.

Mrs. Currie: The current backlog of cervical smears in north Staffordshire is equivalent to 4-5 weeks' work. This is a substantial improvement in the backlog which peaked at three months in January. Two additional part-time screening staff were recruited last summer, and the DHA will continue to send some smears to a private laboratory in Birmingham until waiting times have been further reduced.

Pre-school Playgroups

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will detail the percentage of under five-year-olds in pre-school playgroups in each local authority; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Currie: We do not have information in exactly the form requested. The available information relates to the number of places in playgroups and the table gives the percentage of the population aged under five years for each local authority in England.

Places in playgroups as a percentage of the population aged under five in each local authority in England at 31 March 1987

Local Authority	Places in playgroups as a percentage of the population aged under five
England	13·8
Cleveland	8·0
Cumbria	16·3
Durham	11·2
Northumberland	18·4
Gateshead	8·8
Newcastle upon Tyne	10·4
North Tyneside	6·1
South Tyneside	2·7
Sunderland	6·7
Humberside	10·8
North Yorkshire	21·5
Barnsley	10·0
Doncaster	4·4
Rotherham	8·8
Sheffield	11·9
Bradford	8·4
Calderdale	15·0
Kirklees	9·2
Leeds	11·6
Wakefield	6·4
Cheshire	12·8
Lancashire	11·8
Bolton	5·7
Bury	16·0
Manchester	6·1
Oldham	10·1
Rochdale	9·0
Salford	6·6
Stockport	11·8
Tameside	7·8
Trafford	15·3
Wigan	13·1
Knowsley	6·3
Liverpool	8·2
St. Helens	17·5
Sefton	6·8
Wirral	15·1
Hereford and Worcester	20·4
Shropshire	17·4
Staffordshire	12·6
Warwickshire	13·5
Birmingham	11·4
Coventry	12·2
Dudley	10·3
Sandwell	6·2
Solihull	11·6
Walsall	13·6
Wolverhampton	9·2
Derbyshire	12·0
Leicestershire	15·5
Lincolnshire	19·0
Northamptonshire	15·9
Nottinghamshire	9·5
Bedfordshire	14·0
Berkshire	13·4
Buckinghamshire	19·7
Cambridgeshire	14·5
Essex	18·2
Hertfordshire	14·2
Norfolk	20·2
Oxfordshire	19·6
Suffolk	16·8
Camden	10·9
Greenwich	9·7
Hackney	6·8
Hammersmith and Fulham	7·8
Islington	9·8
Kensington and Chelsea	6·0
Lambeth	6·2
Lewisham	9·0
Southwark	7·5
Tower Hamlets	4·9
Wandsworth	8·2
Westminster	9·7
City of London	11·0
Barking and Dagenham	9·3
Barnet	14·3
Bexley	16·6
Brent	6·8
Bromley	24·1
Croydon	15·0
Ealing	8·4
Enfield	7·6
Haringey	6·7
Harrow	15·3
Havering	14·5
Hillingdon	15·4
Hounslow	9·4
Kingston upon Thames	10·1
Merton	10·8
Newham	3·2
Redbridge	18·8
Richmond upon Thames	23·1
Sutton	14·7
Waltham Forest	7·2
Dorset	19·7
Hampshire	17·7
Isle of Wight	22·7
Kent	18·2
Surrey	20·7
East Sussex	17·7
West Sussex	22·7
Wiltshire	19·8
Avon	13·5
Cornwall and Isles of Scilly	21·0
Devon	17·4
Gloucestershire	22·4
Somerset	21·0

Note: [1]Some figures have been estimated.

Disabled Persons (Staff)

Mr. Sean Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what percentage of his Department's staff are classed as disabled.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: We do not have separate figures for the Department of Health but the June 1988 percentage for the Department of Health and Social Security was 1·42 per cent.

Dentistry (Surgical Gloves)

Mr. Sean Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what guidance he has given to general dental practitioners on the wearing of surgical gloves by dentists and their staff.

Mrs. Currie: The chief dental officer of the Department issued guidance to dentists in April 1986 which stressed the importance of following high standards of cross-infection control when treating all patients, including wearing operating gloves when treating patients.

He wrote to dentists again in May 1988 reminding them of the importance of wearing gloves to ensure an effective barrier against infection for themselves, their staff and their patients.

Maternity Care

Mr. Latham: To ask the Secretary of State for Health whether he will make a statement on the provision of maternity care in Southport, Lancashire, under the National Health Service.

Mrs. Currie: Maternity care in the Southport and Formby health authority is provided at the Christina Hartley maternity hospital which has 35 obstetric beds and 11 special care baby cots. My hon. Friend may wish to contact the chairman of the district health authority for further information about local maternity services.

Packaged Food

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what action Her Majesty's Government have taken on the World Health Organisation recommendation in February that cooked food in sealed packages found to contain listeria monocytogenes should be withdrawn.

Mrs. Currie: No action is necessary. Well established procedures already exist to effect the withdrawal of such foods.

Leeds Western District Health Authority

Mr. Fatchett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health when he expects to announce the appointment of a new chairman for Leeds western district health authority.

Mr. Mellor: Very soon.

Radiotherapy Machines

Miss Emma Nicholson: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) if he will make it his policy to establish a national system for checking and monitoring within each health authority the correct calibration and performance of radiotherapy machines in addition to the monitoring by the Health and Safety Executive to be implemented by all departments of physics and radiation;

(2) if there is a national system for setting up and monitoring the performance of cancer radioactive treatment machines which includes the initial calibration calculation;

(3) if he will issue guidance to district health authorities as to their obligations to take full responsibility for the standards of work carried out by their various departments including physics and radiotherapy and as to the different responsibilities in this area and of the Health and Safety Executive.

Mrs. Currie: It is a prime responsibility of health authorities to ensure the safe and effective operation of all departments. This is over and above any specific statutory responsibilities under regulations enforced by inspectors of the Health and Safety Executive. In the light of the recent report by Sir Bryan Thwaites on the regrettable lapses at the Royal Devon and Exeter hospital, we will be issuing further guidance on the calibration of radiotherapy machines which we will expect all health authorities to implement.

Health Authorities (Women General Managers)

Ms. Harman: To ask the Secretary of State for Heath if he will list *(a)* the regional health authorities and *(b)* the district health authorities that have women general managers.

Mr. Mellor: South Western regional health authority has a woman general manager. The following district health authorities also have women general managers:

Central Nottinghamshire
North Bedfordshire
Parkside
Islington
Waltham Forest
Haringey
Wandsworth
Rochdale

Nurses

Ms. Harman: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will estimate the average number of years worked part-time in the National Health Service by nurses after qualification.

Mr. Mellor: The answer that I gave to the hon. Member's question on 25 November at column *60* included both whole-time and part-time working because individual nurses and midwives move between whole-time and part-time working during their careers. The information cannot be provided separately for whole-time and part-time service.

Medical Care, Bolton

Mr. David Young: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will set up an inquiry into the alleged failure of medical care in Bolton that resulted in the death of Craig Jackson and jeopardised the life of Matthew Catton.

Mrs. Currie *[holding answer 2 December 1988]:* I am aware of the local concern generated by these two cases and I regret the distress they have caused to the families of Craig Jackson and Matthew Catton. But at this stage there are no obvious national implications in the approach to their treatment which would justify my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State holding an inquiry.

Bolton health authority and the Bolton family practitioner committee will be considering what investigations into the cases are appropriate. The parents of both boys can also make use of the complaints procedure of the health authority and family practitioner committee if they feel it appropriate.

Premium Smokeless Fuels

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what discussions he has had about the high costs of premium smokeless fuels; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Spicer: I have been asked to reply.

The particular prices of domestic coals are a matter for the coal merchants concerned. But in general smokeless fuels are more expensive than bituminous house coals, partly because of their greater calorific value and, in the case of manufactured fuels, partly because considerable processing costs are incurred.

Written Answers to Questions

Friday 9 December 1988

EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

Physics and Chemistry

Dr. Moonie: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will make a statement on rationalisation plans for physics and chemistry teaching and research in universities.

Mr. Jackson: Reports setting out the proposed principles for rationalisation of provision were issued by the University Grants Committee to the universities for consultation on 27 October. The committee and its successor, the Universities Funding Council, will consider future provision for physics and chemistry in the light of the reports and the comments received.

Female Teachers (Leaflet 873 PEN)

Mr. Harry Barnes: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what representations he has received following the issue of leaflet 873 PEN to female teachers; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Rumbold: My right hon. Friend has received 58 letters from hon. Members and about 500 from individual teachers. So far, there have been 400 elections to cover previous years which will count towards a widower's pension.

Cox Report

Mr. Haynes: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what time was allowed for consultation on the Cox report on English; from whom he is seeking comments; and when he expects to announce decisions on the report.

Mrs. Rumbold: The National Curriculum Council (NCC) is conducting statutory consultations on my right hon. Friends' proposals for English in the national curriculum for pupils aged 5 to 11. Those proposals are based on the recommendations in the first report of the national curriculum English working group, chaired by Professor Brian Cox. Consultations began on 15 November and the NCC has asked for replies by 27 January 1989. It has consulted formally those bodies which it is obliged to consult under section 20 of the Education Reform Act 1988 and a number of others of its choosing.

Student Unions

Mr. Amess: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science (1) if he will make a statement on the progress of his Department's review of student unions; and if he will make a statement;

(2) when he expects to announce the results of his Department's review of student unions; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Jackson: My Department is now analysing the returns to its questionnaire on student unions. It will need a few weeks to tabulate and summarise the data. Thereafter, the Government will reach conclusions on the best action to take and will consult all those concerned about these conclusions. I cannot at present predict how long this will take.

Mr. Amess: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what percentage of the returned questionnaires for his Department's review of student unions *(a)* supported and *(b)* opposed automatic membership of student unions.

Mr. Jackson: Respondents were not asked to comment on this issue and hardly any did so.

Mr. Amess: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what *(a)* organisations, *(b)* individuals, *(c)* institutions of higher and further education and *(d)* student unions will receive the results of his Department's review of student unions; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Jackson: I refer my hon. Friend to my reply on 31 October at column *471*.

Mr. Amess: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will place in the Library a copy of the results of his Department's review of student unions; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Jackson: My right hon. Friend expects in due course to place in the Library a copy of the Government's conclusions in whatever form they are made available for consultation.

Research Centres

Mr. Pendry: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will list the number of university and interdisciplinary research centres that have already been founded and those in the planning stages, together with the subjects investigated and the geographical locations and the funding for each.

Mr. Jackson: As regards the initiative by the advisory board for the research councils for the establishment of interdisciplinary research centres, commitments have already been made for the following centres:

	£ million
Superconductivity—Cambridge	7·2 over 6 years
Molecular sciences—Oxford	8·9 over 6 years
Engineering design—Glasgow	6·3 over 6 years
Surface science—Liverpool	10·4 over 6 years
Semiconductor materials—London	9·7 over 6 years
Toxicology—Under consideration	8·0 over 5 years
Molecular medicine—Oxford	3·5 over 5 years
Human communication—Edinburgh	2·5 over 5 years

A substantial number of proposals for the establishment of further IRCs are currently under consideration by the research councils.

Additionally, there already exist a large number of research centres and units in universities, some of which pursue interdisciplinary research.

Enborne Lodge, Newbury

Sir Michael McNair-Wilson: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science which authority will now

be responsible for Enborne Lodge special school at Newbury; and if he will make a statement about the school's future as a place of education for young people from London boroughs with special needs.

Mr. Butcher: My right hon. Friend will decide the allocation of responsibility for Enborne Lodge special school and other ILEA residential special schools in the light of discussions currently taking place with all the councils concerned. The school will continue to provide education for young people from inner London with special needs whichever authority takes responsibility for it.

PRIME MINISTER

Leader of the Opposition (Security)

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Prime Minister what are the arrangements for briefing the Leader of the Opposition on security matters, including legislative proposals affecting security matters; and if she will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: As a matter of normal practice I do not propose to confirm or to deny whether briefings on security matters are envisaged or have taken place.

DEFENCE

Aircraft, Upper Heyford

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence why aircraft operating from RAF Upper Heyford are heavier than they were previously, resulting in lower flight paths; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Freeman: I refer the hon. Member to the Adjournment debate which took place on 30 November, *Official Report* columns 849 to 856. The weight increase to which I referred at column 853 is due partly to the changeover to a safer but heavier fuel and partly to the effect on the typical payload carried by the aircraft of changing operational requirements.

Nuclear Submarines (Cooling Systems)

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence (1) what incidents have been reported involving pressurised water reactors in nuclear submarines releasing gas from their cooling systems into the atmosphere;

(2) what information he has on what radionuclides would be produced if air contaminated the cooling system of a pressurised water reactor in a nuclear submarine.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The primary coolant water in submarine pressurised water reactors inevitably contains a very small amount of air. The dominant nuclides which form in the dissolved air are nitrogen-16, nitrogen-17 and argon-41, with half-lives of 7·1 seconds, 14·4 seconds and 1·8 hours respectively. Argon, which accumulates over time, is routinely released when necessary, with appropriate safety precautions. No Royal Navy submarine has ever been involved in an incident causing any radiological hazard to service men, base personnel or members of the public.

Schools' Liaison Teams

Mr. Cartwright: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list those local education authorities which do not allow his Department's schools liaison teams access to schools under their control.

Mr. Freeman: Though, for a variety of reasons, there are problems over access to some schools, I am not aware of any local education authority areas from which service schools liaison teams are excluded.

Research

Mr. Wray: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many and which university research departments are, at present, involved in projects about biological and chemical weapons for his Department in *(a)* England, *(b)* Scotland and *(c)* Wales.

Mr. Sainsbury *[holding answer 5 December 1988]:* None.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

British Overseas Trade Board

Sir Dudley Smith: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what further consideration has been given to the future of the British Overseas Trade Board; and what plans he has to support United Kingdom exports.

Mr. Alan Clark: I refer the hon. Member to the replies given by my right hon. and noble Friend on 7 November, and by myself on 7 December to my hon. Friend the Member for Beverley (Mr. Cran) at columns *304-5*. We will continue to draw on the British Overseas Trade Board's advice and guidance in directing DTI's export services and on issues affecting international trade in general.

Defence Exports

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what percentage of total visible exports were accounted for by defence exports in *(a)* 1986 and *(b)* 1987.

Mr. Alan Clark: Defence equipment accounted for 0·9 per cent. in 1986 and 1·1 per cent. in 1987 of total United Kingdom visible exports.

Exports

Mr. Denzil Davies: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what percentage of the United Kingdom's total exports of goods and services to the rest of the EEC in the financial years 1981-82 to 1987-88, respectively, was represented by the products of *(a)* the manufacturing industries, *(b)* the food, drink and tobacco industries, *(c)* the textile, clothing and footwear industries and *(d)* oil and oil-related products.

Mr. Alan Clark: Information on a financial year basis is not available. Figures by calendar year are in the following table:

United Kingdom exports of goods and services to the European Community
Balance of Payments basis

	1981	1982	1983	1984	1985	1986	1987
	Proportion accounted for by: (percentage)						
Manufactures[1]	50	51	48	49	50	58	60
Food, drink and tobacco[2]	7	7	6	6	6	8	7
Textiles, clothing and footwear[3]	4	4	3	3	3	4	4
Oil and related products[4]	20	21	24	25	26	13	12

[1]Standard International Trade Classification Sections 5 to 8
[2]Standard International Trade Classification Sections 0 and 1
[3]Standard International Trade Classification Divisions 65, 84 and 85
[4]Standard International Trade Classification Division 33

Note:
Textiles, clothing and footwear, and oil are available only on the overseas trade statistics basis. Thus the shares of total exports are very slightly overstated.

Sources:
CSO United Kingdom Balance of Payments 1988.
United Kingdom Overseas Trade Statistics.
Department of Trade and Industry.

Garment Labelling

Mrs. Mahon: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what measures the Government intend to take to ensure that the European Commission enforces working EEC rules on accurate labelling in garments.

Mr. Forth *[holding answer 8 December 1988]:* Fibre content labelling rules in the European Community are based on Directive 71/307/EEC, as amended by Directive 83/623/EEC. The relevant authorities in each member state are responsible for enforcing the national leglislation which implements these directives, although the Commission has indicated that it is willing to consider any evidence put to it suggesting that there is widespread misdescription of fibre content.

After an investigation into garments made from Italian fabrics in 1987 the Commission concluded that the evidence available did not show that such garments were often significantly mislabelled. Further information has recently been brought to the attention of my officials who are considering the position.

ENVIRONMENT

House of Commons (Lighting)

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment, further to his answer of 28 November, if he will take steps to install chandeliers of a similar style to those which lit the House before being destroyed in the bombing of 1941.

Mr. Chope: No. It would be for the House to resolve to make any changes to the present lights in the Chamber.

Sports Clubs

Mr. Pendry: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what provision he will make, under the Local Government Finance Act, for mandatory relief for non-profit making sports clubs.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: Under the Local Government Finance Act 1988 non-profit making sports clubs are eligible for up to 100 per cent. rate relief at the discretion of the charging authority. We have no plans to amend this provision.

Augustine Road Hostel

Mr. Robert G. Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) whether, when giving approval for the costs involved in building the proposed hostel in Augustine road, in the London borough of Harrow, investigations were made into the allegations by the hon. Member for Harrow, West that the figures provided by the borough were inadequate; and if he will publish the details of the responses made by his officials to the appraisal of the scheme by Kenchington, Little and Partners;

(2) what weight he gave in giving approval for the total indicative costs involved in building the proposed hostel in Augustine road, Harrow *(a)* to the susceptibility of a brickwork construction on the proposed site to movement and cracking, *(b)* to the requirement for piled foundations using a bored pile system designed for negative skin friction and *(c)* to the suspension of the ground floor slab or similar allowances against upward pressure; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Trippier: It was primarily the responsibility of the London borough of Harrow to satisfy itself that the cost estimates provided by Network Housing Association were adequate for the works proposed, taking into account ground conditions and all other relevant factors. Payments of Housing Association grant will normally relate to the cost estimates approved by the Department. The report by Kenchington Little and Partners was received by the Department after the project was approved; the council's observations on it have been requested.

Chlorofluorocarbons

Mr. Wray: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what assessment he has made of the effect of a reduction of 85 per cent. of chlorofluorocarbons by the year 2000 on the time needed for the ozone layer shield to recover completely.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The second report of the Department's stratospheric ozone review group, copies of which have been placed in the Library of the House, calculated the reductions of chlorofluorocarbon emissions required to stabilize concentrations of chlorine in the atmosphere. In the case of CFCs 11 and 12, these reductions are 77 per cent. and 85 per cent. respectively. After such reductions, further depletion of the ozone layer would not occur. A complete phase out of CFCs would

lead to a slow decrease in atmospheric chlorine concentrations and recovery of the ozone layer. Because of the long atmospheric lifetime of chlorofluorocarbons, however, chlorine concentrations would not return to their 1975 levels until the second half of the next century.

The Government have called for a reduction in luchlorofluorocarbon emissions of at least 85 per cent. as soon as possible, in response to the review group's report. At the Environment Council held on 24 November the United Kingdom proposed that the Community should call for the Montreal protocol to be strengthened by requiring an 85 per cent. reduction of world-wide emissions of chlorofluorocarbons by the turn of the century.

Fauna and Flora

Mr. Martyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list the member states which supported the draft European Community directive on the protection of natural and semi natural habitats and their wild fauna and flora at the European Community Environment Council on 24 and 25 November; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: I refer the hon. Member to the answer that I gave to the hon. Member for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks) on 8 December.

Nature Conservancy Council

Mr. Martyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will outline the scope and terms of reference of the review he has asked the Nature Conservancy Council to undertake with regard to its landholdings and other functions; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) what actions he has taken to encourage the transfer of ownership of national nature reserves to voluntary conservation bodies;

(2) what plans he has for the selling of national nature reserves; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The Nature Conservancy Council is conducting a comprehensive review of policy towards national nature reserves (NNRs). As part of that review they are considering the size and management of the NNR network and the scope for reserves owned by the NCC to be sold to the private sector (including voluntary bodies) under appropriate conservation safeguards. We expect to receive a report from the council by the end of the year.

Water Authorities

Mr. Martyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list all *(a)* sites of special scientific interest and *(b)* national nature reserves owned by water authorities; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: I regret the information is not readily available and could be provided only at a disproportionate cost.

Mr. Livsey: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how much, in cash terms, each of the water authorities in England and Wales borrowed, per year, from 1983 to the latest year available, broken down by year and authority.

Mr. Moynihan *[holding answer 5 December 1988]:* The external finance requirements of each of the English water authorities for the years from 1983-84 are set out in the table. External finances comprised borrowing and a small element of specific grant. The Welsh water authority is a matter for my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales.

	1983-84	*1984-85*	*1985-86*	*1986-87*	*1987-88*
Anglian	88·4	63·4	47·10	47·10	35·90
Northumbrian	12·8	9·9	13·80	10·20	−4·20
North-West	78·9	91·5	0·88	67·30	60·70
Severn Trent	66·3	43·1	54·60	10·50	2·20
Southern	30·5	22·9	10·70	−2·90	−9·30
South West	6·5	8·1	4·30	−1·50	4·80
Thames	−0·9	−29·7	−76·10	−0·91	−0·98
Wessex	27·3	16·5	21·80	26·80	15·70
Yorkshire	29·7	36·3	30·30	22·10	0·23

Westminster City Council

Mr. Campbell-Savours: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what representations he has received on the level of rate support grant paid to Westminster city council over the last 12 months.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley *[holding answer 7 December 1988]:* The Westminster city council is not at present in receipt of block grant under the rate support grant system. My right hon. Friend, the Secretary of State, has however received several representations about Westminster's contributions to the London rate equalisation scheme.

Office Space (London)

Mr. Speed: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list the total area of London office space occupied by Government Departments on 25 March for each of the last five years.

Mr. Christopher Chope *[holding answer, 7 December 1988]:* The available figures relate to Government accommodation in Greater London as a whole and do not take account of marginal changes in the Property Services Agency's regional boundaries which affect only a small proportion of the total area. They are:

at 25 March	*Square metres*
1984	2,074,490
1985	2,001,116
1986	2,016,123

at 25 March	Square metres
1987	2,025,612
1988	1,971,093

Air Pollution

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) what are his projections of likely carbon dioxide emissions from the United Kingdom in 1990, 1995 and 2000;

(2) what have been the carbon dioxide emissions produced in the United Kingdom for 1987 from coal, oil, natural gas and non-fossil fuel sources, respectively, in million metric tonnes;

(3) what have been the 1987 carbon dioxide emissions from the industrial, domestic, commercial, public and transport sectors, respectively, in million metric tonnes;

(4) what have been the 1987 carbon dioxide emissions from coal used in power stations and other uses, respectively, in million metric tonnes, respectively;

(5) what have been the carbon dioxide emissions in 1987 produced from power stations operated by the Central Electricity Generating Board, South of Scotland Electricity Board, North of Scotland Hydro-Electric Board and independent companies, respectively, in million metric tonnes;

(6) what have been the 1987 carbon dioxide emissions from coal, oil and gas-fired power stations, respectively, in million metric tonnes.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley *[holding answer 5 December 1988]:* Estimates of United Kingdom CO_2 emissions from fuel combustion will be published for the first time in the "Digest of Environmental Protection and Water Statistics" early next year. Preliminary estimates covering the hon. Member's specific questions are given in the table. The Department has no plans to publish projections of CO_2 emissions given that these are subject to a wide range of uncertainty in estimates of economic growth and its relationship to energy use, fuel pricing and fuel availability.

United Kingdom CO_2 Emissions from fuel use (1987)

	Emission (million tonnes CO_2)
(a) By fuel type	
Fuel	
Coal:	
Power stations	218·9
Other use	44·4
Sub total	263·3
Coal	263·3
Oil	172·0
Natural gas	109·6
Non-fossil fuels	n.a.
Other fuels	56·5
United Kingdom grand total	601·3
(b) By Sector	
Power stations	
By Fuel	
Coal	218·9
Oil	13·2
Natural gas	0·4
Sub total	232·5
By generator:	
CEGB	210·1
SSEB	17·2
NSHEB	1·1
Others	4·0
Sub total	232·5
Power stations	232·5
Industry	146·2
Domestic	87·5
Commercial and Public	32·5
Transport	99·8
Others	2·9
United Kingdom grand total	601·3

Hardwood

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is the policy of Her Majesty's Government in respect of the use of tropical rain forest-produced hardwood in its buildings and furniture.

Mr. Chope *[holding answer 30 November 1988]:* PSA and the Crown suppliers use mainly private sector contractors for the provision respectively of Government buildings and furniture. These firms will seek to use materials which best meet the users' requirements, bearing in mind the need for economy and design. The Government take account of advice issued publicly from specialised organisations such as the Princes Risborough laboratory, the Furniture Industry Research Association (FIRA) and the Timber Research and Development Association (TRADA) about the suitability and availability of alternative materials to tropical rain-forest produced hardwood, and about the availability of this product from countries that have a policy of replacing rain-forest as it is used.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Vishnu Statues

Mr. Fisher: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what action he has taken in response to the telegram from Mr. Son Sann, President of Khmer People's National Liberation Front, on 3 November asking him to intervene in the sale of two statues of Vishnu which are alleged property of the Khmer people.

Mr. Waldegrave: We have received no telegram from Mr. Son Sann. We have no locus for intervention in a commercial matter of this kind.

Soviet Jews

Mr. David Amess: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will publish in the *Official Report* a list of those Soviet Jews known by his Department who were refused permission to emigrate from the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, together with the date they first applied, since 1970.

Mr. Waldegrave: I am writing to the hon. Member.

Raoul Wallenberg

Mr. Amess: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what recent discussions he has had with the Governments of *(a)* Sweden, *(b)* the United States of America and *(c)* Israel concerning the case of Raoul Wallenberg; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Waldegrave: We regularly raise the case of Raoul Wallenberg with the Soviet Union both bilaterally and in multilateral fora such as the conference on security and co-operation in Europe. We also keep in touch with other Governments concerned.

United Nations Convention (Ratification)

Miss Nicholson: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when Her Majesty's Government will be in a position to ratify the United Nations convention against torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment.

Mr. Waldegrave: The instrument of ratification was yesterday—8 December—lodged with the Secretary-General of the United Nations in New York. The convention will come into effect for the United Kingdom 30 days from that date.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Lotteries Regulations

Mr. Hanley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he expects to lay before the House any amendments to the lotteries regulations.

Mr. John Patten: We expect to lay regulations to prohibit "multiple" lotteries, by insertion in the Lotteries Regulations 1977, before Christmas.

Pet Animals (Convention)

Mr. Gareth Wardell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he has now completed his consultations regarding the European convention for the protection of pet animals; and if the United Kingdom will sign the convention without any reservation on article 10 on surgical operations.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: I would refer the hon. Member to the reply given to a question from the hon. Member for Liverpool, Mossley Hill (Mr. Alton) on 1 December at column *401*.

Fire Cover (West Yorkshire)

Mr. Lofthouse: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when inspectors last inspected standards of fire cover provided by the west Yorkshire fire and civil defence authority.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The west Yorkshire fire service was last inspected in June. As is usual, Her Majesty's inspector of fire services paid attention to the level of fire cover provided by the brigade.

Children (Attacks)

Mr. Brazier: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what steps his Department is taking to prevent and reduce the number of violent and sexual attacks upon young children.

Mr. John Patten: Attacks on young children are particularly abhorrent. It is important that parents and others know how best to advise them on reducing the risks of being attacked or molested. Such advice is contained in the crime prevention handbook "Practical Ways to Crack Crime". It deals with the threat from people known to the potential victim as well as from strangers. Since its launch in March this year more than 1·5 million copies of the handboook have been distributed, and a revised edition is now available.

Identity Card Scheme

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what representations he has received concerning the introduction of a national identity card scheme.

Mr. John Patten: We receive a steady flow of correspondence and comments from right hon. and hon. Members and the public on the introduction of a national identity card scheme. The Association of Chief Police Officers has been asked for its views on the introduction of national identity cards and we will consider its response together with other views on the subject.

Police National Computer

Mr. John Evans: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what are the maximum delays being experienced in the transfer of annual records of convictions on to the police national computer.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The definitive record of convictions which is used to supply information to the courts is maintained on microfiche by the national identification bureau. It is updated continually and a conviction would normally be recorded on the microfiche record within 10 days of its notification to the bureau. In normal circumstances, local forces would inform the bureau of the result of a conviction within two months.

The convictions application on the police national computer is a limited record of the convictions of those who first offended in 1981 or later Details of relevant convictions may take up to six months to be recorded on this application, depending on the circumstances.

Parking Enforcement

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will bring forward proposals to transfer parking enforcement functions in London from the Metropolitan police to the London boroughs.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: I am awaiting the report of the parking enforcement working party which has reviewed the effectiveness, efficiency and acceptability of the existing arrangements for parking enforcement. I understand that proposals for extending the role of local authorities in parking enforcement are among the issues being considered by the working party.

Breath Tests

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list by police force the following infomation relating to the Christmas period of 1987 *(a)* the number of breath tests, *(b)* the number of

breath tests which were positive, *(c)* the percentage of breath tests which were positive, *(d)* the number of personal road traffic injury accidents, and *(e)* the number of fatal road traffic accidents.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The information requested on breath tests is published in table 6 of Home Office "Statistical Bulletin" issue 23/88—"Statistics of breath tests, England and Wales 1987", a copy of which is in the Library. I understand from my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Transport that the information requested on road accidents is as shown in the table.

Road accidents involving personal injury
England and Wales, 19-31 December 1987 *Number of accidents*

Police force area	*All accidents involving injury*	*Fatal accidents*
Avon and Somerset	145	4
Bedfordshire	69	—
Cambridgeshire	71	5
Cheshire	107	1
Cleveland	61	1
Cumbria	47	3
Derbyshire	94	2
Devon and Cornwall	178	1
Dorset	63	2
Durham	51	2
Essex	195	2
Gloucestershire	67	3
Greater Manchester	298	6
Hampshire	217	2
Hertfordshire	99	1
Humberside	118	3
Kent	162	5
Lancashire	152	9
Leicestershire	93	2
Lincolnshire	85	2
London, City	5	—
Merseyside	187	5
Metropolitan	1,203	18
Norfolk	100	3
Northamptonshire	65	5
Northumbria	120	5
North Yorkshire	72	—
Nottinghamshire	109	2
South Yorkshire	132	5
Staffordshire	125	—
Suffolk	78	2
Surrey	125	2
Sussex	147	5
Thames Valley	207	6
Warwickshire	59	3
West Mercia	116	3
West Midlands	177	2
West Yorkshire	233	5
Wiltshire	72	2
Dyfed Powys	54	1
Gwent	33	—
North Wales	72	—
South Wales	129	2
England and Wales	5,992	132

Rape

Mr. Thurnham: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many crimes of rape have been committed in the Greater Manchester area during 1987 and 1988 to date; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John Patten: 110 rapes were recorded by the Greater Manchester police in 1987 and 118 rapes were recorded in the period 1 January to 30 September 1988. Annual figures are published in table 3.1 of "Criminal statistics, England and Wales, Supplementary tables, Volume 3".

Dog Fights

Mr. Cryer: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will introduce legislation to amend the Protection of Animals (Amendment) Act 1988 so that persons who organise, aid and abet or watch dog fights face either a prison sentence or community care orders to assist such bodies as the Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals on conviction; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: We have no proposals for amending the present law. Organising or attending a dog fight is an offence under the Protection of Animals Act 1911. The maximum penalty for organising a dog fight is six months imprisonment or a fine of £2,000 or both. The maximum penalty for attending a dog fight is a fine of £1,000. With imprisonable offences, where the offender is aged 16 or over, the courts may make a community service order. The work performed under the order is a matter for the probation service. It may include work with a voluntary body like the RSPCA.

Protection of Animals

Mr. Cryer: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what guidance is issued to chief constables to implement the Protection of Animals (Amendment) Act 1988; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Home Office Circular 80/1988, of which a copy is in the Library, was issued on 1 September this year. It notified Chief Officers of Police and courts of the coming into force of the Protection of Animals (Amendment) Act 1988.

Prisoners

Mr. McCrindle: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the average amount of time spent by a prisoner in his cell each day; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: This information is not collated centrally. The daily routine for prisoners varies widely depending on the role of the establishment and other factors. The prisons board statement of the functions of establishments makes clear to governors that a continuing objective is to enable prisoners to spend the maximum possible time out of their cells.

Mr. McCrindle: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many prisoners have the opportunity of working or learning new skills in prison; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The most recent figures available provide estimation of the number of prisoners engaged in work, education or training courses during 1987, based on the average number so employed per weekday in male establishments. There are no available figures for female establishments. The figures are detailed in the table:

	Numbers
Vocational/Trade *Training*	2,460
Other Full-time *Education*	3,590
Pre-release *Courses*	440
Industrial Farms or *Gardens*	10,140
Other *Work*	15,190
Total	31,820

The opportunities for prisoners to participate are subject to constraints such as the availability of work, staffing requirements, existing facilities and regimes in establishments and the suitability of inmates for particular activities.

The prison department attaches great importance to training, education and work experience for inmates as this helps individuals reach their full potential and eventually to play a more constructive role in custody and after release.

In addition to the acquisition of accredited skills in vocational training courses, further consideration is presently being given to the greater integration of learning opportunities and work experience.

Mr. McCrindle: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he has any plans to allow private companies to employ prisoners in prison; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: We have no plans for private companies directly to employ prisoners in prison workshops. Under the existing arrangements, a significant source of employment for prisoners is light assembly work for private companies, with the prison service providing the labour in prison workshops, but the private companies supplying the materials and equipment and distributing the finished goods.

Domestic Assaults

Mrs. Ray Michie: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will ask police forces in England and Wales to provide his Department with regular information regarding the number of reported domestic assaults each year; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John Patten *[holding answer 7 December 1988]:* Information on recorded offences of domestic violence is published in the annual reports of some police forces, for example the annual reports of the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis. Information for England and Wales on domestic violence was published in "Criminal Statistics, England and Wales" in 1979 and 1980. However, this was judged to be incomplete because not all police forces recorded domestic violence separately. An ad hoc survey of violent crime (including domestic assaults) recorded by the police is currently being undertaken and the results will be evaluated in 1989.

WALES

Community Care

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what guidelines his Department has issued to health authorities with regard to remedying the problems of community care in cases where the transition from institutions to the community is costing more than anticipated.

Mr. Grist: Our strategic planning guidance requires health authorities to develop services flexibly so as to ensure that they meet identified needs appropriately and cost-effectively. Additional Welsh Office funding under the all-Wales mental handicap strategy is based on approved county plans which set out the costs of proposals and the sources for meeting them. These plans are subject to annual review and are amended as necessary. We propose similar arrangements in our consultation document on the development of services for those suffering from mental illness.

Mental Health

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list by health authority the amount of money spent on mental health services each year since 1979, the percentage increase in real terms and the percentage of overall spending on health services, both in the National Health Service and in the private sector.

Mr. Grist: The information requested cannot be provided, since only limited data on mental health services' expenditure within the National Health Service in Wales is available for the years before 1987-8 and information on health-care spending within the private sector is not collected by the Department.

The more comprehensive information now available on NHS spending on mental health services in 1987-88 is as follows:

National Health Service mental health services expenditure: 1987-88[1]

District health authority	*Mental health services' expenditure*[2] *(£000)*	*Total as a percentage of overall district health authorities' services expenditure (per cent.)*
Clwyd	7,974	0·99
East Dyfed	7,649	0·95
Gwent	13,923	1·73
Gwynedd	4,384	0·55
Mid Glamorgan	18,563	2·31
Pembrokeshire	768	0·10
Powys	5,587	0·70
South Glamorgan	12,070	1·50
West Glamorgan	6,396	0·80
Wales	[3]77,315	9·63

[1] The figures presented are provisional at this stage.

[2] The figures in respect of mental health services relate to hospital services' expenditure and community health services' expenditure (where this can be separately identified) in respect of the mentally ill, the mentally handicapped, child and adolescent psychiatry, forensic psychiatry and psychotherapy. The hospital services' figures relate only to direct clinical and diagnostic services to patients and therefore do not include any attribution of expenditure in respect of general services such as administration, transport, hotel services or estate management. Similarly the community health services' figures relate

only to the nursing element of community services for these client groups.
Source: District Health Authorities Financial Returns.

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make a statement on the methods of monitoring the use of the proceeds from the sales of National Health Service buildings used for the mentally ill and mentally handicapped; and if he will seek to ensure that these proceeds are put back into those services rather than the regional budget.

Mr. Grist: County plans, produced by Social Services and health authorities and other interests provide the basis for the development of services under the all-Wales mental handicap strategy and make clear the source of investment. Similar arrangements are proposed in our draft proposals for the future development of services for those suffering from mental illness. In addition, the strategic, operational and capital plans of district health authorities provide details of the proposed use of Health Service resources, and their source, including capital receipts.

Sheep Premium

Mr. Geraint Howells: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what discussions he has had with European Economic Community agriculture Ministers about the future of the sheep variable premium scheme; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Walker: My right hon. Friend, the Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, represents the United Kingdom at the Council of Ministers (Agriculture) which has twice considered the European Commission's proposals for review of the sheepmeat regime. The negotiations, are as yet at an early stage.

Fertilisers

Mr. Geraint Howells: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he has any plans to further restrict the use of nitrogen fertilisers in Wales; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Walker: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply given to my hon. Friend the Member for St. Ives (Mr. Harris) on 24 November 1988 by my right hon. Friend the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food.

Bovine Somatotropin

Mr. Geraint Howells: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what discussions he has had with farm animal welfare groups in Wales regarding long-term use of the milk production hormone bovine somatotropin; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Walker: None. Last year, the Farm Animal Welfare Council consulted a wide range of interests, including animal welfare organisations, on the welfare implications of using bovine somatotropin. The council has drawn attention to certain longer term aspects of animal welfare where further information is required. These are being considered in ongoing field trials.

Research and Development

Mr. Geraint Howells: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what consultations he has had with both the farming unions in Wales regarding his proposals to cut his Department's budget on research and development; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Walker: My noble Friend, the Parliamentary Secretary, Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, has had discussions with the farming unions and other representatives of the industry about the Government's proposals to withdraw public funding from near market research and development. My officials have also had contacts with the farming unions. The Welsh Office has no budget for agricultural research and development.

Water Authority

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many professional staff are employed in the legal department of the shadow National Rivers Authority unit of the Welsh water authority.

Mr. Grist: This information is contained in Welsh Water's summary scheme of organisation for the Welsh regional unit of the National Rivers Authority, a copy of which was placed in the Library of the House on 2 December 1988.

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales, pursuant to his answer to the hon. Member for Caerphilly, on 5 December, *Official Report*, column 22, what was the value of the land sold by the Welsh water authority for each year since 1983.

Mr. Grist: The information is more readily available on a financial rather than a calendar year basis. The receipts from land sold by Welsh Water since 1 April 1983 are as follows:

	£
1983-84	319,385
1984-85	351,676
1985-86	199,097
1986-87	758,266
1987-88	204,095
1988 to date	302,486
Total	2,135,005

NATIONAL FINANCE

Government Revenue

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer when was the last surplus of central Government revenue over expenditure; if he will express it in 1988 prices; what is the latest forecast for the current year in 1988 prices; and if he will forecast the likely change in *(a)* money supply and *(b)* the national debt in the current year.

Mr. Lilley: Before 1987-88, the public sector was last in surplus in 1969-70, when the surplus amounted to £0·6 billion, equivalent to £3·8 billion at 1988-89 prices. For the latest forecasts of the public sector surplus and growth of the money supply I refer the hon. Member to the autumn statement, paragraphs 20.2 and 2.48 respectively. To estimate the likely change in the national debt in the current year would involve revealing forecasts of items which by convention the Government never publish.

Platinum Coins

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what information he has regarding the amount and value of platinum coins held off-shore by British investors in order to avoid payment of value added tax; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lilley *[holding answer 8 December 1988]:* None.

Single Parents

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many single parents are expected to claim the additional personal income tax allowance for 1988-89 and how many are widows; how many single parents claim one-parent benefit and how many widows with children receive a child dependency addition in respect of how many children; to what extent these two benefits have been increased to take account of the reduction in the real value of child benefit and the effect of inflation on the amounts payable in March 1986; and if he will bring up to date the benefit figures quoted in paragraph 4.10 of Cmnd. 9756.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: I have been asked to reply.

It is estimated that 470,000 lone parents, including 60,000 widows, will claim the additional personal income tax allowance in 1988-89.

There are some 670,000 lone parents claiming one parent benefit. In March 1988 there were 61,176 widows claiming child dependency additions in respect of 92,086 children. These benefits have been increased in line with the increase in the index of retail prices since March 1986. No account has been taken of changes in the real value of child benefit.

The current rate of one parent benefit is £4·90 weekly (£5·20 from April 1989). Widowed mother's allowance is £41·15 weekly and the child dependency addition £8·40 for each child (£43·60 and £8·95 respectively from April 1989).

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer (1) what is his estimate of the number of single parents and the number of their children; how many are widows and with how many children; how many are covered by one-parent benefit and the child dependency addition and at what cost to Revenue; whether either or both of these benefits are taxable; and how many single parents claiming the additional personal income tax allowance do not claim one-parent benefit or child dependency addition, and at what saving to the Revenue;

(2) what is his estimate of the number of single parents and the number of their children; how many are widows and with how many children; how many are covered by one-parent benefit and the child dependency addition and at what cost to the revenue; whether either or both of these benefits are taxable; and how many single parents claiming the additional personal income-tax allowance do not claim one-parent benefit or child dependency addition, and at what saving to the revenue.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: I have been asked to reply.

The latest available statistics on the numbers of lone parents and their children, provided by OPCS, are for 1984 when there were 940,000 lone parents with 1·5 million children. These figures include 98,000 widows with 147,000 children.

In 1984-85 565,000 lone parents received one parent benefit at a cost of £120 million. No statistics are kept on the numbers of lone parents among recipients of child dependency additions, which are payable with certain national insurance benefits on the basis of the claimant's contribution record. One parent benefit and child dependency additions are not subject to taxation.

A total of 460,000 lone parents, including 70,000 widows, qualified for the additional personal income tax allowance in 1984-85. Statistics are not kept on how many of these were or were not also claimants of one parent benefit or child dependency additions.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Nurses (Grading)

Mr. John D. Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many nursing staff there are at Belvoir hospital; how many of the staff have now been advised of their grades; and how many appeals against their grades have been received.

Mr. Needham: There are 280 nursing staff employed at Belvoir hospital, all of whom have been advised of their grades. No formal appeals have been received but 48 nurses have been involved in informal discussions with management about their grades.

Mr. Beggs: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what is the value of the salary increase payable to a night sister expressed as a percentage increase over salary received prior to re-grading.

Mr. Needham: As a result of the clinical regrading review for nurses, midwives and health visitors, night sisters can be placed on one of three new pay scales. The value of the salary increase expressed as a percentage over salary received prior to re-grading for each payscale is as follows:

Scale	*Range of percentage pay increase*
F	4·2-13·3
G	16·0-33·6
H	27·9-49·4

Mr. John D. Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many nursing staff there are at Ards hospital; how many staff have now been advised of their grades; and how many appeals against their grades have been received.

Mr. Needham: There are 293 nursing staff employed at Ards hospital, all of whom have been advised of their grades. No formal appeals have been received but 42 nurses have been involved in informal discussions with management about their grades.

Mr. John D. Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many nursing staff there are at Forster Green hospital; how many of the staff have now been advised of their grades; and how many appeals against their grades have been received.

Mr. Needham: There are 81 nursing staff employed at Forster Green hospital, all of whom have been advised of their grades. No formal appeals have been received but 13 nurses have been involved in informal discussions with management about their grades.

Mr. John D. Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland why charge nurses and ward sisters are required to write to the director of nursing services to request positions or positional changes at Purdysburn hospital; whether this is normal procedure at hospitals within the Eastern Board area; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Needham: Charge nurses and ward sisters are not normally required by the director of nursing services to write to him regarding positions or positional changes at Purdysburn hospital, nor is such a procedure normal practice at any hospital within the eastern board area. Management does however reserve the right to require such requests in writing.

Mr. John D. Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many nursing staff there are at Purdysburn hospital; how many of the staff have now been advised of their grades; and how many appeals against their grades have been received.

Mr. Needham: There are 526 nursing staff employed at Purdysburn hospital, all of whom have been advised of their grades. No formal appeals have been received but 109 nurses have been involved in informal discussions with management about their grades.

Nurses

Mr. Beggs: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many night sisters are employed in East Antrim hospitals.

Mr. Needham: Ten.

Mr. Beggs: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many night sisters have been regraded upwards in East Antrim hospitals.

Mr. Needham: Ten.

Mr. Beggs: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many nurses at all levels have appealed against the grade allocated to them.

Mr. Needham: There have been no formal appeals by nurses against the grades allocated to them but a number have been involved in informal discussions with management about their grades.

Elected Authorities

Mr. McNamara: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will list in the *Official Report* the anticipated increase in voters in each of the individual assembly seats and district council seats expected as a result of the provision in the Elected Authorities (Northern Ireland) Bill.

Mr. Needham: The Bill brings the local government franchise in Northern Ireland broadly into line with the parliamentary franchise. The franchise for the Northern Ireland Assembly has already been amended in a similar way. On the basis of the current electoral register, the total increase in the number of local government electors would be approximately 10,500.

An analysis of the number of parliamentary electors and local government electors on the current register, by constituency, is contained in the report of the Chief Electoral Officer for Northern Ireland for 1987-88 (HC 572), a copy of which is in the Library. Comparable information for individual districts could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Income Support

Mr. Lester: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many and what percentage of families with children in Northern Ireland are expected to be *(a)* entitled to and *(b)* claiming income support or family credit in 1988-89 and 1989-90.

Mr. Needham: Reliable information on those entitled to these benefits is not available. The available information is as follows:

Families with children under 19 receiving:	*Numbers (estimated)*	[1]*Per cent.*
Income support:		
1988-89	55,600	26
1989-90	55,500	25
Family credit:		
1988-89	20,000	9
1989-90	30,000	14

[1]Represents the percentage of all families receiving child benefit.

Disabled Persons (Staff)

317. **Mr. Sean Hughes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what percentage of his Department's staff are classed as disabled.

Mr. Ian Stewart: Within the Northern Ireland Civil Service the number of officers who have identified themselves as being registered as disabled persons under the Disabled Persons Act (Northern Ireland) 1945 was 1·4 per cent. at 1 January 1988.

The Northern Ireland Civil Service, conscious that this percentage may understate the true extent of disabled people among its staff, is currently carrying out an exercise to obtain more accurate statistics. The results of this exercise are expected to be available next year.

None of the Home Civil Service staff of the Northern Ireland Office is currrently registered as disabled.

Housng Executive

Mr. Hume: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what damage, disruptions or losses have been suffered by the Housing Executive in respect of their offices, sites vehicles and housing stock as a result of paramilitary activities.

Mr. Needham *[holding answer 8 December 1988]:* This is a matter for the Northern Ireland Housing Executive. I am advised by the Chief Executive that the information is not readily available and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

HEALTH

Hospital Beds

Mr. James Lamond: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many hospital beds there were in *(a)* the Oldham health authority area, *(b)* the Greater

Manchester area and *(c)* the rest of the country in May 1979 and at the latest date for which figures are available; what was the percentage change; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Currie: The information requested is shown in the table.

Average daily available beds, Oldham HA, Greater Manchester and the rest of England, 1979 and 1987-88

	1979	*1987-88*	*Percentage change*
Oldham	1,045	993	−5
Greater Manchester	17,618	16,202	−8
Rest of England	326,419	280,575	−14

Because of advances in medical treatment, periods of in-patient care have reduced and more patients are now treated as out-patients or on a day care basis. The latest figures available centrally show that patient activity increased as follows;

NHS hospitals activity, in Oldham, Greater Manchester and in rest of England

In-patients treated	*1979*	[1]*1987-88*	*Percentage change*
Oldham	23,542	30,707	30·4
Greater Manchester	350,892	444,237	26·6
Rest of England	5,049,228	6,175,117	22·3
Out patients attendences (total)			
Oldham	140,972	158,079	12·1
Greater Manchester	2,363,459	2,602,003	10·1
Rest of England	31,736,266	34,148,210	7·6
Day cases		*1986*	
Oldham	2,085	3,612	73·2
Greater Manchester	45,283	83,009	83·3
Rest of England	546,778	967,149	76·9

[1] Patients attending out-patient clinics soley for attention of a minor nature and not seen by a doctor, eg. to have a dressing changed, are no longer counted. Prior to 1987-88 new outpatient attendances were first attendances at an individual hospital for a continuous series of treatments, but are now first attendances within the district when the attendance has not been initiated by the consultant or one of his staff.

Day case figures for 1987-88 are not yet available. 1986 day case figures are given in the table.

Radiographers

Mr. Battle: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many cancer patients attending Cookridge hospital are not receiving treatment as a result of the recent shortage of radiographers.

Mrs. Currie: None. I understand that some treatments recently had to be rescheduled, because of equipment malfunction. The hon. Member may wish to contact the Leeds western health authority for a full explanation.

Hospital Services (Epping)

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what information he has on the alternative arrangements to be put into effect to provide National Health Service hospital services for patients in Epping in the event of services being reduced at St. Margaret's hospital.

Mrs. Currie: We announced approval in principle in May this year for a £30 million scheme for the Princess Alexandra hospital, Harlow, to develop it as the district general hospital for West Essex and enable improved facilities to be provided for the population of the district, including patients in Epping. The centralisation of acute facilities from the Herts and Essex hospital, Bishops Stortford, and St. Margaret's hospital, Epping, to the Princess Alexandra has been accepted by the local community health council. Services remaining at St. Margaret's, after the redevelopment is complete, will include beds and a day hospital for the elderly and the elderly mentally ill, out-patient clinics and a breast screening unit.

Preventive Medicine

Ms. Quin: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what steps his Department is considering to promote preventive medicine.

Mrs. Currie: We recognise the essential role that preventive medicine has to play in improving people's health. A wide range of preventive activity including vaccination and immunisation, health screening, health education, genetic counselling and medical research is already taking place.

We consider that prevention is not simply a question of medicine but of lifestyle. In the coming months we will be launching the next phase of the national heart disease prevention campaign "Look After Your Heart", and we will be playing an active part in next year's "Europe Against Cancer" initiative. Following the successful launch of the measles, mumps and rubella vaccine last October we hope to achieve target uptake of 90 per cent. In June we are planning a conference on the health of elderly people entitled "The Time Of Your Life". We expect to receive advice in the first part of next year from the standing medical advisory committee on the cost-effectiveness of cholesterol screening.

Implementation of health authorities' plans for prevention will continue to be monitored through the ministerial review process to ensure they are effective, well-organised and reflect the pattern of preventable disease in the country.

Babies

Sir Bernard Braine: To ask the Secretary of State for Health whether the recommendation that all babies should be fully examined within 24 hours of birth made in the third report from the maternity services advisory committee has yet been implemented.

Mrs. Currie: Yes, as far as we are aware. All babies are given a physical examination by the midwife attending the birth. We have no details at the moment on the examinations carried out by the doctor.

It is however, the responsibility of the local health authorities through the maternity services liaison committees to ensure that recommendation A.16 is implemented.

Child Health

Sir Bernard Braine: To ask the Secretary of State for Health when he expects to receive the report of the joint working party on child health surveillance.

Mrs. Currie: I understand that the report of the independent joint working party on child health

surveillance, "Health for All Children", is due to be published by the end of February 1989 and I expect to receive a copy at that time.

Asset Registers

Mr. Butler: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will compile asset registers of land owned by the National Health Service.

Mrs. Currie: We do. Registers are compiled by district valuers and are kept at the Department. We also require health authorities to keep similar records including open market value and existing use value.

Mercury (Fish)

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what information he has as to the acceptable level of mercury in fish beyond which they become unfit for human consumption.

Mrs. Currie *[pursuant to her reply, 29 November 1988, c. 198]:* The provisional tolerable weekly intake of mercury should have been given as 0·3 mg per week of which no more than 0·2 mg should be organic mercury.

TRANSPORT

Roads

Mr. Pike: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how much he has budgeted for motorway and trunk road renewal in each of the three years 1989-90, 1990-91 and 1991-92.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The public expenditure provision for renewal of motorways and other trunk roads for the years in question is:

Year	*£ million*
1989-90	240
1990-91	249
1991-92	253

In addition the provision for the renewal and strengthening of bridges associated with those roads is:

Year	*£ million*
1989-90	101
1990-91	103
1991-92	101

Disabled Persons (Staff)

Mr. Sean Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what percentage of his Department's staff are classed as disabled.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: As at 1 December 1988, the percentage of staff classed as disabled was 3·40 per cent. including 1·27 per cent. registered disabled persons.

Coach Drivers

Mr. Adley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a statement on the role of his Department's officials in assisting the Kent police to apprehend 41 coach drivers travelling from France, most of whose vehicles were overladen with excess beer, wines and spirits; if he will bring this behaviour to the attention of the relevant licensing authority; if he will take steps to reduce to 50 mph the speed limit on coaches; and if he will restrict coaches to the inside two lanes of three-lane motorways in order to reduce intimidatory driving.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The check on coaches which took place between the hours of 1800 to midnight on Saturday 3 December was organised by the Department's traffic examiners in conjunction with the Kent police. Traffic examiners weighed all the coaches stopped and directed by the police to the A2 Boughton weighbridge site near Canterbury. Documents including tachograph charts were also checked. The Department's vehicle examiners also attended to carry out safety and mechanical checks on the coaches. Appropriate prosecution action will be taken in the name of the South Eastern Traffic Commissioner against bus operators and drivers who were found to be in contravention of the law.

We have no plans to reduce coach speed limits or to restrict coaches to the two left-hand lanes of three-lane motorways.

Regulations require British coaches to be fitted with road speed limiters. These limiters will physically limit coach speeds to the legal maximum of 70 mph. The fitment programme will be phased over the next few years.

Many millions of motorway miles are already travelled safely by coaches.

Hammersmith Broadway

Mr. Soley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport whether his Department has made any assessment of the implications for traffic management in London of the re-development of Hammersmith broadway.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: No. The London borough of Hammersmith and Fulham is both the highway authority and the planning authority for the Hammersmith broadway redevelopment.

Mr. Soley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport whether his Department has made any assessment of the implications for access for emergency service vehicles to the Hammersmith transport interchange of the proposed development of Hammersmith broadway.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The borough is both planning and highway authority. I understand that the London fire brigade has been involved in discussions about access for emergency service vehicles with the developers and the London borough of Hammersmith and Fulham.

Designs for the underground station will be submitted for approval to the railways inspectorate, which will consult the London fire brigade before making recommendations to me.

Accidents (Heavy Goods Vehicles)

Mr. Mullin: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many people were killed in accidents involving heavy goods vehicles for each year between 1979 and 1987.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The table shows the number of fatalities in accidents involving heavy goods vehicles in Great Britain between 1979 and 1987.

Fatalities in accidents involving heavy goods vehicles: Great Britain: 1977-1987

	Number
1979	1,063
1980	859
1981	851
1982	875
1983	811
1984	876
1985	811
1986	908
1987	910

These numbers have to be associated with distance travelled to establish the trend in the casualty rate.

London Assessment Studies

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many houses would be demolished and how much expenditure would be involved if he decided to proceed with the schemes contained in option 10 of the south London assessment study, option 5 of the east London assessment study, option 3A of the west London assessment study and option E of the south circular assessment study as a package.

Mr. Peter Bottomley *[holding answer 8 December 1988]:* Information on the effects of the preliminary options is contained in the consultants working papers, copies of which have been placed in the Library. The options now being developed are aimed at improving conditions within each study area. It would not be appropriate to package them in the way suggested.

SCOTLAND

Pupils (Intellect)

Mrs. Margaret Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list in the *Official Report* the total number of pupils in each region and division whose intellectual functioning has been defined as *(a)* normal or above normal, *(b)* moderately impaired, *(c)* severely impaired or *(d)* profoundly impaired.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The range of intellectual functioning of pupils in local authority special schools and departments at September 1987 is set out in the table. Information on pupils in other schools is not available.

	Normal or Above	*Moderate Impairment*	*Severe Impairment*	*Profound Impairment*	*Total*
Borders	10	130	30	—	180
Central	20	240	60	60	380
Dumfries/Galloway	50	50	40	20	160
Fife	150	320	120	40	630
Grampian	130	550	210	110	1,000
Highland	10	270	90	40	400
Lothian	430	760	240	110	1,550
Strathclyde	860	2,170	680	490	4,200
Tayside	50	300	80	50	480
Orkney	—	—	—	—	10
Shetland	—	—	—	10	10
Western Isles	—	20	10	—	30
All Scotland	1,710	4,810	1,570	930	9,020
Argyll and Bute	10	50	20	10	90
Ayr	30	300	70	90	490
Dunbarton	40	250	90	80	450
Glasgow (City)	380	870	190	150	1,790
Lanark	130	440	200	80	840
Renfrew	80	270	110	90	550

Fish Farms

Dr. Godman: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will indicate what forms of assessment of the effects of predation by birds and seals at marine fish farms are taking place; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: In-house and externally commissioned research is in progress at present. The need for further research will be considered in the light of results from current studies.

Dr. Godman: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland under what circumstances the killing of predatory birds by marine fish farmers is sanctioned by him; if he is in a position to indicate the number and species of birds so killed in each of the past five years; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: No licences have been granted to permit marine fish farmers to shoot predatory birds in coastal waters.

Seal Conservation

Dr. Godman: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what use he has made of his powers, under the Conservation of Seals Act 1970, to grant to marine fish farmers licences for the shooting of seals; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: My right hon. and learned Friend has granted licences to marine fish farmers only under section 10(1)(c)(i) of the Conservation of Seals Act 1970 for the prevention of damage to fisheries.

Dr. Godman: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland with which interested parties he consults before issuing, under the Conservation of Seals Act 1970, licences to kill seals; how many of these licences have been issued in each of the past 17 years; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: My right hon. and learned Friend consults the Natural Environment Research Council on his policy regarding the granting of licences to shoot seals.

I regret that information relating to the numbers of licences issued in each of the past 17 years is not available.

Dr. Godman: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) if he has any plans to introduce legislation to exempt fishermen and marine fish farmers under section 9 of the Conservation of Seals Act 1970, from the prohibition order, issued under section 3 of the aforesaid Act, which outlaws the killing, injuring or taking of common seals around the coast-line; and if he will make a statement;

(2) if he has any plans to seek to amend the Conservation of Seals act 1970, in terms of the current licensing system and other matters relating to the indentification of the periods of protection, afforded at different times of the year to the grey seal and the common seal; and if he will make a statement;

(3) if he has plans to seek to extend section 9 of the Conservation of Seals Act 1970, so as to cover marine fish-farm cages; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: My right hon. and learned Friend has no present plans to amend the Conservation of Seals Act 1970.

Pesticides

Dr. Godman: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he has any proposals to prohibit the use of the pesticides Dieldrin and Aldrin; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: On 1 August 1988 the Ministers responsible for matters relating to the control of pesticides announced their decision to revoke all remaining approvals for the use of products containing Dieldrin by 30 March 1989 and for the use of products containing Aldrin by 31 December 1992.

Forestry Commission

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what has been the value of land sold by the Forestry Commission in each year since 1981.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Receipts from the disposal of land and property since 1981 have been as follows:

Year to 31 March	*£ million*
1982	6·9
1983	13·8
1984	23·6
1985	22·1
1986	17·0
1987	14·7
1988	12·9

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what proportion, by area and percentage, respectively, of the land sold by the Forestry Commission in each year since 1981, was *(a)* under plantations, *(b)* other woodland, *(c)* to be planted, *(d)* agricultural and grazing and *(e)* unplantable.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The areas of land sold by the Forestry Commission since 1981 which were under plantations or were to be planted, and the percentages of the total land sales represented by these two categories, were as follows:

Year to 31 March	*Plantations*		*To be planted*	
	Area (hectares)	*Percentage of total land sales*	*Area (hectares)*	*Percentage of total land sales*
1982	1,821	17·5	526	5·0
1983	5,490	45·3	1,142	9·4
1984	15,363	34·5	1,144	2·6
1985	13,889	48·1	2,183	7·6
1986	7,291	44·0	1,023	6·2
1987	5,518	50·4	668	6·1
1988	5,361	60·0	1,026	11·5

Composite records of sales of other woodland, agricultural and grazing land, and unplantable land are not held centrally, and the information asked for could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what are the areas of land, offered for sale by the Forestry Commission since 1981, which have been bought by *(a)* conservation bodies and *(b)* public bodies; and if he will make a statement.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Comprehensive records of purchasers of land from the Forestry Commission are not held centrally, and the information requested could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Pacemakers

Mr. Allan Stewart: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he has any further information on the alleged shortfall of pacemakers from Greater Glasgow health board; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Further investigation has shown that all the pacemakers for which the board was previously unable to account have been implanted in NHS patients. I regret that the hon. Member for Strathkelvin and Bearsden (Mr. Galbraith) has chosen to suggest that there might have been any impropriety in their use, and hope that he will apologise to the staff and members of Greater Glasgow health board.

ENERGY

Plutonium

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy why the figure for the amount of plutonium produced by British civil nuclear power stations for the year ended 31 March was rounded up to the nearest 50 kg; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Spicer: The figures have to be rounded to take account of the fact that the plutonium content of irradiated fuel elements is calculated.

Electricity Generation

Mr. Barron: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy how many applications he has received for a licence for new independent power stations; and if he will list the sites, size in mw and proposed base load fuel.

Mr. Michael Spicer: Under existing legislation, private generators do not require a licence from Government to build or operate an independent power station but they must obtain all the relevant local planning consents.

Mr. Blair: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what is the cost of one kilo watt hour unit of electricity generated by *(a)* coal, *(b)* oil, *(c)* gas and *(d)* nuclear power, respectively.

Mr. Michael Spicer: This is an operational matter for the Central Electricity Generating Board. I have asked the chairman to write to the hon. Member.

Mr. Blair: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what proportion of electricity generation depends upon nuclear power for each country within the European Community.

Mr. Michael Spicer: I refer the hon. Member to the answer given to my hon. Friend the Member for Devon, North (Mr. Speller) on 14 November 1988 at column *422*.

Mr. Blair: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what proportion of the 13 GW extra generating capacity needed by year 2000, as outlined in his White Paper, "Privatising Electricity", he anticipates to be produced by nuclear power.

Mr. Michael Spicer: I refer the hon. Member to the answer that I gave to the hon. Member for Cardiff, West (Mr. Morgan) on 11 May 1988 at column *112*.

Mr. Blair: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy whether he plans to stipulate a minimum or maximum length for contracts between former generating companies and area supply boards; and whether such contracts are to be published.

Mr. Michael Spicer: The Government are seeking a range of contract periods, to enable competition to develop. The terms of the contracts will be commercially confidential.

Mr. Blair: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy how much generation, other than by National Power and Power Generation, he expects by the year 2000.

Mr. Michael Spicer: I refer the hon. Member to the reply that I gave to the hon. Member for Newport, West (Mr. Flynn) on 7 December 1988 at column *193*.

Gas

Mr. Frank Cook: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy whether the twin advanced gas cooled reactor installations at Hartlepool and Heysham A are awaiting licensing consent from Her Majesty's nuclear installations inspectorate, before the operators are permitted to undertake refuelling operations whilst the reactors are on load; whether, currently and since the commissioning of these reactors, each reactor has to be completely closed down for refuelling operations; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Spicer: This is an operational matter for the CEGB. I have asked the chairman to write to the hon. Member.

Electricity Privatisation

Mr. Blair: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy (1) what is the anticipated dividend yield that will be paid to investors in the privatised electricity supply industry;

(2) whether the Government have yet made any provisional estimate of the asset value of the electricity supply industry on privatisation.

Mr. Michael Spicer: It is premature to make any such estimates.

Mr. Blair: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what is the anticipated total staffing level of the office of the Director General of Electricity Supply.

Mr. Michael Spicer: The Electricity Bill currently before the House would provide for the appointment of a Director General of Electricity Supply, who would be supported by the staff of the office of electricity regulation (OFFER). We shall be consulting the Director General, as soon as he is identified, on the level of staffing of his office. We presently anticipate a need for a net increase of about 115 public sector posts. His staff will deal with consumer matters and meter examining as well as the regulation of the industry.

Mr. Blair: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what is his policy towards the European Commission's proposals to harmonise the methods used by energy authorities to calculate prices; what effect the proposals will have on the privatisation of the electricity supply industry; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Spicer: The EC Commission has said that it will shortly be tabling proposals on the transparency of energy prices for major consumers of gas and electricity. These will be carefully considered by the Government.

Mr. Blair: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy how the merit order system for power stations will work in the privatised electricity supply industry.

Mr. Michael Spicer: Stations will be despatched on the basis of prices bid to the National Grid company, so ensuring that demand is met from the cheapest stations while maintaining the stability of the transmission system.

Mr. Blair: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy whether, after electricity privatisation, one area board will be allowed to make a takeover bid for another area board.

Mr. Michael Spicer: Arrangements will be made to safeguard the independence of the privatised distribution companies.

Mr. Blair: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what, after electricity privatisation, the consequences will be of the insolvency of an area board.

Mr. Michael Spicer: As with previously privatised industries, such as British Gas, existing insolvency law would apply.

Mr. Blair: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy whether he has made any estimate of the impact of 1992 and the single European market on the ability of the Government to prevent nationals of other EEC member countries owning shares in a privatised electricity supply industry.

Mr. Michael Spicer: It is not the Government's intention to prevent nationals of other EEC member states from owning shares in the privatised electricity supply industry.

Mr. Blair: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he will estimate the cost of transferring the national grid to the distribution companies.

Mr. Michael Spicer: The benefits of promoting competition will outweigh any costs that might arise.

Mr. Blair: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy when he anticipates publishing the regulatory framework for prices under the Electricity Bill.

Mr. Michael Spicer: We intend to make draft licences, which will include descriptions of the price controls, available for the Committee stage of the Electricity Bill.

Mr. Blair: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy whether, after electricity privatisation, contracts between large users direct with generators will be subject to any regulation.

Mr. Michael Spicer: No. Competition law will apply to such contracts but the licences issued to National Power and PowerGen will contain a non-discrimination provision.

Generating Costs

Mr. Blair: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy whether he has made any estimate of the anticipated generating and operating cost per kilowatt hour of *(a)* nuclear power and *(b)* fossil fuel power up to the year 2000.

Mr. Michael Spicer: This is an operational matter for the Central Electricity Generating Board. I have asked the chairman to write to the hon. Member.

Atomic Energy

Mr. Blair: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what was the budget allocation to atomic energy research made by his Department for each financial year from 1979-80 to 1988-89; and what is his Department's anticipated expenditure for 1989-90.

Mr. Michael Spicer: Expenditure was, and is expected to be, as follows:

	£ million
1979-80	146
1980-81	188
1981-82	203
1982-83	212
1983-84	204
1984-85	196
1985-86	190
1986-87	158
1987-88	141
1988-89	145

Notes:

Figures are rounded to the nearest million.

The 1979-80 and 1980-81 figures are outturn figures taken from the 1983-84 Public Expenditure White Paper.

Outturn figures for 1981-82 to 1986-87 are based on the Cabinet Office annual reviews of Government funded R and D which were first published in 1984.

Figures for the years before 1986-87, when the United Kingdom Atomic Energy Authority was put on a trading fund basis, include some expenditure on non-R and D work.

Figures for 1987-88 and 1988-89 are the costs incurred and expected to be incurred by the UKAEA on nuclear R and D work for the Department.

Expenditure forecasts for 1989-90 will be published in the 1989 Public Expenditure White Paper.

Energy Efficiency Office

Mr. Blair: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what was the budget allocated for the Energy Efficiency Office for each financial year from 1979-80 to 1988-89; and what is his Department's anticipated expenditure for 1989-90.

Mr. Peter Morrison: The Energy Efficiency Office was established on 31 October 1983. Its net budget allocation has been as follows:

	£ million
1984-85	16·8
1985-86	20·5
1986-87	26·0
1987-88	24·5
1988-89	20·8

Figures for my Department's estimated expenditure for 1989-90 will be published in the Public Expenditure White Paper.

Advanced Gas Cooled Reactors

Mr. Blair: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy how many years the advanced gas cooled reactors at *(a)* Dungeness, *(b)* Hartlepool and *(c)* Heysham 1 are behind schedule; and what has been the cost of delay for each individual advanced gas cooled reactor to date.

Mr. Michael Spicer: This is an operational matter for the Central Electricity Generating Board. I have asked the chairman to write to the hon. Member.

Sulphur Emissions

Mr. Blair: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if his Department has any plans to research into magnetohydrodynamics as a means of reducing sulphur emissions from coal-fired power stations.

Mr. Michael Spicer: Magnetohydrodynamics is not considered to have sufficient promise to justify the substantial funds required to develop it. The advanced coal based generators—such as pressurised fluidised bed and the integrated coal gasification combined cycle generators—reported in Energy Paper 56 (a copy of which is in the Library of the House) are considered preferable and sufficient to meet United Kingdom requirements.

Electricity Industry

Mr. Blair: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what were the staffing levels for the electricity supply industry for each financial year from 1979-80 to 1988-89; and what is the planned level for 1989-90.

Mr. Michael Spicer: The number of staff employed by the electricity supply industry of England and Wales in post on 31 March of each year from March 1979 to March 1988 and the planned levels for March 1989 and 1990 are as follows:

Year	*Total Staff (all grades)*
Outturn[1]	
March	
1979	159,825
1980	158,780
1981	154,910
1982	146,655
1983	141,385
1984	137,210
1985	133,718
1986	131,446
1987	131,087
1988	130,217
Planned[2]	
March	
1989	130,200
1990	129,580

[1] Data from the Handbook of Electricity Supply Industry Statistics, published by The Electricity Council.
[2] Industry forecasts.

Electricity Disconnections

Mr. Blair: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy how many domestic electricity disconnections were there in the years 1979-80 to the most recent year for which figures are available.

Mr. Michael Spicer: The Electricity Council informs me that the figures for disconnections in England and Wales are as follows:

Year	*Number*
1979-80	98,894
1980-81	118,221
1981-82	108,266
1982-83	91,334
1983-84	90,722
1984-85	91,039
1985-86	102,714
1986-87	98,823
1987-88	88,870

There is a continued downward trend in disconnections and in the 12 months ending 31 October 1988 the total was 80,592, the lowest since records began in 1976.

Advertising and Promotional Budgets

Mr. Blair: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what is the advertising and promotional budget for the Central Electricity Generating Board, including the area boards for the years 1978-79 to 1987-88; and what is the anticipated expenditure for the next five years.

Mr. Michael Spicer: This is an operational matter for the industry. I have asked the chairman of the Electricity Council to write to the hon. Member.

Mr. Blair: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what is the advertising and promotional expenditure by his Department for each of the last five and next five years.

Mr. Parkinson: Advertising and promotional expenditure for the years 1986-87 and 1987-88 was £37 million (of which £24·6 million represents advertising costs associated with the privatisation of British Gas) and £5·6 million respectively. The provision for 1988-89 is £6·5 million. It is not possible to identify separately all advertising and promotional expenditure before 1986-87. Forecasts of the Department's advertising and promotional expenditure for future years are not available. Further information on the Department's publicity budget will be published in the 1989 public expenditure White Paper early in the new year.

Nuclear Plants

Mr. Blair: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy how much money has been set aside by the Central Electricity Generating Board in each of the last 10 years for *(a)* the decommissioning of nuclear plant and *(b)* the disposal of nuclear waste.

Mr. Michael Spicer: These figures are available in the CEGB's report and accounts for the relevant years, copies of which are in the Library of the House.

Pressurised Water Reactors

Mr. Blair: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what is the anticipated cost of building the family of four new pressurised water reactors.

Mr. Michael Spicer: This is a matter for the CEGB.

Power Stations (Construction)

Mr. Blair: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he will list the major projects in hand for the construction of power stations by companies or groups other than National Power and Power Generators.

Mr. Michael Spicer: The details of the proposed projects are provided to the Department on a commercial-in-confidence basis. It is for the companies to announce details of their plans.

Electricity Supply (Channel Link)

Mr. Blair: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he has plans to increase the capacity of the Channel link between the Central Electricity Generating Board and Electricite de France.

Mr. Michael Spicer: It is for the CEGB and, after privatisation, the successor companies to bring forward any proposals for a second link.

Coal-fired Power Stations

Mr. Blair: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what information he has on the intention of the Central Electricity Generating Board on proceeding with the coal-fired power stations at West Burton and Kingsnorth.

Mr. Michael Spicer: My right hon. Friend is currently considering the CEGB's application for consent to construct a coal-fired power station at West Burton.

He has received no application from the CEGB for consent to construct a coal fired power station at Kingsnorth. It is for the CEGB to decide whether and when to apply for consent to construct any new power station.

Chapelcross Nuclear Installation

Mr. Doran: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy (1) what contribution has been made by the Central Electricity Generating Board towards the cost of decommissioning the Chapelcross nuclear installation; and what further contributions the board or its successors will make towards these costs;

(2) what contributions have been made by Departments of State and public corporations, other than the South of Scotland Electricity Board, the North of Scotland Hydro-Electric Board and the Central Electricity Generating Board, to the costs of decommissioning the Chapelcross nuclear installation; and what further contributions such bodies will make towards these costs;

(3) on what basis the various contributions towards the costs of decommissioning the Chapelcross nuclear installation, whether from the Scottish electricity boards, the Central Electricity Generating Board, or from other public bodies and Departments of State, have been calculated;

(4) what contributions have been made by the South of Scotland Electricity Board and the North of Scotland Hydro-Electric Board towards the cost of decommissioning the Chapelcross nuclear installation; and what further contributions the boards or their successors will make towards these costs.

Mr. Michael Spicer: Neither the Central Electricity Generating Board nor its successors has any liability for the costs which will be incurred in decommissioning the nuclear facilities at Chapelcross.

No contributions have yet been made by customers towards the costs of decommissioning the Chapelcross facilities, since these facilities are still in operation. The eventual contributions of British Nuclear Fuels plc and other bodies towards these costs will be assessed on the basis of the relevant share of usage of the facilities. Where appropriate, provisions have been made for such decommissioning in the accounts of the bodies concerned on the basis of current cost estimates.

EMPLOYMENT

Training Statistics (Nottingham)

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will publish his Department's operating statistics for each completed month of employment training for Nottingham, specifying *(a)* the end of month profile for each region, *(b)* the actual number in training in each region, *(c)* the number of starts in each month in each region, *(d)* the number of leavers each month, *(e)* how many of the trainees are on employment training training allowance and *(f)* how many are still receiving wages from the Community programme.

Mr. Nicholls: Most of the information requested is given in the following table. Regional profiles for starts are used for internal management purposes only. It is not yet possible to give figures on employment training leavers as the Training Agency's management information system does not differentiate between those who were on the new job training scheme or the community programme and those who were entrants to employment training.

Employment Training Statistics—Nottingham

	September 1988	*October 1988*
Starts	319	667
In-training on allowances	970	1,319
In-training on CP wages	2,513	2,118
Total in-training	3,483	3,437

Vacancies (London)

Mr. John Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will make a statement on the level of unfilled vacancies in Greater London.

Mr. Lee: In October 1988 the number of unfilled vacancies registered at jobcentres in the Greater London region, seasonally adjusted was 29,000. This figure does not include all vacancies in the economy. A survey conducted in June 1988 showed that there were around 150,000 vacancies in total in Greater London, around four and a half times the level of vacancies recorded at the jobcentre at that time.

Skills Shortages

Mr. Stern: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what proposals he has to reduce skills shortages in British industry; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Cope: I refer my hon. Friend to the chapter on training in the White Paper "Employment in the 1990's" and the statement by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State of Monday 5 December 1988.

Radiation

Mr. Cran: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment when he expects the Health and Safety Commission working group on ionising radiations to report on its review of dose limits for acceptable levels of exposure to radiation.

Mr. Nicholls: The working group on ionising radiation is currently finalising its end of year report which will include advice on dose limitation. The report will be submitted to the Health and Safety Commission in the new year.

Labour Statistics

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment at what time the last set of monthly unemployment figures were made available to the press *(a)* in Nottingham and *(b)* nationally.

Mr. Lee: The latest unemployment figures, both national and regional were first available to all enquirers at 11.30 am on 17 Novermber 1988.

Mr. Leighton: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what is his Department's estimate of the number of economically inactive people who would like a job.

Mr. Lee: It is estimated from the labour force survey (LFS) that in spring 1987 there were 2,180 thousand people without a job who were economically inactive using the ILO/OECD definition—that is, either not seeking or not available for work—aged 16 and over in Great Britain, who said they would like a job.

Playground Accidents

Mr. Robert G. Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will list the number of children who turn up at hospital because of playground accidents for every month since his Department started collecting figures; and if he will make a statement about those figures.

Mr. Nicholls: The table shows the available information. Before 1986 reports of playground injuries cannot be separately identified. While a large number of these major injuries would have required attention at hospital I have no information on the exact numbers. Non-fatal injuries in playgrounds other than those specified as major are not reportable. I shall be writing to the hon. Member about the monthly breakdown of the figures.

Injuries to children, 18 years of age or younger, reported to the Health and Safety Executive's Factory and Agriculture Inspectorates for years beginning 1 April

	1986-87		[1]*1987-88*	
	Fatal	[2]*Major*	*Fatal*	[2]*Major*
Resulting from sports activities in school playgrounds	0	995	2	765
Resulting from indoor and outdoor play activities in school	0	2,161	1	1,234
In playgrounds other than those in schools	1	87	1	84

[1] Provisional
[2] Major injuries as scheduled under the Reporting of Injuries Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations 1986 (RIDDOR).

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Atomic Energy (Departmental Unit)

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many people have been employed in the Atomic Energy (Unit C) section of his Ministry in each of the last 10 years; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Ryder: The information requested is as follows:

	Number
1978-83	3 or 4
1984	6
1985	8
1986	9
1987	14
1988	16

I am satisfied that Unit C of the Ministry's food science division, now known as the food safety (radiation) unit, has been adequately staffed to carry out its duties throughout this period.

Radioactive Caesium Deposition (Cumbria)

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food whether he has made the preliminary contour map of radioactive caesium deposition resulting from the aeriel survey of Cumbria available to all the farmers in the restricted area of that county; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Ryder: No. Only the final report on this survey will be published.

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food whether he will make the preliminary contour map of radioactive caesium deposition resulting from the aerial survey of Cumbria available in the Library; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Ryder: I have nothing to add to the reply that I gave to the hon. Member on 28 November at column *190*.

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many farmers and landowners *(a)* from the restricted area of Cumbria and *(b)* from outside the restricted area attended the meeting at Edenbridge house, Carlisle on 23 November to discuss the aerial survey of post-Chernobyl radioactivity; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Ryder: The farmers and landowners who attended the meeting on 23 November were chosen by their representative organisations. I understand that all of them farm within the original restricted area of Cumbria, though the farms of three of them are no longer under restriction.

Veterinary Products

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food when his powers to ban a veterinary product if that product has satisfied the Veterinary Products Committee in terms of its safety, quality and efficacy and has therefore been granted a product licence were last used; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Donald Thompson: It has rarely been necessary to use my power in this way, the last occasion being The Medicines (Hormones Growth Promoter) (Prohibition of Use) Regulations 1986, re-enacted in 1988, made to implement a Community decision which we had contested.

Pollen Beetle

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what steps his Ministry is taking to contain the spread of the metogethes, or pollen beetle.

Mr. Ryder: The pollen beetle is indigenous to and widespread in the United Kingdom. There are a number of approved pesticides which are effective against it.

Improvement Scheme

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what was the expenditure by county in England and Wales under the agricultural improvement scheme for each of the last three years.

Mr. Ryder: I regret that the information is not available in the form requested.

Total expenditure under the Agriculture Improvement Scheme was as follows:

£ million	*1985-86*	*1986-87*	*1987-88*	[1]*1988*
England	0·127	6·670	14·572	4·672
Wales	0·054	3·249	5·88	1·396

[1] April to June

Percentage distribution by Divisional Office was as follows:

Division	*Financial year 1986-87 (includes any 1985-86 expenditure) percentage*	*Financial year 1987-88 percentage*	*June quarter 1988 percentage*
Beverley	7·34	5·52	6·21
Carlisle	4·75	10·61	9·22
Newcastle	6·14	7·10	3·95
Northallerton	9·67	8·81	7·66
Crewe	7·99	6·23	7·19
Nottingham	5·29	5·57	6·86
Worcester	3·44	4·63	5·22
Preston	13·74	7·32	6·13
Lincoln	3·07	2·61	4·63
Chelmsford	3·30	6·88	10·69
Huntingdon	1·77	1·96	0·61
Norwich	1·89	2·25	2·57
Guildford	3·69	4·68	6·98
Maidstone	0·99	3·36	1·94
Oxford	2·14	1·48	0·85
Exeter	12·88	8·66	6·35
Gloucester	3·50	3·62	3·31
Taunton	4·45	3·46	4·56
Truro	3·96	5·25	5·07
	100·00	100·00	100·00
Caernarvon	8·79	11·17	11·16
Cardiff	3·06	8·93	3·07
Carmarthen	49·90	38·65	29·81
Llandrindod Wells	32·91	34·00	45·91
Ruthin	5·34	7·25	10·05
	100·00	100·00	100·00

Chickens (Salmonella Enteritidis)

Mr. Alan W. Williams: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many chickens slaughtered for meat are tested for the presence of salmonella enteritidis; and how many are found to carry the bacteria.

Mr. Donald Thompson: Testing is not a statutory requirement and no firm information is available. Advice has been issued to enforcement authorities on the identification and rejection of birds showing visible signs of salmonella enteritidis at post-mortem inspection. We have asked the industry to consider urgently what other steps can be taken. Salmonella is destroyed if poultry is cooked properly.

SOCIAL SECURITY

Cash Limits

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security on which social security benefits expenditure is cash-limited; and which are not so limited.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: None.

Child Benefit

Mr. Battle: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many *(a)* fathers and *(b)* mothers claim child benefit.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Information available relates to men and women rather than fathers and mothers—child benefit is sometimes claimed by someone other than the parent, for example a grandparent. In Great Britain at 31 December 1987, about 135,000 child benefit claimants were men and about 6,545,000 claimants were women.

Sir Ian Gilmour: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what was the rate of child benefit in 1979; and by what percentage the rate has increased between April 1979 and April 1988.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The April 1979 rate of child benefit was £4.00; the increase in the rate between that date and April 1988 was 81.3 per cent.

Disability Benefit

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many claims in Stoke-on-Trent, North for disability benefit and for reduced earnings allowance are currently pending; what is the average length of time claimants in Stoke-on-Trent, North are having to wait from the date when their claim is first submitted to the date when the medical examination is done; what is the average waiting time between the receipt by his Department of the medical examination report and the payment of benefit; if he will consider paying disability benefit and reduced earnings allowance in cases which are pending; and how many consultants are currently available to undertake medical examinations to claimants in Stoke-on-Trent, North.

Mr. Scott: Claims from people living in Stoke-on-Trent, North constituency are dealt with by Stoke North local office, but their boundaries are not coterminous. The information which can be provided without incurring disproportionate cost is as follows.

As at 6 December, Stoke-on-Trent, North local office had 68 claims for disablement benefit and reduced earnings allowance at the stage of initial enquiries and which had yet to be medically examined.

Because payment of benefit is directly linked to an initial medical assessment of the degree of disablement, payment of benefit pending that assessment would not be appropriate.

There are 79 NHS consultants in the Stoke-on-Trent area who may be asked to carry out medical examinations of claimants.

Crisis Loans

Mr. Battle: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security why local offices of his Department will not give crisis loan applications forms to local advice agencies.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Local offices of the Department are authorised to issue representative samples of social fund forms, including the crisis loan application form, to local advice agencies. I am satisfied that this arrangement is operating effectively. To issue other than representative quantities would be counter-productive as both the forms and the information contained within them are constantly under review.

Cold Weather Payments

Mr. Amos: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will make a statement on the relative merits of *(a)* the Leeming and *(b)* the Newcastle weather stations to determine the eligibility for cold weather payments for people in the Hexham constituency.

Mr. Scott: The Newcastle weather station is not used for the purposes of the social fund cold weather payments

scheme since its location in the City tends to make it warmer than the area covered by the Department's local offices in the Hexham constituency. The weather station at Leeming, in the Vale of York, though further away, experiences temperature more representative of the Hexham constituency.

Invalid Care Allowance

Mr. Alfred Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what action he is taking to trace the women who are entitled to back-payments of the invalid care allowance in consequence of the decision by the European Court of Justice in the case of Lucy Mabel Hood of Horsham:; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Scott: The case of Mrs. Hood's claim to invalid care allowance has not been before the European Court of Justice. She was however recently awarded benefit by a Social Security commissioner. We are now considering carefully the wider implications of the commissioner's decision.

Income Support

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he intends to implement the recommendation in the report "I can't go back to Mum and Dad", published by Barnados of a premium payment for care leavers; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: We are monitoring the impact of the reformed benefit on all income support recipients, including the young people covered by the report. Once that exercise has been completed, we shall consider what, if anything, needs to be done.

Retirement Pension

Sir Ian Gilmour: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what was the basic national insurance pension in 1958 *(a)* as a percentage of average earnings in 1958 and *(b)* in 1988 prices and as a percentage of average earnings in 1988.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: In January 1958 the full basic national insurance retirement pension was 19·8 per cent. of the average earnings of all male manual workers. In April 1988 it was 20·5 per cent. The full basic pension in 1958 at 1988 prices was £21·75.

Mortgage Interest

Mr. Fatchett: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what would be *(a)* the overall varying and *(b)* benefit to the Exchequer for 1989-90 from calculating benefit increases on the retail prices index calculated without the inclusion of mortgage interest payments.

Mr. Scott *[holding answer 6 December 1988]:* Between September 1987 and September 1988 the retail prices index excluding the cost of mortgage interest payments rose by 5·2 per cent. If the April 1989 uprating has been calculated using this figure the cost would have been reduced by around £160 million, as shown in the table:

Benefit	*£ million*
Retirement pension	− 137
Widows benefit	− 6
Unemployment benefit	− 6
Invalidity benefit	− 26
Attendance allowance	− 8
Mobility allowance	− 5
Other benefits	− 13
Income support	+ 32
Rent rebate and allowance	+ 10
Total	− 159

Written Answers to Questions

Monday 12 December 1988

ATTORNEY-GENERAL

Patrick Ryan

64. **Mr. Baldry:** To ask the Attorney-General if he will make a statement as to the progress of the extradition of Patrick Ryan from the Republic of Ireland.

The Attorney-General: I refer my hon. Friend to the answers which I gave to the private notice question tabled by the right hon. and learned Member for Aberavon (Mr. Morris) on 1 December and on 7 December to my hon. Friend the Member for Eastbourne (Mr. Gow). At present, I have no further developments to report.

Extradition

65. **Mr. Harry Greenway:** To ask the Attorney-General if he will make a statement on the operation of extradition procedures between the United Kingdom and other countries; and if he will make a statement.

The Attorney-General: Where the United Kingdom has an extradition treaty with a foreign state other than a member of the Commonwealth, the provisions of that treaty and of the Extradition Act 1870 presently apply. With effect from a day to be appointed by my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary provision for new extradition arrangements with foreign states will be made by part I of the Criminal Justice Act 1988.

Extradition procedures involving a fugitive from a Commonwealth country apprehended here are governed by the Fugitive Offenders Act 1967, and those sought by our own prosecuting authorities who are within the jurisdiction of one of our Commonwealth partners are subject to reciprocal legislation in substantially the same terms.

Finally, the position of the Republic of Ireland is different again and is unique. Extradition procedures depend upon reciprocal legislation enacted by both nations in 1965. The Irish Extradition Act was amended in certain significant respects at the end of last year. Our own legislation has not been altered correspondingly.

The Government are satisfied that the procedures under the United Kingdom legislation and associated treaties with foreign states provide the basis for satisfactory extradition arrangements.

66. **Mr. Mullin:** To ask the Attorney-General what is the number of outstanding extradition warrants against residents of the Irish Republic who are wanted in connection with terrorist offences.

The Attorney-General: Warrants issued in the United Kingdom for the arrests of 24 fugitives believed to be in the Republic of Ireland are presently outstanding. I do not think it would be in the public interest to specify how many of these warrants have been issued in connection with terrorist offences.

Entry Clearances

Mr. Darling: To ask the Attorney-General what is the average cost to public funds of all work in connection with an appeal against refusal of entry to the United Kingdom including the time expended in preparing the entry clearance officers' report, the appeal hearing and the ultimate determination of the case.

The Attorney-General: The average cost to public funds of all work in connection with an appeal against refusal of entry to the United Kingdom is not readily identifiable. The Home Office, Foreign and Commonwealth Office and Lord Chancellor's Department all incur expenditure in relation to such appeals but it is not possible for those Departments to identify separately costs attributable to particular types of work related to appeals against refusal of entry only.

However, the average cost to the FCO of preparing an entry clearance officers' explanatory statement in 1987-88 (the last complete year for which figures are available) was estimated to be £85. The average cost to the Lord Chancellor's Department of the work done by the immigration appelate authorities in hearing and determining an appeal against refusal of entry is currently estimated to be £113.

The Coventry Four

Mr. Campbell-Savours: To ask the Attorney-General what discussions took place between his Department and the office of Mr. Justice Leonard in the case of those persons known as the Coventry four.

The Attorney-General: None.

Mortgage Fraud

Mr. Sean Hughes: To ask the Attorney-General whether, in view of the recent court judgments which prevented the police restraining convicted defendants from profiting from assets obtained as a result of mortgage fraud, there are any legislative measures proposed to close this loophole.

Mr. John Patten: I have been asked to reply.

Part VI of the Criminal Justice Act 1988 empowers the courts to restrain and confiscate property in proceedings for serious offences, including offences of the kind alleged in this case. We expect to bring these provisions into force in April 1989.

EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

Disabled Students

Mr. Hannam: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if the disabled students' allowance will remain index linked following the recent Government announcement to introduce top up loans for students.

Mr. Jackson: The amount of the allowance is at the discretion of local education authorities, subject to a ceiling—at present £730. That ceiling is not index linked. No decision has been taken on what it should be in the future.

Student Grants

Mr. Macdonald: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will give the figures for the

percentages of *(a)* full-time students receiving the full grant from their local educational authority, *(b)* students receiving (i) 1 to 9 per cent., (ii) 10 to 19 per cent., (iii) 20 to 29 per cent., (iv) 30 to 39 per cent., (v) 40 to 49 per cent., (vi) 50 to 59 per cent., (vii) 60 to 69 per cent., (viii) 70 to 79 per cent., (ix) 80 to 89 per cent., (x) 90 to 99 per cent., respectively, of their grant from their local educational authority and *(c)* students receiving minimum grant from their local educational authority.

Mr. Jackson: The available data are as follows:

Mandatory awards (England and Wales) 1986-87

	Student numbers	*Percentage of award holders*
Full maintenance	[1]145,307	36·9
Maintenance reduced by assessment:		
(i) Numbers of dependent students with parental contributions of:		
Under £200	26,255	6·7
£201-£400	23,573	6·0
£401-£600	19,114	4·8
£601-£800	17,625	4·5
£801-£1,000	15,932	4·0
£1,001-£1,200	14,140	3·6
£1,201-£1,400	11,924	3·0
£1,401-£1,600	9,491	2·4
£1,601-£1,800	7,600	1·9
£1,801-£2,000	5,331	1·4
Over £2,001	4,323	1·1
(ii) Dependent students who contribute to grant from their own income	509	0·1
(iii) Indpendent students	4,954	1·3
Nil maintenance[2]	[1]88,188	22·4

[1] Includes dependent and independent students.
[2] The minimum grant was abolished with effect from 1985-86. For these students only the course fees are paid.

Teachers (Exchanges)

Mr. Cartwright: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what steps he is taking to encourage the development of the overseas teachers exchange scheme with particular reference to the Commonwealth.

Mrs. Rumbold: The Department continues to encourage the development within available resources of the teacher exchange schemes administered by the Central Bureau for Educational Visits and Exchanges and the League for the Exchange of Commonwealth Teachers. An evaluation of teachers exchange commissioned from the National Foundation for Educational Research is currently under consideration by the Department.

Mr. Cartwright: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what advice he is giving to local education authorities on the formation of local financial management schemes to ensure that the costs of teachers' exchange schemes do not fall disproportionately on individual schools.

Mr. Butcher: My Department's officials have indicated that it will be open to local education authorities to propose, as part of their local management schemes, to retain as an exception from delegation the additional costs incurred by individual schools participating in teacher exchange schemes.

Arts (Young People)

Mr. Fisher: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science which bodies will take over responsibility for the present arts projects for young people after the abolition of the Inner London education authority.

Mrs. Rumbold: The inner London councils will be responsible for all aspects of their education service, including relevant arts activities, from 1 April 1990. Boroughs have an opportunity to set out their development plans, to be published by 28 February 1989, proposals for this aspect of their service. Certain arts projects, including theatres, have already been discussed jointly by the boroughs.

Student Loans

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science (1) what is his policy on providing timely information to local education authorities in order to enable them to respond to individual inquiries about the proposed introduction of top-up loans for students;

(2) what arrangements he made for the distribution of copies of the White Paper "Top-up Loans for Students" to local education authorities; whether there was any delay in this distribution; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Jackson: The Department sent copies of the White Paper to the local authority associations and copies were available for purchase by individual authorities when it was published on 9 November. The Department does not normally distribute copies of priced publications to local education authorities. Local education authorities received copies of the Department's press notice announcing the publication.

Science Base

Mr. Straw: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science when he expects to publish a policy statement on science in the light of discussions on the document "A Strategy for the Science Base" by the Advisory Board for the Research Councils.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: When I am ready to do so.

Capital Spending

Mr. Straw: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what allocations for capital spending, by local education authorities in respect of maintained schools, including voluntary schools, and in respect of grant maintained schools, he is making for 1989-90.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: I expect to announce allocations shortly.

Teachers (Ethnic Minorities)

Mr. Rowe: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what progress he has made towards finalising the guidance given by his Department to education authorities on monitoring the numbers of teachers recruited from ethnic minorities, their promotion pattern and related matters; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Butcher: We expect to issue a circular on the collection of ethnically based statistics on teachers shortly. The circular will require authorities to make first returns to the Department in January 1990.

Bradford City Technology College

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what are the estimated revenue costs for the city technology college in Bradford over each of the 10 years from 1990; and who is going to pay the revenue expenditure over this period.

Mrs. Rumbold: My right hon. Friend will pay a per capita grant to meet the normal running costs of each city technology college in line with average costs in local education authority maintained secondary schools in similar areas. It is too early to say what grant will be payable to the city technology college proposed for Bradford since this will depend on factors yet to be decided, such as the size of the city technology college and the rate at which pupils will be recruited.

PRIME MINISTER

Retired Officers

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Prime Minister (1) what restrictions exist on emigration to a Communist country of retired security service officers.

(2) what restrictions exist covering the emigration of retired officers from the British independent nuclear deterrent programme to the Soviet Union.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Member to my reply to the hon. Member for Newport, West (Mr. Flynn) on 8 December 1988 at column *268*.

Nuclear Accidents

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Prime Minister if any progress has been made in plans to produce a comprehensive co-ordinated arrangement to deal with emergencies arising from nuclear accidents in the United Kingdom, or in nearby countries.

The Prime Minister: Following the Chernobyl accident, extensive consultations were held with emergency services and those authorities who would be involved in dealing with a nuclear accident in the United Kingdom. These consultations have confirmed the availability of contingency plans which would permit an effective response to be made to any nuclear accident, including those with more widespread effects than the specific site and off-site plans are designed to cater for. These plans are kept under continuous review and are regularly exercised.

The procedures for responding to an accident in nearby countries are set out in the Department of the Environment booklet "The National Response Plan and Radioactive Incident Monitoring Network (RIMNET): A Statement of proposals" published by HMSO, copies of which have been placed in the Library of the House. Forty six monitoring stations throughout the United Kingdom became operational in June. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment expects to accept the associated computer and telecommunications systems for phase 1 of RIMNET from the contractor shortly.

Nuclear Initiatives

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Prime Minister if, during her recent visit to Washington DC, she discussed with the President and President-elect Bush any new initiatives to be developed by the Western Alliance on nuclear proliferation, the 1990 non-proliferation treaty review conference, and methods to combat nuclear terrorism.

The Prime Minister: These are subjects which are frequently discussed between the United States and ourselves.

Radioactive Fallout

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Prime Minister if she will make it her policy to request President Gorbachev, during his forthcoming visit to the United Kingdom, to provide financial compensation for British farmers who have suffered economic hardship following contamination of their land and livestock by radioactive fallout from the Chernobyl nuclear accident.

The Prime Minister: President Gorbachev's planned visit to the United Kingdom has had to be postponed because of the devastating earthquake in Armenia. The position with regard to compensation remains as stated in the reply to the hon. Member of 21 July 1986 at column *5*.

Nurses and Midwives (Pay)

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Prime Minister what representations she has received on the nurses and midwives pay award for the coming year; and if she will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: None.

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Prime Minister when she expects to receive the report of the nurses and midwives pay review body for 1989.

The Prime Minister: The review body has been asked to submit its report to me in time for decisions to be made on its recommendations by mid-February.

Official Gifts

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Prime Minister how much has been spent by her office on official gifts for presentation to Heads of Government, Heads of State and officials in each of the three financial years.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave on 8 December at columns *267-8*.

CPRS (Costs)

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Prime Minister how much of the cost of £1,109,000 for the Central Policy Review Staff in 1982-83 was wholly attributable to staffing costs; how many staff were employed; and what were the costs in 1979-80, 1980-81 and 1981-82.

The Prime Minister: Actual figures for the cost of the CPRS are not available and it is not possible, therefore, to identify actual staffing costs. The estimated figure of £1,109,000 quoted in my answer of 1 December 1988 at column *348* is based on a staff-in-post figure for 1982-83 of 35. The estimated costs of the CPRS, on the same basis, for the years prior to 1982-83 are:

	£
1979-80	662,000
1980-81	797,000
1981-82	932,000

No. 10 Downing Street (Furnishing and Decoration)

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Prime Minister if competitive tenders were sought for the current programme of furnishing and decorating of No. 10 Downing street.

The Prime Minister: Schedules of rates for the redecoration of No. 10 Downing street were obtained from two firms, on the basis of which one of them was invited to tender. The tender was evaluated by an independent consultant, and the contract price was determined in further negotiations with the tenderer.

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Prime Minister if she will give a breakdown of the expenditure on *(a)* furnishing and *(b)* decoration at No. 10 Downing street for all items over £500 in the current financial year to date.

The Prime Minister: No. The information is not readily available in the form requested and cannot be provided except at disproportionate cost.

South Africa

Mr. Wilson: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list the occasions on which, during the course of her official duties, she has expressed the view of Her Majesty's Government over the failure of the South African authorities to return four alleged criminals to the United Kingdom to stand trial.

The Prime Minister: This matter was thoroughly aired in the House at the time. I refer the hon. Member to the statement made by the then Minister of State at the Foreign and Commonwealth Office on 23 October 1984 at columns 559-569.

WALES

Health Service (Grading)

Mrs. Clwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what percentage of clinical nursing and midwifery staff have been assimilated to each of the new clinical grades by district health authority.

Mr. Grist: I refer the hon. Lady to the reply given to my hon. Friend the Member for Vale of Glamorgan (Sir R. Gower) on 1 December 1988 at columns *349-50* by my right hon. Friend.

Acid Rain

Mrs. Clwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what steps he is taking to limit acid rain deposition in Wales; and whether he is taking any special measures to limit acid deposition in the Snowdonia national park.

Mr. Grist: Limitation of acid deposition over Wales is dependent upon the reduction of emissions throughout the United Kingdom and Europe. The United Kingdom is party to a European Community directive which commits us to significant reductions in emissions from large combustion plants and sets stringent standards for emissions from new plans. Compliance will entail a substantial effort over and above the existing £1 billion programme by the Central Electricity Generating Board to retrofit 6,000 megawatts of generating capacity with flue gas desulphurisation, and all 12 major coal-fired power stations with low nitrogen oxide burners.

We are also introducing more stringent standards for car exhaust emissions following agreement on a European Community directive in December 1987 and the meeting of Environment Ministers in November this year.

These measures will affect deposition in all parts of Wales including the Snowdonia national park.

Gwent-Glamorgan Archaeological Trust

Mr. Gareth Wardell: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will sanction the grant of £50,000 by the Welsh Development Agency to the Gwent-Glamorgan archaeological trust to enable the wall surrounding the Salt house at Port Eynon, Gower, to be rebuilt.

Mr. Peter Walker: The Welsh Development Agency has been given approval to include the project in its programme.

Mental Health

Mr. Roy Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what provisions the National Health Service in Wales has made for back-up services for mentally ill patients who have been discharged from hospitals.

Mr. Grist: The provision of appropriate services for people with mental illnesses who have been discharged from hospital is a matter for district health authorities in collaboration with a range of other bodies, including social services departments, housing bodies and the primary health care and voluntary sectors. The Welsh Office provides central support for the development of community-based mental illness services. In 1988-89 some £2·4 million of additional central funds have been allocated to Welsh health authorities for new projects for the care of people with mental illnesses.

Mr. Roy Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales, what proposals he has to deal with those mentally ill patients in Wales discharged from hospitals without alternative accommodation.

Mr. Grist: The Department's draft mental illness strategy makes it clear that patients should only be discharged when appropriate alternative services are available to meet their individual needs.

Marketing Initiative

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what is the cost to public funds of his Welsh agricultural and food products marketing initiative announced on 19 July at the Royal Welsh show.

Mr. Peter Walker: I am delighted that all three of the marketing advisers have agreed to carry out their work without salary.

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what are the terms of reference of his Welsh agricultural and food products marketing initiative announced on 19 July at the Royal Welsh show.

Mr. Peter Walker: The marketing advisers have an open remit to use their extensive commercial expertise to

examine the broad range of Welsh agriculture and food processing in Wales and to come forward with as many constructive ideas and proposals as they see fit without any bureaucratic control or direction from me.

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what have been the achievements of his Welsh agricultural and food products marketing initiative announced on 19 July at the Royal Welsh show.

Mr. Peter Walker: So far, the marketing advisers have been examining and evaluating the structure of Welsh production and marketing systems. More specifically they are looking at:

the development of the image of Wales and high quality Welsh products;
the marketing of Welsh lamb and associated products;
the marketing of milk-based products;
fresh foods and farm-scale food speciality operations.

I am confident that the results of this work will become apparent in due course.

Planning Applications

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales whether his Department will now start collating statistics on planning applications in national parks in the same way as the Department of the Environment.

Mr. Grist: The Welsh Office already collates and makes available statistics on planning applications in national parks in Wales.

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what information he has on the percentage of planning applications to his Department granted on appeal; and what percentage of these relate to national parks.

Mr. Grist: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the replies I gave him on 2 December at columns *418-19*.

Rate Support Grant

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales (1) whether he is reconsidering the level of rate support grant to be paid to Cardiff city council for the 1987-88 financial year;

(2) whether he will restore to Cardiff city council the £2·3 million which was due to that council until the moment of his rate support grant statement on 7 July;

(3) in what circumstances the undertaking, made to the House in his statement of 8 December on the rate support grant in Wales, to consider amended figures that local authorities might submit in respect of the 1987-88 financial year and to amend their actual grant as a consequence will apply; and in what circumstances it will not apply.

Mr. Grist: My right hon. Friend's decisions on the grant entitlement of all Welsh local authorities for 1987-88, based on the information known to him and using amount of total expenditure determined in accordance with the provisions of section 1 of and schedule 1 to the Rate Support Grants Act 1988, are set out in the Welsh Rate Support Grant Supplementary (No. 2) Report 1987-88, laid before the House on 8 December. It remains open to all authorities to make further representations as to the total expenditure figures used in calculating their grant entitlement. If my right hon. Friend is able to agree that, under the provisions of the Act, a different amount of total expenditure should be used for an authority, that authority's grant entitlement will be recalculated accordingly.

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what is his policy on local authorities planning their spending ahead in accordance with the details and information provided by him in formal statements to the House and in official communications from his officials to those authorities.

Mr. Grist: Within the statutory framework, local authorities have discretion to determine their own spending plans.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Visa Applications

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, pursuant to his replies to the hon. Member for Edinburgh, Central (Mr. Darling) of 30 November, *Official Report*, columns *310-16*, to what causes he attributes the disproportionately high rate of refusals to applicants in Bangladesh; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Waldegrave: The causes remain those identified in paragraphs 31 to 37 of the Home Affairs Committee's second report on immigration from the Indian sub-continent, Session 1985-86, (House of Commons Paper 67-I).

Albino Cimini

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what action has been taken by Her Majesty's embassy in Ankara concerning Albino Cimini.

Mr. Waldegrave: Mr. Cimini was transferred on 8 December 1988 to the United Kingdom under the provisions of the Council of Europe convention on the transfer of sentenced persons, which came into force for Turkey on 1 January 1988. During his time in prison, Mr. Cimini received monthly consular visits.

Her Majesty's embassy, Ankara, liaised with Turkish and British authorities over Mr. Cimini's application under this convention.

Turkey

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how many United Kingdom subjects are held in Turkish prisons; for what period they have been held; and what representations have been made by embassy officials concerning their plight.

Mr. Waldegrave: There are two British subjects currently in prison in Turkey. One has been on remand for three months awaiting trial, and has legal representation. The other was imprisoned in August 1988. We do not make representations about judicial procedures in other sovereign states. Her Majesty's embassy has provided consular assistance to both prisoners.

Angola

Mr. Nicholas Winterton: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether he has any information on the number of Soviet bloc advisers in Angola at the present time.

Mrs. Chalker: We do not have reliable information on the number of Soviet bloc advisers in Angola.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (1) what progress has been made by Her Majesty's Government in encouraging African intermediaries to promote and facilitate national reconciliation in Angola;

(2) whether Her Majesty's Government will act as an honest broker in bringing the MPLA-PT Government and UNITA together in a conference to promote national reconciliation in Angola;

(3) whether his Department has had any contact with third parties to promote national reconciliation in Angola;

(4) what assistance he will be giving to the organisation and supervision of free and fair elections in Angola.

Mrs. Chalker: We would welcome any move to establish internal peace in Angola which had the support of both sides. We believe, however, that African leaders in the region with whom we are in touch are best placed to mediate. It is not for us to prescribe how elections should be conducted in another sovereign state.

Coventry Four

Mr. Campbell-Savours: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (1) whether representatives of Her Majesty's Government corresponded with representatives of the South African Government of the question of the remanding of those persons known as the Coventry four on charges of breaching arms embargo regulations;

(2) on what date representatives of the South African Government petitioned for the repatriation to South Africa of those persons known as the Coventry four;

(3) what representations were made by the British Government to representatives of the South African Government on the question of action being taken in the case of those persons known as the Coventry four, following upon their repatriation to South Africa;

(4) what representations were received by Her Majesty's Government from the South African embassy on the question of the remanding of those persons known as the Coventry four in March 1984;

(5) in what way relations with Pretoria were affected following upon South Africa's refusal to co-operate with the British courts in the case of those persons known as the Coventry four;

(6) how many summaries of developments on the inquiries by his Department into the case of those persons known as the Coventry four were written; and to whom they were despatched.

Mrs. Chalker: This matter was thoroughly aired in the House at the time. I refer the hon. Member to the statement made by the then Minister of State at the Foreign and Commonwealth Office on 23 October 1984 at columns 559-69.

South Africa

Mr. Wilson: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when he last met the South African ambassador; and what matters were discussed.

Mrs. Chalker: My right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State last met the South African ambassador on 23 September. They discussed a range of issues of common interest.

Mr. Wray: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what assessment he has made of the implications for the nuclear non-proliferation treaty of South Africa having the means and skills to build atomic weapons.

Mr. Waldegrave: We would be seriously concerned by the acquisition of nuclear weapons by a non-nuclear weapon state. We continue to urge South Africa to remove the element of ambiguity in its position by acceding to the non-proliferation treaty and placing all its nuclear facilities under full scope International Atomic Energy Agency safeguards.

Mr. Dassam Abu Sharif (Meeting)

Mr. Arbuthnot: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether he will make a statement on the meeting of the Minister of State, the hon. Member for Bristol, West (Mr. Waldegrave), with Mr. Dassam Abu Sharif on 9 December.

Mr. Waldegrave: This meeting was arranged after Mr. Abu Sharif agreed to make a public statement which met in full the conditions we have maintained since 1985 for ministerial contact with the PLO. This is an important step forward. I am arranging for copies of the agreed text and of the statement as delivered from memory by Mr. Abu Sharif to be placed in the Library of the House.

Mr. Abu Sharif emphasised that the Palestinians were serious in seeking peace with Israel and that the decisions of the PNC in Algiers superseded the PLO charter. I welcomed this and his clarification of the PLO's recognition of Israel and opposition to all forms of terrorism and violence, which I hoped would be confirmed by Mr. Arafat's speech to the United Nations General Assembly in Geneva.

We hope that the Government of Israel will respond constructively and now agree to attend an international conference on the basis of Security Council Resolutions 242 and 338.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Westminster Cemeteries

Mr. Campbell-Savours: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what were the relevant facts which his Department became aware only after 23 November which led an official of his Department to telephone a Westminster City councillor to tell him to disregard the contents of a letter dated 23 November stating that his Department would not be making an inquiry into alleged fraud by companies which purchased land from Westminster council, or through whose hands ownership of land subsequently passed, related to Westminster cemeteries.

Mr. Maude: The relevant facts were media references to a report which might shed light on the affair. This was later identified as a report under section 15(3) of the Local Government Finance Act 1982 to Westminster city council by the auditor appointed by the Audit Commission. In the

telephone conversation to which the hon. Member refers, an official underlined the substance of the Department's letter of 23 November that whilst there were no grounds for a Companies Act investigation any further information would be considered on its merits.

Insolvency Service

Mrs. Clwyd: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster how many items of correspondence he has received about the work of the insolvency service since 1 July from hon. Members.

Mr. Maude: Fifty nine. Ministers have also received other correspondence which has, in part, concerned the work of the insolvency service.

Exports

Dr. Hampson: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will list the 10 largest markets for British exports with the percentage of United Kingdom exports given to each.

Mr. Alan Clark: The information is as follows:

United Kingdom exports 12 months to October 1988

	Percentage of total exports
United States of America	13·1
Federal Republic of Germany	11·8
France	10·0
Netherlands	7·0
Belgium-Luxembourg	5·1
Irish Republic	5·0
Italy	5·0
Spain	3·1
Sweden	2·8
Canada	2·5

Source: Overseas Trade Statistics.

Investment Services

Mr. Teddy Taylor: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will outline the nature of the proposals relating to the operation in the United Kingdom of home country authorised investment firms and financial intermediaries in the investment services directive; when the directive will be considered by the Council of Ministers; and if it will fall to be considered by majority vote in the Council.

Mr. Maude: The European Commission is still preparing its proposal for a directive on investment services for consideration by the Council of Ministers.

Mr. Teddy Taylor: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he has consulted the Securities and Investments Board and the FIMBRA organisation about the implications of the investment services directive; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Maude: My Department is in regular contact with the Securities and Investments Board and FIMBRA on the range of matters of concern to them and will consult them on the investment services directive when a proposal has been presented to the Council of Ministers by the European Commission.

Coventry Four

Mr. Campbell-Savours: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster whether he will identify those firms that agreed to discuss the supply of arms to South Africa following upon discussions with those persons known as the Coventry four.

Mr. Alan Clark: No.

GATT

Mr. Waller: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will make a statement on the outcome of the mid-term meeting of the GATT Uruguay round in Montreal.

Mr. Alan Clark: The task of the mid-term meeting which my right hon. Friend the Minister of Agriculture and my right hon. and noble Friend attended was to consolidate the past two years' work of the Uruguay round and to lay down guidelines and frameworks for the second half of the negotiation. Substantial progress to this end was made on a number of the issues of particular concern to the United Kingdom. Detailed frameworks for further negotiations on liberalisation of trade in services, multilateral tariff reductions and strengthening of GATT procedures including dispute settlement were agreed on a provisional basis. There was also agreement to liberalise the import regime for tropical products. The European Community will put in place from 1 January 1989 tariff reductions on tropical products which can be implemented under the generalised scheme of references.

Disappointingly, however, there was no agreement on a more detailed framework for negotiations on the reform of agriculture, despite substantial and positive efforts by the European Community, the Cairns group of agricultural exporting countries and others. The United States insisted on pressing for the total elimination of agricultural support by a time to be agreed. This was not acceptable to the Community, nor was it in the 1986 Punta del Este declaration which set the guidelines for the round. Nor was progress possible in negotiation on international trade in textiles, nor on the better protection of intellectual property. Since in those three cases agreement could not be achieved in Montreal it was decided to suspend the work there with a view to further negotiation in preparation for a meeting of senior trade policy officials in Geneva early in April. The objective then will be to endorse formally the agreements reached provisionally last week, and if possible to establish common ground on the way forward on the three issues in dispute at Montreal.

It is disappointing that for the time being further progress could not be made on agriculture, but it is a suspension rather than a breakdown of negotiation, and over the coming months the Government will continue to work for a positive outcome. In other areas of importance to United Kingdom industry and commerce positive results have been secured. The Government will be working with our partners in the Community to resolve outstanding issues and to ensure that the gains made at Montreal are consolidated in April and that in the remaining two years of the Uruguay round continuing progress is made on the full range of issues covered by the negotiations.

Textiles and Clothing (Exports)

Dr. Hampson: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what is the current value of textile and clothing exports; and what proportions go to the European Community, Japan and the United States of America.

Mr. Alan Clark: The information is in the following table:

United Kingdom textile and clothing exports[1]
12 months to October 1988

	£ million	Per cent. of total
Total	3,356	100
European Community	1,882	56
Japan	172	5
USA	303	9

[1]Standard International Trade Classification Divisions 65 and 84.
Source: Overseas Trade Statistics.

CHURCH COMMISSIONERS

Rating Reform

Mr. Key: To ask the right hon. Member for Selby, as representing the Church Commissioners, what steps the Church Commissioners are taking to assist the churches in adjusting to the introduction of the Community charge.

Mr. Alison: The commissioners are closely consulting dioceses about what charges would be desirable in the stipends arrangements of the clergy when they and their spouses become liable to pay a personal community charge in 1990. Because most of the clergy have hitherto lived in their accommodation free of rates, the commissioners hope to make substantial additional sums available for stipends in 1990 to reflect the extra costs which will fall on them.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Nurses

Mr. Beggs: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland whether all nurses in East Antrim hospitals have been notified of their new grading.

Mr. Needham: Yes.

Mr. Beggs: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many nurses are employed in East Antrim hospitals; and how many are in each grade at present.

Mr. Needham: There are 420·82 whole-time equivalent nursing staff employed in East Antrim hospitals. The numbers in each grade at present are as follows:

Grade	Whole-time equivalent
A	70·09
C	90·51
D	96·73
E	97·83
F	22·66
G	33·00
H	7·00
I	3·00
Total	420·82

Sewage Disposal

Mr. Kilfedder: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how much money will be made available to Northern Ireland as part of the amount announced by the Secretary of State for the Environment for improving the coastal sewage disposal systems throughout the United Kingdom over the next four years.

Mr. Needham: None. The accelerated programme of capital improvement for sewage treatment works announced by the Secretary of State for the Environment relates only to England and Wales.

Mr. Ronald Allen

Mr. John D. Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland when the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State responsible for education will reply to the letter of 7 October from Mr. Ronald Allen of "Roalan", Lower Ballo road, Groomsport BT19 2LU.

Dr. Mawhinney: A reply was issued on 8 November, signed by my private secretary.

ENVIRONMENT

Yorkshire Water Authority

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if, pursuant to his answer to the hon. Member for Wakefield on 28 November, he will give the reasons for his conclusion that the information supplied to his Department by the Yorkshire water authority in its annual return for 1987 detailing the discharge and monitoring of list one substances does not constitute a breach of the relevant European Community directives governing discharges of these substances.

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what action he is going to take against Yorkshire water authority for breaching the European directives for mercury and cadmium being found in river sediment in addition to breaches for the pesticide lindane; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Moynihan: I apologise to the hon. Member that only the first paragraph of the five-paragraph answer which I had prepared was given to him. The full answer should have read as follows:

On the basis of the periodic returns supplied by Yorkshire water authority, the Department does not consider that the requirements of the relevant European Community directives governing discharges of these substances have been breached. Measures taken by Yorkshire water authority have resulted in considerable reductions in the discharge of mercury and cadmium in recent years, and all authorised discharges meet the requirements of the relevant directives. The directives also specify that concentrations of these substances in sediments must not increase significantly with time, and again the monitoring carried out by Yorkshire water authority demonstrates a general downward trend, although because of the persistence of these substances some time lag can be expected before the improvements in water concentrations show up fully in improved sediment concentrations.

The 1987 sediment monitoring results do show a small increase in the mercury concentration at one location, but this is not considered to be significant against the overall trend at that location since 1984. The 1986 sediment monitoring results also showed an increase over the

previous year in the measurement of cadmium at one location, but the 1987 results shows no further increase, and it is too early to establish a reliable trend. In neither case is the increase believed to be due to the effects of any current discharge, but future results at these locations will be monitored carefully and appropriate action taken if any significant upward trend should emerge.

The levels of lindane in some Yorkshire rivers have been a matter of concern, though these are due largely to past use of this highly persistent pesticide. The Department receives regular reports from Yorkshire water authority about its programmes to eliminate any remaining sources of pollution and is satisfied with the considerable efforts that the authority has made.

There has been a steady decline in the concentration of lindane at all monitoring points in recent years, and this trend is expected to continue. The latest data supplied by Yorkshire water authority indicate that the quality standard in the relevant European Community directive is now exceeded at only one monitoring point, and the concentration here is expected to fall within the standard in the near future. The water authority has not identified any current source or user of lindane whose discharge could be linked to this particular reading. However, they are continuing to monitor the position and to search for any possible unknown sources.

Conservation (Staffordshire)

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list the amount of nature conservation work carried out by the voluntary sector on water authority land in Staffordshire.

Mr. Moynihan: I have no information on this, but I suggest that the hon. Member contacts the Severn Trent water authority.

Rents

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will publish for *(a)* Great Britain, *(b)* England and *(c)* each region, the average of local authority rents and fair rents registered for unfurnished dwellings, for each year since 1979, indicating the percentage in each year on annual and cumulative basis.

Mr. Trippier: I have today laid in the Library tables giving the available information at national and regional levels.

Rating Reform

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will publish his Department's proposed timetable for publishing further material relating to the community charge, giving the manner and type of publication and the amounts budgeted both in total and by individual category; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gummer: I am completing consideration of these arrangements and shall be making an announcement shortly.

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will set out the amounts to be allowed to each local authority in *(a)* England and *(b)* Wales to meet the setting up costs of the community charge, indicating in each case the division between specific and block grant, and where available the local authorities' estimates of the costs involved.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: In England capital allocations totalling £25 million in respect of expenditure in 1988-89 were announced on 13 April. A list of individual authorities' allocations was placed in the Library on that date. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State announced on 21 October that a further allocation of £135 million would be made for 1989-90. Individual allocations from this total will shortly be made.

My right hon. Friend also announced on 21 October that half the provision of £110 million included in the 1989-90 rate support grant settlement for the current costs of preparing for the community charge will be met through a specific grant. A list showing individual authorities' share of this £55 million specific grant was placed in the Library on that date. The remaining half of the expenditure will be supported by rate support grant in the normal way.

We do not have comprehensive figures for local authorities' own estimates of these costs. The capital allocation of £135 million for 1989-90 was derived from the mid point of the range forecast for England in the Price Waterhouse report published in June this year. The provision of £110 million for current costs is also in line with the estimate made in that respect and is higher than the equivalent figure then postulated by local authority associations.

The information requested in respect of Wales is the responsibility of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales.

Crichel Down Rules

Mr. Heddle: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he has any plans to make mandatory the Crichel Down rules on the disposal of Government property; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Chope: It is already Government policy that the Crichel Down rules will be applied to all disposals of Government property falling within the terms of Department of the Environment circular 18/84 (Welsh Office circular 37/84). The general principles underlying these rules and procedures are commended to local authorities and other public bodies.

Listed Buildings

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many areas of the United Kingdom have still not been surveyed for the purpose of revising the statutory lists of buildings of special architectural or historical significance; how many people are currently employed to do this work; and how long it will be before the revised list is completed.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: Southwell (Nottinghamshire), West Malling (Kent) and the Isles of Scilly and Lundy have not yet been resurveyed; a further five areas are in the process of being resurveyed. English Heritage and the Department of the Environment each employ seven people in the exercise, which will be completed by spring 1989.

Radioactive Waste

Mr. Frank Cook: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what conclusions as to the disposal costs of high-level radioactive waste arisings were reached by recent studies commissioned by his Department; and if this cost includes the present and future storage of the high-level waste and the vitrification of the waste.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: Accurate cost estimates are not possible as high-level waste will not be disposed of for at least 50 years. An indicative estimate is in the order of £500 per litre, exclusive of the costs of storage and vitrification.

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will place in the Library a copy of his Department's report on Magnox fuel dry storage and direct disposal, assessment of the Central Electricity Generating Board/South of Scotland Electricity Board reports; and if he will make a statement about the report's estimate of the cost of disposing of *(a)* high-level and *(b)* intermediate and low-level nuclear waste.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: A copy of the report was placed in the Library on 26 May 1988. For high-level wastes, accurate cost estimates are not possible as waste in this category will not be disposed of for at least 50 years. The report gives an indicative estimate of £500 per litre.

The costs estimated in the report of the disposal of low and intermediate-level wastes are consistent with the costs currently estimated by UK Nirex Ltd. which are:

Intermediate-level wastes—Land based deep repository £2,000-£7,000 per cubic metre.

Low-level wastes—Deep repository £750-£2,000 per cubic metre.

Local Authorities (Shareholdings)

Mr. Steen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what plans he has to restrict local authorities from holding shares in publicly quoted companies.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: Our proposals are set out in the consultation papers issued earlier this year: "Local authorities' interests in Companies" (especially paragraphs 31 and 32) and "Local Government in England and Wales: Capital Expenditure and Finance" (especially paragraphs A.37 and A.38). These proposals will not apply to the investment of superannuation funds or of charitable funds of which the local authority is trustee. Copies of the consultation papers are in the Library of the House.

Housing (Islington)

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what have been the housing investment programme bids and the amounts allocated to the London borough of Islington for each year since 1983; how many new dwelling units have been constructed and rehabilitated for each year, and how many new dwellings have been added to the authority's stock as a result.

Mr. Trippier: Local authorities are able to supplement their allocations by the use of capital receipts and we would expect them to spend more on rehabilitation than on new construction. The bids, allocations and total spend; and new build and net additions by conversion reported by Islington council are as follows:

	Bid	*Allocation (£ million)*	*Spend*	*New Build (units)*	*Conversion*
1983-84	74·675	35·103	40·189	121	49
1984-85	72·806	34·449	49·165	80	—
1985-86	103·227	29·319	31·899	42	—
1986-87	121·397	29·486	64·259	135	75
1987-88	121·641	26·307	67·336	90	—
1988-89	104·226	27·009	—	—	—

In addition the council reported 18,292 dwellings renovated or improved between 1 April 1983 and 31 March 1988.

Unused Land

Mr. Steen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many acres of unused land, currently listed on the register, belong to *(a)* water authorities, *(b)* the electricity industry, *(c)* the Ministry of Defence and *(d)* the Property Services Agency.

Mr. Trippier: The following are the amounts of unused and underused land on the land registers at 30 November 1988 for these owners:

	Acres
Water authorities	2,231
Electricity industry	2,952
Ministry of Defence	617
Property Services Agency	936

Mr. Steen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will estimate by how much the public debt would be reduced if all public unused land currently listed on the register was realised on the open market.

Mr. Trippier: At 30 November 1988 there were throughout England 8,134 sites on the land registers, covering 85,200 acres. The value obtainable for all these sites would depend on numerous site-specific and external factors which vary widely. It is therefore not possible to make any realistic estimate of how much would be realised if all the sites on the land registers were sold.

Disposal Notices

Mr. Steen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many directions he has made under the Local Government Act as amended by way of disposal orders in each of the last three years; and if he will list in tabular form the acreage involved and the location.

Mr. Trippier: The statutory procedures leading to the issue of a direction require a notice of the proposed direction to be given. In many cases, the issue of the notice

is sufficient to get the land brought into use or sold. Over 200 notices were issued in the last three years, and in some cases, were followed up by directions, as shown in the table below.

	Number of directions	*Acres*
1986	14	49
1987	25	148
[1]1988	13	73
Total	52	270

[1] To end of November.

Location and acreage of directions issued

District	*Number of sites*	*Acres*
Amber Valley	1	5
Barking and Dagenham	1	10
Barrow in Furness	2	7
Blackburn	1	14
Blackpool	1	3
Bolton	1	1
Bristol	1	9
Broadland	1	1
Burnley	1	1
Bury	1	10
Charnwood	2	15
Cheltenham	1	7
Doncaster	2	25
Dudley	2	8
Durham	1	10
Greenwich	2	3
Harrow	1	[1]
Hounslow	1	7
Kingston upon Hull	4	22
Kingston upon Thames	1	4
Kirklees	2	7
Lambeth	1	2
Leeds	1	2
Macclesfield	2	19
Manchester	1	15
Mansfield	1	2
Middlesbrough	1	4
North Hertfordshire	1	[1]
Pendle	1	1
Rotherham	1	16
Sheffield	1	1
South Ribble	1	3
Southwark	2	3
Stoke	1	[1]
Sunderland	1	7
Sutton	2	3
Tower Hamlets	1	5
Wigan	1	4
York	2	14
Total	52	270

[1] These sites were less than half an acre.

Electrical Transformers

Mr. Wallace: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he has any proposals to control the disposal of obsolete or redundant electrical transformers; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The Disposal of electrical transformers is controlled under part 1 of the Control of Pollution Act 1974. Where they contain polychlorinated biphenyls, they are also subject to the Special Waste Regulations 1980. A code of practice for the disposal of PCBs is contained in Waste Management Paper No 6.

South Wiltshire Structure Plan

Mr. Key: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he will announce modifications to the south Wiltshire structure plan following his examination in public.

Mr. Chope: I will do so soon.

Commissioner for Local Administration

Mr. Michael Brown: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what administrative redress is available from him to a complainant, against a decision of a local authority when the Commissioner for Local Administration has ruled in a council's favour and against the complainant.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: None: the commisioner for Local Administration (the local ombudsman) is independent of both local authorities and central Government.

Radon Gas

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) if he will consider reducing the action level of radon gas attracting grant aid by 50 per cent. to 200 bq/cu m measured by an approved laboratory following a 12-month continuous survey; and if he will make a statement;

(2) if he will consider when recommending new action levels for radon gas, setting the same level for domestic and occupational exposure; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The action level for radon was recommended by the National Radiological Protection Board. The board has a statutory responsibility to advise Government on matters of radiological protection. They are keeping the level under review. Any recommendation from the board to reduce levels would be considered very carefully. The responsibility for administering regulatory controls on occupational exposure to radon rests with the Health and Safety Executive, which is also advised by the board.

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will consider an extension to the provisions of mandatory house renovation grants to include all dwellings with radon levels above the action level irrespective of their age or their ability to meet the other qualifying condition of grant aid for housing; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Trippier: No.

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will consider producing advice and guidance for local authorities on the administrative procedures to be adopted when giving grants for work in dwellings with levels of radon above the action level as proposed by the Institution of Environmental Health Officers; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Trippier: My Department wrote on 30 November to the local authority associations inviting their comments on draft guidance on the way in which authorities might consider applications for improvement grants toward the cost of radon remedial work. We await their comments.

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will consider the inclusion within

any forthcoming legislation on housing, reference to external factors that may affect the internal environment of the dwelling caused by poisonous substances including radon gas, methane from refuse tips or contamination from industrial operations; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Trippier: We are considering the scope of the work which will be eligible for grant aid under our proposals for legislation to reform the improvement grant system.

Ministerial Vehicles

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will detail by make and model the vehicles allocated to each of the Ministers in his Department.

Mr. Chope: Ministers in the Department of Environment have been allocated vehicles as follows:
Secretary of State—Rover 827
Minister for Local Government—Austin Rover Montego
Minister for Housing, Environment and Countryside—Ford Sierra Sapphire
Minister for Water and Planning—Austin Rover Montego
Parliamentary Under Secretary of State (Mr. Trippier)—Austin Rover Montego
Parliamentary Under Secretary of State (Mr. Chope)—Austin Rover Montego (temporarily allocated a Rover Fastback 820 on trial)
Parliamentary Under Secretary of State (Mrs. Bottomley)—Vauxhall Cavalier
Parliamentary Under Secretary of State (The Hon. Colin Moynihan)—Ford Sierra Sapphire

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if there exists any hierarchy in terms of vehicle allocation for Secretaries of State, Ministers of State and Parliamentary Under-Secretaries.

Mr. Chope: Cabinet Ministers, unless security reasons demand otherwise, are allocated Austin Rover 820 series vehicles. Other Ministers are allocated Austin Rover Montegos, or equivalent models.

Tidy Britain Group

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what were the particular reasons for the selection of the A1-Grantham service area as one of the experimental projects currently being carried out by the Tidy Britain Group.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The Grantham service area, being on a trunk road as opposed to a motorway, was chosen by the Tidy Britain Group to enable comparisons to be drawn with a similar project being undertaken on the Keele motorway service area. The hon. Gentleman may approach the Tidy Britain Group for more information.

Drinking Water

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what arrangements exist within his Department to keep London local authorities informed of progress in meeting the standards of directive 80/778/EEC.

Mr. Moynihan: Specific arrangements have not been established as London boroughs have a duty to ascertain the wholesomeness of drinking water in their respective areas.

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment which areas of London fail to meet the standards set out in the European Community drinking water directive 80/778/EEC.

Mr. Moynihan: There are no drinking water supplies to areas of London regularly exceeding the standards set in the EC drinking water directive.

Consultation Papers

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list the consultation papers issued by his Department during this Parliament giving for each: the numbers issued, the date of issue, the date consultation closes/closed, the number of responses received and whether they are available in the Library; if summaries of responses are available; and whether additional publicity materials were developed, and at what cost.

Mr. Ridley *[holding answer 25 November 1988]:* The information the hon. Gentleman has requested is given in the table:

Title	*Date issued*	*Date consultation closes/closed*	*Number issued*	*Responses received*	*Available in Library?*	*Summary available through Library?*
Proposed Amendment to Public Rights to Inspect Local Authorities' Accounts and Associated Records	9 July 1987	9 October 1987	65	35	No	No
The National Rivers Authority: The Government's Proposals for a public regulatory body in a privatised water industry	16 July 1987	15 October 1987	1,825	355	Yes	No
Non-domestic Rates: Amendments to the Rating Legislation in England and Wales	31 July 1987	18 September 1987	200	270	No	Yes
Finance for Housing Associations	18 September 1987	31 October 1987	2,500	273	Yes	No
Competition in the Management of Local Authority Sport and Leisure Facilities	28 September 1987	11 December 1987	500	350+	Yes	No
The Private Rented Sector: Legislative Proposals	2 October 1987	31 October 1987	475	232	Yes	No
Right to Buy: Legislative Proposals	2 October 1987	31 October 1987	20	200	Yes	No
Deregulation of the Private Rented Sector: Implications for Housing Benefit	6 October 1987	31 October 1987	375	115	Yes	No
Housing Action Trusts	8 October 1987	6 November 1987	800	126	Yes	No
Tenants' Choice: An explanatory paper	1 November 1987	4 December 1987	1,200	212	Yes	No
Competition in the Provision of Local Authority Services	2 November 1987	31 January 1988	675	267	Yes	No
Home Improvement Policy	5 November 1987	4 January 1988	500	307	Yes	No

Title	*Date issued*	*Date consultation close 'closed*	*Number issued*	*Responses received*	*Available in Library?*	*Summary available through Library?*
Paying for Local Government—Appeals and valuation and Community Charge Tribunals	10 November 1987	18 December 1987	675	122	No	Yes
Competition for Education-Related Activities Following Abolition of ILEA	14 November 1988	31 January 1989	250	Not yet known	No	
Uses of Rateable Values in Housing and Building Legislation	23 December 1987	31 March 1988	175	155	Yes	No
Local Government (Superannuation and Compensation) (Amendment) Regulations 1988	7 January 1988	29 January 1988	550	57	No	No
London Government Reorganisation (Non-domestic Mortgages) Order	8 January 1988	29 January 1988	35	25	No	No
Environmental Assessment: Implementation of EC Directive	26 January 1988	25 March 1988	550	164	Yes	No
Consolidation of the Town and Country Planning General Development Order	4 February 1988	7 April 1988	460	211	Yes	No
Local Government Bill—Race Relations Matters	9 February 1988	29 February 1988	75	70	Yes	No
Portable Antiquities	11 February 1988	30 April 1988	225	111	Yes	No
Section 5 of the Housing and Planning Act 1986: Loans in respect of Service Charges and the Housing (Right to Buy) (Mortgage Costs) Order	19 February 1988	15 April 1988	10	7	No	No
City Grant: Simplification of Urban Grants	7 March 1988	8 April 1988	2,000	119	Yes	Yes
Local Authority Building Control Fees	8 March 1988	15 April 1988	50	21	No	No
Local Government Act 1988: Contract Periods and Financial Objectives	20 April 1988	31 May 1988	230	197	Yes	No
London Government Reorganisation (Property) Order 1988	9 May 1988	3 June 1988	40	10	No	No
Draft National Code of Practice on the use of Sewage Sludge in Agriculture	19 May 1988	1 September 1988	400	28	No	No
Planning Control Enforcement Notice Appeals —Efficiency Scrutiny and Action Plan	26 May 1988	26 August 1988	25	121	No	No
Local Authorities' Interests in Companies	13 June 1988	30 July 1988	900	200+	No	No
London Government Reorganisation (Hampstead Heath) Order	14 June 1988	1 August 1988	85	36	No	No
Disputes about Valuations under the Leasehold Reform Act	23 June 1988	30 September 1988	50	23	No	No
Building Regulations—Parts G, H, and J	28 June 1988	28 October 1988	225	223	Yes	No
Housing in Rural Areas: Village Housing and New Villages	5 July 1988	26 September 1988	800	210	Yes	No
The LRB: Disposal of Remaining Housing Mortgages	5 July 1988	1 August 1988	65	7	No	No
Capital Expenditure and Finance	7 July 1988	7 October 1988	2,800	404	No	No
Houses in Multiple Occupation	18 July 1988	1 September 1988	1,250	221	Yes	No
Building Regulations—Parts F and L	20 July 1988	28 October 1988	280	130	Yes	No
New Financial Regime for Local Authority Housing in England and Wales	27 July 1988	7 October 1988	1,400	300+	No	No
Integrated Pollution Control	28 July 1988	31 October 1988	2,350	94	No	No
The Future Funding of Housing Association Hostels and Special Needs Projects	28 July 1988	30 September 1988	875	151	Yes	Yes
Part III Local Government Planning and Land Act 1980: Competition for Building and Maintenance Work	28 July 1988	31 October 1988	630	185	Yes	No
Inputs of Dangerous Substances to Water: Proposals for a United System of Control	28 July 1988	30 October 1988	500	81	No	No
Review of Planning Control Enforcement Powers	1 August 1988	30 September 1988	65	121	No	No
Right to Buy: Proposed revision of the Housing (Right to Buy) (Prescribed Persons) Order 1984	5 August 1988	30 August 1988	20	11	No	No
Caravan Sites and Control of Development Act 1960: Model Standards	12 August 1988	31 October 1988	40	26	No	No
New Towns Housing Transfer	23 August 1988	21 October 1988	225	24	No	No
Sale Licensing for Butterflies	15 September 1988	30 September 1988	90	30	No	No
Control of Pollution (Landed Ships' Waste) Regulations	4 October 1988	28 October 1988	40	18	No	No
Zoo Licensing Act	18 October 1988	None given	120	37	No	No
Draft Regulations on the Administration of the Community Charge	28 October 1988	23 December 1988	35	Not yet known	No	No
Access to Housing Authority Tenants' Records	28 October 1988	25 November 1988	85	Not yet known	No	No
Competition in the Management of Local Authority Sport and Leisure Facilities: The Local Government (Competition in Sport and Leisure Facilities) Order	14 November 1988	13 January 1989	250	Not yet known	No	No
Preserved Right to Buy: Regulations under Section 171c of the Housing Act 1985	21 November 1988	20 January 1989	10	Not yet known	No	No

Title	Date issued	Date consultation closes/closed	Number issued	Responses received	Available in Library?	Summary available through Library?
Waste Disposal Law Amendments: Follow-up Consultation Paper	23 November 1988	23 January 1989	180	Not yet known	No	No
Proposed Amendments to the Boundary between Domestic and Non-domestic property in the Local Government Finance Act	1 December 1988	31 January 1988	210	Not yet known	No	No

Sewers

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is the approximate mileage of sewers, currently the property of regional water authorities, that are serviced and maintained by locally elected councils.

Mr. Moynihan *[holding answer 7 December 1988]:* This information is not available.

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make arrangements to enable local authorities which currently service and maintain sewers under contract to regional water authorities to become exclusive contractors to their successor bodies.

Mr. Moynihan *[holding answer 7 December 1988]:* No.

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what consultations he has had with representatives of local authorities concerning the future servicing and maintenance of sewers which are currently the property of regional water authorities.

Mr. Moynihan *[holding answer 7 December 1988]:* The Government issued a consultation paper on the future of sewerage agency arrangements in November 1986, and invited comments from a range of interested organisations. Among those who responded were the Association of District Councils, the Association of Metropolitan Authorities, NALGO, and the Water Authorities Association. The subject has also been raised since then in discussions between Ministers and the ADC.

Defective Dwellings

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when and how residents of the Galleys Bank estate in Kidsgrove were issued with statutory notices under section 563 of the Housing Defects Act.

Mr. Trippier *[holding answer 8 December 1988]:* Section 563 of the Housing Act 1985 requires public sector bodies selling designated properties to notify the purchaser, specifying the qualifying defect and stating that no assistance will be available under the housing defects legislation. We understand that purchasers at Galleys Bank estate, Kidsgrove were not notified by British Coal until October 1986.

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what action he will take to make sure that those residents who purchased their homes from a private owner, and who had no means of knowing that their homes were classified as defective under section 563 of the Housing Defects Act at the time of purchase, could be made eligible for grant aid under the Act.

Mr. Trippier *[holding answer 8 December 1988]:* We have no plans to amend the housing defects legislation in this respect; the 12-month period of grace following the cut-off date, provided for by the Act, should have allowed sufficient time for knowledge of the defects to reach all those involved with the buying and selling of properties.

Water

Mr. Nigel Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what was the average annual domestic water bill at constant prices deflated by the retail prices index in 1979, 1987 and 1988.

Mr. Moynihan *[holding answer 8 December 1988]:* The information requested by the hon. Member is presented in the following table. The RPI deflator for 1988-89 is based on the Autumn Statement made by my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer.

Average domestic water bill at constant (1987-88) prices and deflated by the RPI.

1979-80 £	*1987-88* £	*1988-89* £
72·88	98·81	101·11

Mr. Wray: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if, further to his reply to the hon. Member for Glasgow, Provan on 5 December, *Official Report*, column *16*, he will set out functions of water authorities for which development is and will be allowed in their land.

Mr. Chope *[holding answer 8 December 1988]:* Schedule 2 to the Town and Country Planning General Development Order (SI No. 1813/1988) contains general permissions which may apply to water authority land. In addition, parts 10, 14, 15, 16 and 17 (class E) of schedule 2 all specify particular kinds of development for which the GDO grants general permission, unconditionally or subject to specified conditions, and which may be particularly relevant to water authorities. If a water authority's development proposal requires specific planning permission, the application will be determined on its merits by the local planning authority.

Rates

Mr. Battle: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is his estimate of the rate increase for Leeds city council for 1989-90, assuming expenditure by the council at the Government's grant-related expenditure allocation level; and what is his estimate of the corresponding increase for Bradford city council on the same assumptions, based on the information contained in the rate support consultation paper for 1989-90 issued on 11 November.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley *[holding answer 8 December 1988]:* We estimate that, if Leeds city council's total expenditure for 1989-90 were to equal its GRE, and the

council use the same amount of balances as in 1988-89, its rate increase for 1989-90 would be 12 per cent. We estimate that for Bradford the corresponding figure would be a rate decrease of 12 per cent.

Local Government Commissioners (Rulings)

Mr. Michael Brown: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will seek powers to enable him to consider cases where the decision of a local government commissioner in ruling on a case appears to a constituent to be at variance with a previous decision.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley *[holding answer 9 December 1988]:* No. It is essential that the independence of the Commissioners for Local Administration in carrying out investigations is retained.

Water Authorities

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is the area of land sold by each water authority in England as being surplus to operational requirements for each year since 1983.

Mr. Moynihan *[holding answer 9 December 1988]:* The acres of land disposed by English water authorities from the Land Register each year from 1984 are as follows:

Size in acres

	1984	*1985*	*1986*	*1987*	*1988*
Anglian	10	178	70	15	44
Northumbrian	3	17	3	16	3
North West	8	5	1	12	9
Severn Trent	2	—	27	—	—
Southern	4	—	—	—	16
South West	2	21	10	21	—
Thames	7	44	—	65	53
Wessex	6	—	10	—	—
Yorkshire	—	9	—	—	32

Mr. Ron Davies To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what has been the value of the land sold by each water authority in England for each year since 1983.

Mr. Moynihan *[holding answer 9 December 1988]:* Receipts from the sale of fixed assets are published in the water authorities' annual reports. Copies are available from the Library.

Darenth Park and Swan Farm

Mr. Dunn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he is likely to issue his decision on the Darenth park site and the Swan farm planning inquiries.

Mr. Chope *[holding answer 9 December 1988]:* My right hon. Friend hopes to issue his decisions shortly.

Water Pollution

Mr. John Evans: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how much his Department intends to spend on measures to combat water pollution in the north-west area between now and the proposed privatisation of the water industry.

Mr. Moynihan: Water pollution is usually the result of industrial or agricultural activities or unsatisfactory discharges of sewage effluent. The North West water authority is responsible for sewage effluent discharges within its area and is engaged in major programmes to replace inadequate and outdated sewerage systems and to upgrade its sewage treatment works. The costs of these programmes are still being drawn up. Expenditure on measures to reduce the impact of industrial and agricultural discharges will be borne by the dischargers in line with the polluter pays principle.

THE ARTS

Libraries

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Minister for the Arts how many replies to his financing libraries Green Paper *(a)* support and *(b)* oppose his proposals; and when he expects to make a statement.

Mr. Luce: Most of the 7,000 respondents neither directly supported nor opposed the proposals as a whole. Six respondents supported all the recommendations; 106 rejected them all. As I said on 7 November in reply to the hon. Member for Stoke-on-Trent, North (Ms. Walley) at column *14*, I intend to make a statement in due course.

CIVIL SERVICE

Foreign Office (Disbursements)

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Minister for the Civil Service if he will provide the most convenient breakdown of the disbursements made by his Department to the Foreign and Commonwealth Office in the last financial year.

Mr. Luce: The total of disbursements made by my Department to the Foreign and Commonwealth Office in 1987-88 was £209,756.

NATIONAL FINANCE

Taxation Offences

Mr. Campbell-Savours: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer (1) what progress has been made on investigations into alleged offences under the Taxes Management Act 1970 and the Taxes Act 1988 in respect of Messrs. Lewis and Tucker of 16 Hanover square, London W1;

(2) what progress has been made on investigations into alleged offences under the Taxes Management Act 1970 and the Taxes Act 1988 in respect of Wisland Investment Group Ltd;

(3) what progress has been made on investigations into alleged offences under the Taxes Management Act 1970 and the Taxes Act 1988 in respect of Bestwood Property Ltd;

(4) what progress has been made on investigations into alleged offences under the Taxes Management Act 1970 and the Taxes Act 1988 in respect of Chelwood Holdings Ltd;

(5) what progress has been made on investigations into alleged offences under the Taxes Management Act 1970 and the Taxes Act 1988 in respect of Royal Investments Ltd;

(6) what progress has been made on investigations into alleged offences under the Taxes Management Act 1970 and the Taxes Act 1988 in respect of Platemede Ltd.;

(7) what progress has been made on investigations into alleged offences under the Taxes Management Act 1970 and the Taxes Act 1988 in respect of Cemetery Assets UK Ltd.;

(8) what progress has been made on investigations into alleged offences under the Taxes Management Act 1970 and the Taxes Act 1988 in respect of Clive Warren Lewis of Lewis and Tucker, of 16 Hanover square, London W1.

Mr. Norman Lamont: Such information is confidential.

Earned Income

Mrs. Roe: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will estimate women's earned income as a percentage of total earned income for the years 1958, 1960, 1970, 1980, and the latest available figure.

Mr. Norman Lamont: The information is for years ending on 5 April. For single women, estimates are confined to those with total income above the PAYE threshold, and for married women, to those where the combined total income of husband and wife is above the threshold. For the years 1980-81, and the latest readily available year, 1985-86, earned income is net of superannuation contributions. I regret that information for 1958-59 and 1960-61 is not available. The nearest years for which an estimate can be compiled are shown in the table:

Women's earned income as a percentage of total earned income

	Per cent.
1954-55	16
1962-63	15
1970-71	20
1980-81	22
1985-86	26

Taxation

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will give a breakdown of the marital status of those caught in the poverty and employment traps; what effect his proposals for the separate taxation of husbands and wives will have on the numbers caught in each trap; and whether he will publish in the *Official Report* figures for his revised proposals corresponding to those in chart 3.2 of Cmnd. 9756 on the Green Paper basis and on the present basis together with the number of low-earning households which will be worse off than at present as a result of the restriction on the transfer of any part of the husband's personal allowance to the wife.

Mr. Norman Lamont: The number of families in the poverty and unemployment traps is a matter for my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Social Security. The introduction of independent taxation will have a negligible effect on the number of families in either trap in 1990-91.

An update of the figures underlying chart 3.2 of Cmnd. 9756 could be provided only at disproportionate cost. There are transitional provisions which ensure that no married couple will suffer a cash reduction in their total tax allowances simply as a result of the change to independent taxation.

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if, further to paragraphs 12 and 13 of annex 4 to Comnd. 9756, he will publish in the *Official Report* a table showing the changes in the number paying tax and average gain or loss in each case as a result of his revised proposals at current rates of income tax.

Mr. Norman Lamont: When independent taxation is introduced in April 1990, the number of higher rate taxpayers will fall to about 1 million and the provisions for wives' earnings elections will be withdrawn. Details of the average gains to individuals from the introduction of independent taxation were included in the Inland Revenue press release of 15 March 1988. Further estimates were provided to the hon. Member for Dunfermline, East (Mr. Brown) on 19 May at columns *574-76*. I regret that further estimates could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what was the economic case for reducing income tax on investment income in the case of those with an income in excess of the ceiling below which there is an entitlement to income support; and if he will publish in the *Official Report* an estimate of the saving to the Revenue from increasing the tax on investment income by eight percentage points.

Mr. Norman Lamont: The reduction in tax rates in the 1988 Budget will have improved incentives for all taxpayers both to earn and to invest. A surcharge on investment income of 8 per cent. would yield just over £1·5 billion per annum at 1989-90 income levels. This estimate takes no account of any behavioural changes that would follow the introduction of the surcharge. The estimate is based on a projection of the 1985-86 survey of personal incomes and is therefore provisional.

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether he will publish in the *Official Report* a table comparing the changes in the numbers paying tax and the average gain or loss in each case with his revised proposals at current rates of income and tax along the lines of paragraphs 9 and 11 of annex 4 Cmnd. 9756.

Mr. Norman Lamont: When independent taxation is introduced in April 1990, the number of elderly married couples liable to income tax will fall by about 160,000. The reduction in the number of married couples of working age liable to tax will be small.

Details of average gains from independent taxation, analysed by income, were included in the Inland Revenue press release of 15 March 1988. Further estimates were provided to the hon. Member for Dunfermline, East (Mr. Brown) on 19 May at columns *574-76*.

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will be reconsidering the use of negative taxation as set out by the Government of the day in 1972 in their White Paper on this subject; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Norman Lamont: No.

Mr. Allen: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what was the take-up of the tax cuts announced in his Budget; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Norman Lamont: The cut in the basic rate of income tax and the double indexation of personal

allowances benefited all 25 million income taxpayers. The abolition of all higher rates above 40 per cent. benefited the 1·6 million people who pay income tax at the higher rate. In addition, some 750,000 people were taken out of the income tax net altogether by the increase in personal allowances.

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether he will consider introducing a scheme for gradually drawing back personal income tax alllowances on the lines of the present age allowance.

Mr. Norman Lamont: No.

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is his estimate of the number of unmarried couples eligible for two additional personal allowances, the number claiming two allowances, and the estimated saving to the Exchequer from reducing their entitlement to one additional allowance in 1989-90.

Mr. Norman Lamont: We estimate that about 20,000 unmarried couples may be affected by the change made in section 30 of the Finance Act 1988 restricting unmarried couples with children to only one additional personal allowance between them. There should be a small tax yield of around £5 million.

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, whether, in advocating the conversion of additional personal income tax allowance into one-parent and other benefits as suggested in paragraph 4.11 of Cmnd. 9756, he was also considering targeting the payment of one-parent and other benefits after the conversion of the additional personal allowance; to what extent the considerations set out in paragraphs 4.11 to 4.16 have been affected by his revised proposals for the separate taxation of husband and wife; and whether he has considered freezing, reducing or abolishing the additional personal allowance and/or one-parent allowance and/or child dependency addition to enable him to target the benefit to those families which he considers in most need of financial help.

Mr. Norman Lamont: I refer the hon. Member to the reply which I gave to him on 5 December at column *54*.

Mr. Ralph Howell: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what information he has as to the starting rates of income tax in *(a)* the United Kingdom, *(b)* Germany, *(c)* the Netherlands, *(d)* Belgium, *(e)* Denmark, *(f)* France, *(g)* Japan and *(h)* the United States of America, for (i) 1969-70, (ii) 1979-80, (iii) 1984-85 and (iv) 1987-88 or the last available year, in £ sterling.

Mr. Norman Lamont: The information requested is given in the table.

Starting rates of income tax (percentages)

	United Kingdom: 1969-70 Others: 1969	*United Kingdom: 1970-80 Others: 1979*	*United Kingdom: 1984-85 Others: 1984*	*United Kingdom: 1988-89 Others: 1988*
United Kingdom	30	25	30	25
Federal Republic of Germany	19	22	22	22
Netherlands	4	20	16	14
Belgium[1 2]	19·7	20	21·7	24·2
Denmark[1]	18	18	14·4	22
France	5	5	5	5
Japan[1]	10	10	10·5	10·5
United States of America[1]	14	14	11	15

[1] Plus local income taxes at varying rates.
[2] For lower income levels a percentage figure is not quoted. The figures given are effective start rates estimated from the official tax table.

Single Internal Market

Mr. Ian Taylor: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what types of potential problems of differing direct, indirect and corporate taxation rates have been raised with him, or with the Bank of England, arising from progress towards completion of the single internal market.

Mr. Norman Lamont: We have received a number of representations about the tax system in relation to the completion of the single market. These have ranged from representations about maintaining VAT zero rates and about the levels of excise duties proposed by the European Commission to questions of the interaction of the United Kingdom tax system and the free internal market in areas of the financial sector. I have been unable to trace any representations about direct and corporate tax rates as such.

Life Assurance

Mr. Alton: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what representations he has received from the life assurance companies concerning the Inland Revenue review of life assurance; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Norman Lamont I have received a number of substantial responses and I am studying them carefully. I will take account of all that has been said in coming to decisions on the future of the life assurance tax regime.

Mr. Alton: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer when he intends to close his consultation on his document, "The Taxation of Life Assurance"; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Norman Lamont: I am currently considering responses to the Inland Revenue consultative document on the taxation of life assurance. There is much to digest before I can decide the best way forward and the extent of further consultation.

Mr. Alton: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what was *(a)* the growth in tax yield from life offices and *(b)* the growth in life assurance business between 1982 and 1987, measured by total funds, taxable funds and taxable income.

Mr. Norman Lamont: The figures requested are not available from official sources and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost. The Association of British Insurers in its response to the Inland Revenue consultative document on the taxation of life assurance offered

estimates of the growth rates described in the question based on a sample of life offices. I am sure that the association would let the hon. Member have details on request.

Child Benefit

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what would be the effect on the tax threshold of a one-earner married couple with an income equal to that of the average earnings of an adult male manual worker; and how many additional adults and children would fall into the poverty and employment traps if child benefit were terminated.

Mr. Norman Lamont: The level of child benefit has no effect on the thresholds at which married couples become liable to income tax; these are determined solely by eligibility for personal tax allowances and reliefs. The effect of the abolition of child benefit on the numbers in the poverty and unemployment trap is a matter for my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Social Security.

Pensions

Mr. Lester: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will publish figures showing the different tax concessions for pension contributions, distinguishing between contributions to the state pension and to private pensions and between the maximum tax-deductible amounts or percentage that can be contributed by employees, employers and the self-employed, and also summarising the regulations regarding tax-free lump sums.

Mr. Norman Lamont: The information is set out in the table:

1. Private Pensions
Table

	Maximum tax-relievable contributions as percentage of earnings		
	Employer	*Employee*	*Maximum lump sum benefit*
Occupational Pension Schemes	No limit[1]	15[2]	Lesser of 1·5 times final earnings or £150,000[3]
Personal Pension Schemes	17·5[4]	17·5[4]	Lesser of 25 per cent. of value of individual's benefits or £150,000
Retirement Annuity[5] Contracts	None	17·5[6]	Three times the annual annuity after commutation[7]

Notes:
[1] Employer contributions should not exceed the amount required to provide the benefits promised under the scheme rules, taking into account any employee contributions.
[2] The self-employed cannot be members of an occupational pension scheme.
[3] Lump sums normally accrue at 3/80ths of final earnings for each year of service, up to a maximum of 40 years, giving a maximum of 120/80ths. But maximum benefits may be given for 20 years' service to normal retirement age. Finance (No. 2) Act 1987 introduced a proportionate link between maximum pensions and lump sums for people joining pension schemes on or after 17 March 1987. The £150,000 ceiling does not apply to members who joined before that date.
[4] The limit of 17·5 per cent. applies up to the age of 50. The limit applies to *aggregate* contributions by employers and employees. For higher ages the contribution limits are:
51-55 20 per cent.
56-60 22·5 per cent.
60-74 27·5 per cent.
The same limits apply to contributions by self-employed people.
[5] Retirement annuity contracts were superseded by personal pensions on 1 July 1988, although contracts in existence on that date may continue.
[6] Contribution rates are identical to those for personal pension schemes.
[7] In relation to contracts issued on or after 17 March 1987 an upper limit of £150,000 applies to the lump sum.

2. *State pensions*

(a) State retirement pension: The state retirement pension consists of a basic pension, and, in some cases, an additional pension (the state earnings-related pension scheme—SERPS) and a graduated pension. All are funded from national insurance contributions. There is no tax relief for employees' contributions. Employers' contributions may be deducted from profits as a business expense.

(b) Contracted-out personal pension schemes: When an employee uses a personal pension scheme to contract out of SERPS the tax treatment of his and his employer's national insurance contributions is the same as under SERPS. But the employee's share of the contributions—known as "minimum contributions"—paid to the personal pension scheme by the Department of Social Security (DSS) is grossed up at the basic rate of income tax.

(c) Contracted-out occupational pension schemes: Contributions by employers and employees paid towards a "Guaranteed minimum pension (GMP)" or "protected rights" qualify for tax reliefs in the manner described in the table above. The GMP or protected rights represent under DSS legislation a minimum level of pension which be paid to a scheme member by a contracted-out scheme. They are broadly equivalent to the amount of pension the member would have received under SERPS.

(d) State pensions and those in substitution for them cannot be taken as lump sums.

Trade Deficit

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is his estimate of the loss of revenue to the Exchequer as a result of the deficit of £14 billion in trade in manufactures.

Mr. Major: The effect of the deficit of trade in manufactures on Government revenues depends on what would otherwise have happened to a wide range of economic variables. Any estimates would be highly speculative and subject to wide margins of error. Even the direction of the effect is ambiguous. Revenues could be either higher or lower.

Payroll Giving

Mr. Heddle: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will indicate the level of public support for the payroll-giving scheme; and how much money has been donated to charities for each year since the introduction of the scheme to the latest available date.

Mr. Fisher: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer (1) how many people participated in the payroll giving scheme in each of the past three years;

(2) what total sums of money were distributed to charities through the payroll giving scheme in each of the past three years.

Mr. Norman Lamont: In 1987-88, the first year of the payroll giving scheme, about 60,000 employees participated and £1 million was donated. These estimates are provisional. Information for 1988-89 is not yet available, but donations and the number of participants in the scheme are expected to be considerably higher than in the first year.

Mr. Fisher: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer (1) whether he will publish a list of charities who have benefited from the payroll giving scheme;

(2) what arts charities have benefited under the payroll giving scheme in each of the past three years; and to what extent.

Mr. Norman Lamont: The extent to which all charities benefited from the payroll giving scheme in the year 1987-88, the first year of its operation, is estimated to be around £1 million. I am unable to supply details of individual charities which have benefited, because the information supplied to the Inland Revenue on individual charities is confidential.

EC (Revenue)

Mr. Redwood: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will list all the sources of revenue for the EEC in 1988 along with the latest estimates of the amounts to be raised in pounds sterling.

Mr. Brooke: Information on the own resources figures in the Community budget is included in the "Statement on the 1988 Community Budget", Cm. 525, tables II and IIa. The Community also has miscellaneous items of revenue and, in 1988, benefited from a surplus carried forward from 1987. These additional items amount to some 811 mecu (£541 million). Table III of the statement provides a slightly more up-to-date estimate of what the United Kingdom is likely to pay this year.

Civil Service (Leavers)

Mr. Riddick: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what steps he is taking to provide more scope for people who leave the Civil Service to return to it later in their careers.

Mr. Brooke: New arrangements come into force today by which former civil servants may be reappointed, at the discretion of the Civil Service Commissioners, at a grade higher than that occupied when they left the service, without the formality of an open competition. In the past it has only been open to former civil servants in such circumstances to return at the same or a lower grade than they previously occupied.

My right hon. Friend the Minister of State, Privy Council Office and my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs have approved an appropriate amendment to the Civil Service Commission General Regulations 1986 in respect of both the home Civil Service and Diplomatic Service.

Tobacco Tax

Mr. Parry: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what information he has as to the percentage of households paying more in tobacco tax than in income tax; and if he will conduct an inquiry into this area.

Mr. Norman Lamont *[holding answer 1 December 1988]:* Sufficiently reliable and up-to-date information is not available to provide an estimate of the numbers requested. While the Government have no plans to conduct an inquiry into this specific issue, tobacco duties are reviewed annually. Their levels are set to strike a careful balance between revenue requirements and health considerations.

Growish Limited

Mr. Campbell-Savours: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what progress has been made on investigations into offences under the Taxes Management Act 1970 and the Taxes Act 1988 in respect of Growish Limited.

Mr. Norman Lamont *[holding answer 5 December 1988]:* I cannot comment on the tax affairs of an individual taxpayer.

Pensioners

Mrs. Beckett: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what income tax is received from those over pensionable age by decile or quartile with respect to total numbers of people over pensionable age; and what is the median weekly income tax received from those over pensionable age.

Mr. Norman Lamont *[holding answer 5 December 1988]:* In 1988-89, about 2·6 million single people aged 65 or over and married couples in which at least one partner is 65 or over will be liable to income tax. This represents about one third of all elderly tax units. The median level of income tax taken over all such tax units is therefore nil. The level of income at the upper quartile point is about £100 per week and income tax paid is about £7 per week. The corresponding figures for the highest decile point are £200 and £25. The total income tax liability of elderly tax units is given in the table.

Income tax liability of aged tax units 1988-89

Quartile	*Tax units (thousand)*	*£ billion*
Top 10 per cent.	790	3·1
Next 15 per cent.	1,185	0·9
Next 8 per cent.	625	0·2
Remainder	5,300	—
Total	7,900	4·2

Estimates are based on a projection of the 1985-86 survey of personal incomes and are provisional.

Privatisation (Advertising)

Mr. Wareing: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what was the total cost of advertising the sale of shares in respect of each company privatised since 1979.

Mr. Norman Lamont *[holding answer 5 December 1988]:* I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave to my hon. Friend the Member for Darlington (Mr. Fallon) on 3 March 1988 at column *629*. This lists the cost to the Government of corporate and flotation advertising and advertising agency fees, exclusive of VAT, for each privatisation and residual share sale since the British Telecom sale of December 1984. Comparable figures for previous sales are not readily available.

Disposable Income

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will give the average net disposable income after taking account of housing costs for each region of the United Kingdom in 1988.

Mr. Norman Lamont *[holding answer 9 December 1988]:* The latest available regional information on average per capita disposable income after taking into account housing costs is from the family expenditure surveys for 1985 and 1986. Data for 1985 and 1986 combined are:

	£ per person per week
North	50·12
Yorkshire & Humberside	50·14
North West	52·08
East Midlands	53·92
West Midlands	50·17
East Anglia	56·29
Greater London	67·72
Rest of South East	62·08
South West	57·99
Wales	52·41
Scotland	54·60
Northern Ireland	44·88
United Kingdom	55·85

Housing costs consist of mortgage repayments, gross rent including owner occupiers' imputed rent, rates, water charges etc. less housing benefit, rebates and allowances.

Pension Funds

Mr. McCrindle: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what proposals he has to permit or require pension funds to build up a margin of reserve against expected future liabilities; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Norman Lamont *[holding answer 9 December 1988]:* It is a matter for the trustees of individual pension funds to decide what reserves should be held against expected future liabilities.

Pensions Holidays

Mr. McCrindle: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer (1) what proposals he has to review the practice of taking pensions holidays; and if he will make a statement;

(2) what proposals he has to extend to 20 years the period over which pension surpluses should be eliminated; and if he will make a statement;

(3) what proposals he has to abolish or restrict contribution holidays for employer sponsored occupational pension schemes; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Norman Lamont *[holding answer 9 December 1988]:* I have no such proposals.

Contracts (Tendering)

Mr. Blair: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether the Government have made any study of the impact on British industry of the EEC draft directive requiring all companies in the private and public sectors to put out to tender contracts for supplies above £500,000 and capital schemes above £3,000,000; when he expects this draft directive to come into effect; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Major *[holding answer 9 December 1988]:* Recent proposals by the European Commission to extend rules on purchasing to bodies outside central and local government cover undertakings in the water, energy, transport and telecommunications sectors which operate on the basis of special or exclusive rights or an authorisation granted by a competent authority of a member state. The rules are intended to make purchasing more open, but let undertakings negotiate with selected suppliers or contractors instead of putting contracts out to tender. Individual contracts would be affected when their estimated value, net of VAT, exceed £142,000 for supplies (and software service contracts in the case of the proposal on telecommunications) and £3·3 million for building and civil engineering works; supplies requirements which were expected to exceed £500,000 in a product area over 12 months would be the subject of periodic indicative notices.

The proposals are part of the single market programme due to be completed in 1992. The Government are consulting closely with relevant purchasers and suppliers in the United Kingdom on possible changes to the proposals which would reduce any burdens the rules may impose. The rules should enable United Kingdom suppliers and contractors to compete more effectively in markets which in some cases have been difficult to enter.

MIRAS

Mrs. Ray Michie: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the total cost to the Treasury in terms of MIRAS of a 1 per cent. increase in mortgage lending rates.

Mr. Norman Lamont *[holding answer 8 December 1988]:* A one percentage point increase in gross mortgage interest rates would increase the cost of mortgage interest tax relief by about £450 million in a full year at 1988-89 levels. If other interest rates were also to change, there would be other effects on Government revenues.

Fixed Capital Formation

Mr. Nigel Griffiths: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will publish general government gross domestic fixed capital formation, total gross domestic fixed capital formation, net general government fixed capital formation and net domestic fixed capital formation for each quarter of 1978, 1979, 1987 and 1988 at constant prices, specifying in each case which deflator has been used.

Mr. Major *[holding answer 8 December 1988]:* The latest constant price estimates together with the implied deflators are given in the tables. The net figures are available only on an annual basis.

Gross domestic fixed, capital formation at constant 1985 prices, seasonally adjusted in £ million, together with the implied deflators[1]

Year per Quarter		Total	Deflator for total (1985 = 100)	General Government	Deflator for General Government (1985 = 100)
1978	Q1	13,957	53·5	1,994	58·3
	Q2	13,738	55·4	1,944	59·2
	Q3	13,629	57·7	1,931	60·8
	Q4	13,590	59·7	1,815	64·2
1979	Q1	14,000	60·3	1,814	65·3
	Q2	13,216	64·1	1,813	67·7
	Q3	14,089	66·8	1,925	70·4
	Q4	15,145	70·1	1,797	76·6
1987	Q1	15,455	105·1	1,754	101·7
	Q2	15,794	109·6	1,637	100·6
	Q3	16,175	111·5	1,630	101·3
	Q4	16,772	112·8	1,775	103·0
1988	Q1	16,804	116·2	1,657	104·9
	Q2	17,445	116·3	1,563	103·8

Net domestic fixed capital formation at constant 1985 prices in £ million, together with the implied deflators[1]

Year	Total	Deflator for total (1985 = 100)	General Government	Deflator for General Government (1985 = 100)
1978	20,587	56·4	4,606	56·9
1979	21,250	64·7	4,208	67·1
1987	20,546	107·6	4,057	104·3

[1] A large number of deflators are used in the calculation of capital formation at constant prices. The CSO's "United Kingdom National Accounts, Sources and Methods, 1985", Chapter 12, gives further details.

OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT

UNICEF

71. **Mr. Tom Clarke:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when he next proposes to meet representatives of UNICEF to discuss common priorities; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Chris Patten: I hope to see Mr. Grant, the executive director of UNICEF, in March.

Aid (Women)

72. **Mr. Matthew Taylor:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he has any plans to increase the number of staff in his Department responsible for monitoring the effect of aid projects on women.

Mr. Chris Patten: Executive departments in the Overseas Development Administration are responsible for monitoring all aspects of projects, including their impact on women. The staffing of these departments is adequate to fulfil their full range of responsibilities. Professional advice available to the Department on social development issues has been significantly strengthened in the past year.

European Community

73. **Ms. Quin:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when he last met his European Economic Community counterparts; and what was the content of the discussion.

Mr. Chris Patten: I met them at the Development Council on 23 November. We agreed on the fundamental importance of food security and adopted a resolution which provides valuable guidelines on this. We discussed whether the Community's Asia/Latin America programme should be focused on the poorest countries and the progress made to date on renegotiating the Lomé convention. We also reviewed the Community's special programme of assistance for debt-distressed countries in sub-Saharan Africa, under which over £200 million has been allotted over the last year.

Kampuchea

75. **Sir Russell Johnston:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on his Department's co-operation with British voluntary agencies in the provision of aid for Kampuchea.

Mr. Chris Patten: I announced on 25 October an additional allocation of £500,000 to support projects, including humanitarian projects in Cambodia, proposed by British voluntary agencies for assistance under the joint funding scheme.

Aid (Environmental Impact)

76. **Mr. Hind:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether British overseas aid projects are scrutinised for environmental impact.

Mr. Chris Patten: Aid managers in the Overseas Development Administration are required to ensure the environmental soundness of projects from the earliest stage to completion and evaluation. A new ODA manual to help project managers decide how much environmental assessment is required in each case is currently being field tested; over 50 international agencies and non-governmental organisations have been asked for their comments.

Ethiopia

77. **Mr. Baldry:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on his recent visit to Ethiopia.

Mr. Chris Patten: I visited Ethiopia from 6 to 9 November. The main purpose of my visit was to see the refugee camps in the Ogaden and on the Sudanese border. I also had talks with Ethiopian Ministers and officials and with representatives of the international and voluntary agencies. My main impression was of the appalling degree of human suffering which is being caused by the conflicts in Sudan and Somalia. We shall continue to do all we can to urge a peaceful resolution of these conflicts and, meanwhile, to ease the plight of the refugees.

India

78. **Mr. Butler:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is the total of overseas aid given to India between 1981 and the latest available year.

Mr. Chris Patten: Gross British bilateral aid to India was £825 million for the calendar years 1981-87 inclusive.

81. **Sir Fergus Montgomery:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs to what extent British is assisting the development of primary education in India.

Mr. Chris Patten: We have carried out an innovative pilot project in four districts of the state of Andhra Pradesh providing a total of £1·3 million to construct 200 classrooms to new, improved designs and to train teachers and teacher educators in child-centred learning techniques. A recent appraisal mission has been looking at ways of extending the project to all 23 districts of Andhra Pradesh. We look forward to working with the state Government on this major undertaking.

Sub-Saharan Africa

79. **Mr. Andrew Smith:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what was *(a)* Britain's and *(b)* other members of the OECD development assistance committee's net official development assistance disbursement to sub-Saharan Africa between 1980 and 1987.

Mr. Chris Patten: Britain's net official bilateral development assistance to sub-Saharan Africa between 1980 and 1987 amounted to $2·7 billion. In the same period disbursements by the other 17 DAC members totalled $44·8 billion.

Aid (Distribution)

80. **Mr. Patrick Thompson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is his policy with regard to the geographical distribution of British overseas aid.

Mr. Chris Patten: Policy on the geographical allocation of bilateral aid is governed principally by the needs of recipient countries, how effectively the aid can be used, what other donors are doing and the United Kingdom's historical links with many developing countries, particularly in the Commonwealth.

Forestry

82. **Mr. Bowis:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on British aid for forestry in developing countries.

Mr. Chris Patten: Details of our existing forestry activities are given in a supplement to this month's *British Overseas Development*, a copy of which I am placing in the Library. In future we will encourage recipient countries to direct more of our aid to forestry and will increase commitments through international research and British charities.

Central African Federation

83. **Mr. Favell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what plans he has to enable increased pensions to be paid to former public servants of the Central African Federation.

Mr. Chris Patten: The Governments of Zimbabwe, Zambia, Malawi and the United Kingdom, as joint guarantors of the central African pension fund, have agreed that pension increases averaging 300 per cent. should be paid, with effect from 1 October 1988. The cost of financing these increases is approximately £9 million, which the trustees of the fund would like to see funded in sterling. In response to requests from the three African Governments, I have agreed that the British Government should meet the full cost of the increase.

We are considering what further action is necessary to assist those central African pensioners whose pensions have been particularly eroded by currency depreciation.

European Integration

84. **Miss Lestor:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, what assessment has been made by his Department of the effects of European economic integration in 1992 on the Third world; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Chris Patten: The Commission in its statement of 19 October made clear that the single market should be seen as a contribution to the global liberalisation of trade. The economic growth resulting from completion of the Single Market should benefit Community and non-Community countries alike, including developing countries. We share this view. At their meeting in Rhodes, Heads of Government declared that Europe after 1992 will be a partner and not a "Fortress Europe".

Bangladesh

85. **Mr. Squire:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, if he will make a statement on the current level of British aid to Bangladesh.

Mr. Chris Patten: I expect total expenditure in the current financial year to exceed £50 million. This includes £7·5 million of emergency relief aid provided following the recent disastrous floods.

Bilateral Aid

86. **Mr. Simon Hughes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the use of British bilateral aid to bring political trade or military advantages to the United Kingdom.

Mr. Chris Patten: The basic aim of the aid programme is the promotion of sustainable economic and social progress and the alleviation of poverty. That aim is entirely compatible with serving our political and commercial interests. It is not Her Majesty's Government's policy to use the aid programme for military purposes.

China

87. **Mr. Yeo:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on official aid to the People's Republic of China.

Mr. Chris Patten: Britain has a growing aid programme to China. In September I visited Peking to sign a new agreement which will provide aid and trade provision support for development projects to a total value of £300 million. Grant aid for technical co-operation in the current financial year is likely to be about £5 million.

Rain Forest

88. **Mr. Wallace:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will meet the chairman of the World bank to discuss the possibility of writing off debts of developing countries in return for guarantees about the protection of areas of tropical rain forest.

Mr. Chris Patten: I hope to meet the president of the World Bank in 1989 and to discuss the bank's increasing concern with environmental issues, including the protection of areas of tropical rain forest. I do not have specific plans to discuss the introduction of any direct linkage between the protection of rain forests and the wider question of measures to deal with developing countries' debt difficulties.

UN (Voluntary Funds)

89. **Mr. Waller:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what contributions Her Majesty's Government will make in 1989 to the voluntary funds of the United Nations system.

Mr. Chris Patten: So far I have made the following pledges for 1989:

	£
UN Development Programme (UNDP)	26 million
UN Children's FundUNICEF)	8 million
UN Population Fund (UNFPA)	5·5 million
UN Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM)	50,000
UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR)	3·6 million
Industrial Development Fund of the UN Industrial Development Organisation (IDF)	500,000

Contributions to special appeals are decided during the course of the year. They add considerably to our funding of United Nations agencie.

International Debt

90. **Mr. Alex Carlile:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations he has received regarding the problem of international debt.

Mr. Chris Patten: I receive a number of letters on this subject from hon. Members and their constituents, as well as from representatives of non-governmental organisations. International debt is a frequent topic of discussion at the international meetings I attend.

Aid (Ecology)

91. **Mr. Harry Barnes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he has plans to increase the amounts of aid for projects which restore, protect and improve the ecological basis of development in Third world nations.

Mr. Chris Patten: Allocations to particular projects and sectors within our country programmes are agreed with recipient Governments and this involves weighing up competing priorities. I aim to agree with interested Governments more support to the forestry sector.

Senegal

92. **Mr. Wells:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what development assistance he is giving in support of Senegal's economic reform programme.

Mr. Chris Patten: During the state visit of President Diouf last month my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister offered a grant of £2 million. The grant is in the form of balance of payments finance in support of Senegal's continuing IMF-backed economic reform programme. It is in addition to our ongoing technical co-operation programme.

New Zealand Dairy Imports

Sir Geoffrey Johnson Smith: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what would be the impact on the United Kingdom dairy producers quota, in percentage terms, if all New Zealand dairy imports were stopped.

Mr. Donald Thompson: Community rules do not provide for any increase in United Kingdom milk quotas if New Zealand imports of dairy products were eliminated.

Common Agricultural Policy

Dr. Hampson: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what proportion of the European budget is devoted to the common agricultural policy and what was the figure in 1979.

Mr. MacGregor: In 1988 it is currently estimated that spending under the common agricultural policy will take up 71 per cent. of the Community's budget, of which 3 per cent. is for depreciating old agricultural stocks and therefore relates to liabilities incurred in previous years. The equivalent figure for 1979 is 76 per cent.

Bovine Somatotropin

Mr. Jopling: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food whether he will estimate how much land would be no longer needed *(a)* in the EEC as a whole, *(b)* in the United Kingdom and *(c)* in each of the four countries to support milk production in the event of bovine somatotropin being freely available and universally used in the EEC.

Mr. Donald Thompson: No. To produce an estimate of any value would require detailed data, which are not available, and a variety of assumptions about the commercial application of bovine somatotropin were it to be approved.

Mr. Wallace: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what information he has on the progress being made in compiling additional scientific information on each of the seven areas detailed by the chairman of the Farm Animal Welfare Council in his letter to him dated 26 October 1987, *Official Report*, 17 December 1987, column *740*, regarding the use of bovine somatotropin to increase milk production.

Mr. Donald Thompson: The information necessary to allow a full exploration of the areas identified by the Farm Animal Welfare Council is being generated in field trials conducted under the terms of animal test certificates issued by my Department.

Chernobyl

Mr. Wallace: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what information he has about steps taken by the European Community to guard against the export to developing nations of foodstuffs contaminated as a result of the Chernobyl accident.

Mr. Ryder: I am satisfied of the safety of all United Kingdom foodstuffs exported following the Chernobyl accident. At EC level, I understand that the Commission has taken administrative action to ensure that all food aid consignments to developing countries meet the same standards as those applied to post-Chernobyl imports from third countries.

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what proposals he has to protect agriculture and fisheries in the area of Cumbria which were found by the post-Chernobyl aerial survey to have radioactivity readings in excess of 300,000 bq/sq m.

Mr. Ryder: The figures from the aerial survey need to be put in perspective. They relate to total caesium in the rocks and soil as well as in the vegetation. Monitoring on a regular basis of foodstuff in Cumbria area has shown there is no need to take additional measures to protect agriculture and fisheries.

Furnace Ships

Mr. Wallace: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food whether his Department has undertaken any studies to monitor the environmental impact in the North sea of furnace ships moored there.

Mr. Donald Thompson: Two incineration vessels are currently approved to use the internationally agreed incineration site in the Dutch sector of the North sea. The environmental impact of the emissions from the vessels is kept under review by the Oslo and London dumping conventions. They are advised by a group of experts who include representatives of my Department.

Chickens

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will list, for each year since 1983, the apparent number of egg-producing chickens and the number of establishments that they are kept in by *(a)* battery methods, *(b)* deep litter and *(c)* free range.

Mr. Donald Thompson: Details of the size of the laying flock and number of holdings in the United Kingdom, taken from the UK annual agricultural census, are given in the table below. Very small holdings which only make occasional returns are excluded from these figures.

	Number of fowls (millions)	*Number of holdings* (thousands)
1983	40·760	51·9
1984	40·304	48·1
1985	39·268	46·4
1986	37·827	44·6
1987	38·229	41·9

Separate census data are not collected on the type of farming system used. However, I estimate that the number of birds kept in deep litter and free range systems over the last three years are:—

	Number of fowls on deep litter	*Number of fowls on free range*
1985	25,000	319,000
1986	11,000	908,000
1987	17,000	1,148,000

Information for earlier years is not available.

Salmonella

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many cases of salmonella have been reported for each year since 1983 in *(a)* battery chicken farms, *(b)* deep litter chicken farms and, *(c)* free range eggs for sale to the consumer and carcases for sale to the consumer.

Mr. Ryder: The reporting of salmonella in food producing animals is required under the zoonoses order 1975. The total number of incidents reported in live chickens in Great Britain since 1983 is as follows:

	Incidents
1983	514
1984	446
1985	456

	Incidents
1986	519
1987	497

It is not possible to distinguish between incidents occurring under different management systems.

There is no statutory requirement to test poultry carcases or eggs specifically for salmonella and therefore no firm information on the number of cases is available.

Environmentally Sensitive Areas

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will outline the work he is doing to monitor the effects of environmentally sensitive area designation on *(a)* farm incomes and *(b)* employment; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Ryder: I have commissioned the universities of Manchester and Newcastle to carry out a detailed examination of the economic impact of ESA designations. I shall be publishing a report which will cover progress on this and a number of other fronts early in the new year.

Fruit Orchards

Mr. David Clark: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (1) if he will list the hectares of fruit orchards that have been replaced on a county by county basis for each year since 1985 as a result of farmers receiving payment under the capital grant scheme; and if he will make a statement;

(2) if he will list the reduction in hectares of fruit orchards on a county by county basis for each year since 1985 as a result of farmers receiving payment under the capital grant scheme; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Ryder: I regret that this information is not available and could not be provided except at disproportionate cost.

Fisheries Council

Sir Michael Shaw: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what was the outcome of the Fisheries Council meeting in Brussels on the 9 and 10 December; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. MacGregor: I refer my hon. Friend to the statement that I gave earlier today.

Wheat

Mr. Ralph Howell: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what is the average price paid to producers for wheat in each country of the EEC in 1986 and 1987 and that period in 1988 for which figures are available.

Mr. Ryder *[holding answer 9 December 1988]:* Annual average producer prices for wheat in 1986, 1987 and the first quarter of 1988 are as follows:

National currency/tonne	*1986*	*1987*	*198*
Belgium (BFR)	8,301	8,016	7,678
Denmark (DKR)	1,469	1,401	1,365
France (FF)	1,152	1,107	1,053
Germany (DM)	410	396	386
Greece (DR)	21,720	22,360	26,530
Ireland (IRL)	105	120	[1]
Italy (LIT)	339,490	325,100	335,220
Luxembourg (LFR)	7,650	7,483	7,250
Netherlands (HFL)	449	412	[1]
Portugal (ESC)	[1]	47,900	[1]
Spain (PTA)	[1]	[1]	[1]
United Kingdom (UK)	111	111	107

[1] Figures not available.
Source: Eurostat—Agricultural prices.

Mr. Ralph Howell: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will state the average prices paid to producers for wheat in each year from 1979 to 1987 and also for the period of 1988 for which figures are available; and if he will express these at 1979 prices and 1987 prices.

Mr. Ryder *[holding answer Friday 9 December 1988]:* The price information requested for each of the years 1979 to 1987 is set out in the table. Final figures for 1987 and forecast figures for 1988 will not be available until published in "Agriculture in the United Kingdom" early next year.

	Weighted average price of United Kingdom wheat of point of first sale £ per tonne	*At 1979 prices*[2] *£ per tonne*	*At 1987 prices*[2] *£ per tonne*
1979	95·92	95·92	174·00
1980	99·30	82·92	150·44
1981	108·92	81·58	147·91
1982	113·74	79·16	143·54
1983	124·80	82·62	149·88
1984	114·58	72·41	131·31
1985	112·25	67·24	121·79
1986	111·18	64·26	116·52
1987[1]	112·35	61·90	112·35

[1] Forecast.
[2] Using the GDP deflator (at market prices).
Source: Annual Review of Agriculture.

Pollen Beetle

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what research is being sponsored by his Ministry into the damage caused by, and control of, the metogethes, or pollen beetle; whether such research will be affected by the transfer of responsibility for funding from the public to the private sector; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Ryder *[holding answer 9 December 1988]:* My Department is supporting work by the Agricultural and Food Research Council (AFRC) on the pollen beetle as part of a research programme on the ecology, behaviour and control of pests of oilseed rape. The Agricultural Development and Advisory Service (ADAS) is also monitoring the pollen beetle under the pest monitoring service and for crop intelligence reports. A very small proportion of the AFRC work and most of the ADAS work is regarded as appropriate for industry funding and we are seeking such support for it.

SCOTLAND

VAT

Mr. Heddle: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what assessments he has made as to the likely effect on *(a)* his Department's capital building programme and *(b)* the rent the Department will pay under occupational leases of implementation of the European Court of Justice's judgment on value added tax on non-domestic buildings.

Mr. Rifkind: Implementation of the European Court of Justice's judgment on VAT will have no effect on my Department's capital building programme, since compensating adjustments have been made to the relevant expenditure provisions. At this stage, before landlords have decided whether to exercise their option to tax rents, it is not possible to offer meaningful estimates of the effects of the judgment on rental costs.

Sir Hector Monro: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland whether, following the European Court's judgment that value added tax should be applied to new non-domestic buildings with effect from 1 April 1989, he has reviewed the levels of grant available under the local capital grants scheme.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: I have reviewed the levels of grant available and have decided to increase the maximum grant from £80,000 to £100,000 with effect from 1 April 1989. In addition our 1989-90 allocation for this scheme has been fixed at £1·045 million representing an increase of 17 per cent. over the 1988-89 amount. This increase takes into account both the imposition of value added tax on new buildings and increased costs.

Disabled Persons (Staff)

Mr. Sean Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what percentage of his Department's staff are classed as disabled.

Mr. Rifkind: 1·4 per cent.

Special Educational Needs

Mrs. Margaret Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list in the *Official Report* the total number of pupils in special schools who are neither ascertained nor recorded, giving the breakdown by region and by division.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The numbers of these pupils in special schools and departments at September 1987 are set out in the table.

	Number
Borders	30
Central	0
Dumfries/Galloway	50
Fife	190
Grampian	190
Highland	20
Lothian	960
Strathclyde	780
Tayside	90
Orkney	—
Shetland	—
Western Isles	—

	Number
ALL SCOTLAND	2,320
Argyll and Bute	20
Ayr	100
Dunbarton	110
Glasgow (City)	290
Lanark	150
Renfrew	110

Mrs. Margaret Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list in the *Official Report* the total number of ascertained or recorded students in primary schools and secondary schools with significant special educational needs arising from *(a)* severe/profound hearing impairment, *(b)* pronounced visual impairment, *(c)* severe physical impairment, *(d)* severe pervasive communication difficulties, *(e)* social and emotional difficulties and *(f)* moderate, severe or profound learning difficulties; and if he will give the breakdown by region and by division.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Information on the range of impairments of pupils in primary and secondary schools was collected for the first time in the 1988 school census and I will write to the hon. Member early next year when it has been collated.

Language Teachers

Mrs. Margaret Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) what plans there are to revise the draft review of staffing standards to include primary school language specialists;

(2) what is the number of primary school language specialists which the Government projects is needed for 1989-90, 1990-91, 1991-92 and 1992-93.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: There are no such plans. Pilot studies on the inclusion of a foreign language in the primary curriculum will start in 1989.

Mrs. Margaret Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many modern language teachers have been employed in Scottish secondary schools in 1985, 1986, 1987 and 1988.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: There were the equivalent of 1,856 full-time teachers of modern languages employed in Scottish secondary schools in 1987. Figures for 1985 and 1986 are not available, while those for 1988 are still being processed.

Mrs. Margaret Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many modern language teachers have been employed in Scottish primary schools in 1985, 1986, 1987 and 1988.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: With the exception of specialist teachers of Gaelic, it is not usual to employ modern language teachers in that capacity in Scottish primary schools. There are some 15 specialist teachers of Gaelic who visit primary schools.

Mrs. Margaret Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many modern language specialists are in training in Scottish colleges of education or Stirling University for *(a)* primary education and *(b)* secondary education.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: There are 45 students training at Scottish colleges of education or at Stirling university to teach modern languages at secondary level. This figure does not include students in colleges of education whose main teaching qualification is not in modern language, but who may be taking a subsidiary teaching qualification in one. There is no separate qualification for specialist modern language teachers in primary schools.

Health Service (Expenditure)

Mrs. Margaret Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what is the additional planned expenditure on the National Health Service in Scotland for 1989-90 showing the amount of new cash and the amount of savings in each of *(a)* hospital and community services, *(b)* primary health care and *(c)* centralised services.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: My right hon. and learned Friend will announce shortly his plans for expenditure on the National Health Service in Scotland for the years 1989-90 to 1991-92.

Legal Aid

Mrs. Margaret Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list in the *Official Report* for each of the last 25 years *(a)* the hourly rate of remuneration payable under the section one legal aid scheme for time occupied in performance of all work other than attendance at court, conducting proof or formal debate, *(b)* the hourly rate of remuneration payable under the criminal legal aid scheme for time occupied in performance of all work other than attendance at trial and *(c)* the value of 10 units, being the level of hourly charges recommended by the Law Society of Scotland except in so far as prescribed by or under statute; and if he will show *(a)* as a percentage of *(c)* and *(b)* as a percentage of *(c)*.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The table provides the information for the last 13 years. Before then the Law Society of Scotland did not recommend a unit charge.

	Legal Aid Rates		*Law Society Rate*	*Percentages*	
Date	*Column A Civil*[1]	*Column B Criminal*[1]	*Column C*	*Column A as a percentage of Column C*	*Column B as a percentage of Column C*
15 September 1976	8·57	9·52	18·00	47·6	52·9
1 January 1977	8·57	9·52	18·00	47·6	52·9
1 January 1978	8·57	9·52	18·00	47·6	52·9
1 January 1979	11·09	12·32	25·00	44·4	49·3
1 January 1980	11·09	12·32	30·00	37·0	41·1
1 January 1981	14·41	16·02	33·50	43·0	47·8
1 January 1982	15·12	16·80	35·00	43·2	48·0
1 January 1983	21·17	23·52	38·00	55·7	61·9
1 January 1984	22·18	24·64	40·00	55·5	61·6
1 January 1985	22·18	24·64	42·50	52·2	58·0
1 January 1986	23·41	25·98	45·00	52·0	57·7
1 January 1987	24·42	27·10	48·50	50·4	55·9
1 January 1988	25·62	30·60	52·50	48·8	58·3
1 August 1988	26·77	31·60	52·50	51·0	60·2

[1] Inclusive of an additional 12 per cent. to cover posts and incidents. An increase to the rates in Column C to cover such items may be charged by the solicitor according to the circumstances of the case.

Student Grants

Mr. Macdonald: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will give the percentage of full-time students in Scotland receiving *(a)* 1 to 9 per cent., *(b)* 10 to 19 per cent., *(c)* 20 to 29 per cent., *(d)* 30 to 39 per cent., *(e)* 40 to 49 per cent., *(f)* 50 to 59 per cent., *(g)* 60 to 69 per cent., *(h)* 70 to 79 per cent., *(i)* 80 to 89 per cent., *(j)* 90 to 99 per cent., *(k)* and 100 per cent. respectively, of the student grant.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The latest available complete figures, which relate to session 1987-88, are as follows. The analysis is based on Scottish domiciled full-time students in receipt of maintenance grants under the students' allowances scheme. The figures show the percentage of such students whose actual maintenance grant entitlement falls within each of the defined proportions of their full standard maintenance allowance.

	Percentage
a)	2·5
b)	3·3
c)	3·9
d)	4·2
e)	4·7
f)	5·1
g)	5·4
h)	6·2
i)	7·7
j)	7·8
k)	49·2

Accident and Emergency Treatment

Mrs. Margaret Ewing To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what representations he has received from the Royal College of Surgeons about avoidable deaths in rural areas due to delays in transporting accident victims for emergency treatment; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: None.

Mr. Galbraith: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what information he has on the future provision of accident and emergency departments in the Greater Glasgow Health Board.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: All accident and emergency services in Glasgow are currently being reviewed. The strategy team has still to report to the board and no recommendations concerning any of the sites have yet

been made. Any plan which may be proposed as a result of the review will of course be subject not only to board approval but also to the normal consultative process.

Mr. Michael J. Martin: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what information he can give regarding the future of the accident and emergency department of Stobhill hospital.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: I refer the hon. Member to my reply of 12 December to the hon. Member for Strathkelvin and Bearsden (Mr. Galbraith).

Mr. Dunnachie: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what information he can give regarding the future of the accident and emergency department of the Southern General hospital, Glasgow.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: I refer the hon. Member to my reply of 12 December to the hon. Member for Strathkelvin and Bearsden (Mr. Galbraith).

Strip Searches

Mr. Sillars: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will issue a code of practice for police officers carrying out strip searches *(a)* in what circumstances strip searches should be authorised, *(b)* what rank of police officers should be empowered to authorise strip searches, *(c)* by whom strip searches should be carried out and *(d)* what records should be kept of strip searches.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Procedures for searching persons detained or arrested by the police are set out in force orders and instructions, with which all officers must comply. The evidence available at present to my right hon. and learned Friend does not suggest that there is a need for further guidance to the police service bearing specifically on strip searching.

North Sea Pollution

Mr. James Wallace: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what steps he has taken to monitor the levels of polychlorinated biphenys along Scotland's North sea coast.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Responsibility for monitoring coastal waters lies with the river purification authorities (river purification boards and islands councils) who undertake monitoring according to local circumstances.

Disabled People

Mr. Wray: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what is the latest information regarding the number of disabled people in Scotland.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The most recent information about the number of disabled adults in Scotland is contained in the first report of a survey of disability in Great Britain, issued by the Office of Population Censuses and Surveys on 28 September 1988. The report's estimate of the number of disabled adults in Scotland is 611,000, of whom 125,000 are in the least severe of 10 severity categories. A report on the number of disabled children (which forms a part of the survey) will be issued next summer.

Salmonella

Mr. Wray: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what is the latest information regarding the number of cases of people affected by salmonella as a result of the consumption of *(a)* eggs and *(b)* poultry.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: So far in 1988, 2,847 cases of food poisoning in Scotland have been reported by general practitioners. In cases where it has been possible to identify the cause, 99 arising from five incidents have been attributed to salmonella in egg or egg-based products and 113 arising from 22 incidents to salmonella in poultry.

Hospital Waiting Lists

Mr. Wray: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what is the latest information regarding hospital waiting lists in *(a)* Scotland, *(b)* Strathclyde, *(c)* Lothian, *(d)* Edinburgh, *(e)* Glasgow, *(f)* Aberdeen and *(g)* Dundee.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Information on waiting lists is collated centrally only for health board areas. The latest available information on hospital in-patient and day case waiting lists is published in the statistical bulletin 1/88, "Waiting List Figures for 31 March 1988", copies of which are held in the Library.

Eye Treatment

Mr. Wray: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many new cases of *(a)* glaucoma and *(b)* blindness were treated in (i) Scotland, (ii) Strathclyde and (iii) Glasgow for each year since 1975.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Information on new cases of glaucoma and blindness is not available centrally. The number of in-patient discharges from hospital where the main diagnosis was glaucoma is shown below. This represents, however, only part of the glaucoma caseload as some treatment is provided on an out-patient basis.

	Greater Glasgow	*Strathclyde*	*Scotland*
1975	554	775	1,412
1976	574	799	1,396
1977	551	766	1,343
1978	622	792	1,369
1979	482	706	1,230
1980	670	895	1,446
1981	697	915	1,531
1982	715	1,008	1,679
1983	664	930	1,599
1984	707	958	1,680
1985	669	933	1,783
1986	719	1,022	1,939
1987	805	1,107	2,018

Regional Development Grant

Mr. Wilson: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many fraud investigations, in connection with payments of regional development grant, are in hand at present.

Mr. Lang: At present 24 cases are under investigation by the police in Scotland. In addition, a number of other cases are being reviewed and some of them may be brought to the attention of the police.

Mr. Wilson: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many jobs were supported through the payment of

regional development grant in each of the past five years; how many of these jobs were retained for at least 12 months; and how many he estimates to be still in existence.

Mr. Lang: Payments under the original regional development grant scheme (RDG1) were not tied to the creation of jobs. Jobs linked to payment authorisations under the revised regional development grant scheme (RDG2) since its inception in November 1984 are as follows:

	Number of new jobs
1984-85	nil
1985-86	4,490
1986-87	12,360
1987-88	13,720
1988-89 (to end Nov)	9,160

The RDG2 scheme encompasses capital grant, job grant and grant associated with the provision of both assets and jobs. The rules that govern payments under the scheme require that assets or jobs have to be retained for 36 or 18 months respectively. Completed projects are normally visited within this period. Although comprehensive figures for jobs retained for just 12 months are not available, these visits have revealed that around 1,400 of the 35,240 jobs created since April 1986 had been lost by the time of the visit. Beyond this, it is not possible to make reliable estimates for the number of jobs still in existence.

Mr. Wilson: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what steps he has taken to detect and eliminate fraud to the payment of regional development grants.

Mr. Lang: Examination procedures to detect fraudulent claims have been in place since the inception of the scheme. It would not be in the public interest to give further details.

Mr. Allen Adams: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he intends to introduce new guidelines for the granting of regional development grants to private companies in Scotland in the next financial year.

Mr. Lang: No. The statutes and procedures under which the regional development grant schemes are operated throughout Great Britain provide an adequate framework. The administration of the schemes is under constant review.

Mr. Allen Adams: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many jobs have been created as a result of regional development grant in the last year.

Mr. Lang: Payments under the original regional development grant scheme (RDG1) were not tied to the creation of jobs. Payment authorisations for job grant under the revised regional development grants scheme (RDG2) in the latest financial year (1987-88) were linked to the creation of over 13,700 jobs.

Mr. Dunnachie: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if, in view of the investigation by the fraud squad in Strathclyde region on alleged abuse of the regional development fund, he will take steps to tighten up the system for awarding such grants.

Mr. Lang: The administration procedures of regional development grant are under constant review. Many of the investigations presently being undertaken by the fraud squad of Strathclyde police are a direct consequence of the vigorous application of the existing scrutiny procedures.

Community Charge

Mr. Wilson: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he or any of his ministerial colleagues have any plans to visit Millport to discuss the community charge.

Mr. Lang: I have no plans to do so. I am aware of the concerns that have been expressed about aspects of the community charge in Millport and I have responded to these concerns.

Forestry

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he has any plans to privatise the Forestry Commission; and if he will make a statement.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The Government have not drawn up any plans to privatise the Forestry Commission, nor have the Government made any proposals which might lead in that direction.

Liquor Licences

Mr. Darling: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) if he has any proposals to amend the Licensing (Scotland) Act 1976 to allow for a right of appeal against the granting of a liquor licence by persons living near to the premises to which the licence relates;

(2) if he has any proposals to amend the Licensing (Scotland) Act 1976 to broaden the grounds on which an application for a licence can be objected to and to simplify the procedure for so doing;

(3) if he has any proposals to amend the Licensing (Scotland) Act 1976 to allow the licensing boards greater flexibility in regulating licensed premises, including the power on cause shown to suspend a licence or to restrict its scope on an interim basis;

(4) if he has any proposals to amend the Licensing (Scotland) Act 1976 so far as the consideration of application for regular extensions of hours of opening by licensed premises is concerned; and if he will make a statement;

(5) what representations he has received regarding amendments to the Licensing (Scotland) Act 1976; and if he will make a statement.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: I refer the hon. Member to my reply to his question on 7 November 1988 about amendments to the Licensing (Scotland) Act 1976.

Zircon

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if, in the light of the raid on BBC Scotland relating to the Zircon film, the Lord Advocate plans to make any changes in the method of application for search warrants in cases originating outside his jurisdiction.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: No.

Hypothermia

Mr. Wray: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what urgent steps is he taking in order to minimise the risks of hypothermia in Scotland this winter.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: In addition to the information pack the Scottish Health Education Group supplies to health professionals annually, we recently launched the Scotish campaign "Keep Warm This Winter" to remind old people and other vulnerable groups of the simple, practical steps they can take to minimise risks in winter, and to encourage good citizenship among the population generally. The campaign comprises the distribution of 1 million copies of a leaflet, supporting publicity and a free telephone helpline.

Salmon Fishing

Mr. Wilson: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will estimate, by local government area, the anticipated cost of revenue to Scottish local authorities through the abolition of rates on salmon fishing.

Mr. Lang: The best estimates available of the maximum losses of income are:

	Total cost of revenue to authorities £000
Borders	81
Central	7
Dumfries and Galloway	52
Fife	0
Grampian	265
Highland	146
Lothian	0
Strathclyde	16
Tayside	199
Orkney	0
Shetland	0
Western Isles	15
Scotland	781

Mr. Wilson: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what steps he intends to take to implement the recommendations of the Salmon Advisory Committee on the need for more accurate reports on salmon catches.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The recommendations made in the salmon advisory committee's report "Information on the status of salmon stocks" are still being considered.

Mr. Wilson: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many Scottish salmon proprietors have failed to report catch returns in each of the past five years; and if he will name those who have been in default on more than one occasion.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The number of proprietors (and occupiers) of salmon fisheries who failed to provide catch returns for the years 1984, 1985, 1986 and 1987 are as follows. Accurate information for 1983 is not available. It is not my intention to name those individuals who have not provided catch returns.

	1984	*1985*	*1986*	*1987*
Number of catch returns not provided	118	214	113	103

Mr. Wilson: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list the salmon proprietors who failed to register catch returns for 1987.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: No.

Mr. Wilson: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what action is to be taken against salmon proprietors who failed to register catch returns for 1987 under the Salmon and Fresh Water Fisheries Act 1951.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: My right hon. and learned Friend is reviewing the administrative arrangements for obtaining salmon catch statistics with a view to improving the rate of return of forms issued.

School Transport

Mr. Steel: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland whether, in the light of the increasing number of roadside assaults on, and abductions of young children he intends to seek to change the current provisions for school transport within the Education Acts, and to make available additional resources for local authorities to use their discretion in providing transport in rural areas.

Mr. Rifkind: I have no plans to change the current provisions for school transport. Education authorities have a wide discretion in this area and they are in the best position to assess and determine arrangements in the light of local needs and circumstances.

The special circumstances of school transport in rural areas are fully taken into account in arriving at the provision for relevant expenditure in the calculation of revenue support grant; but it is for authorities individually to set their own budgetary priorities.

HEALTH

Ophthalmology (Waiting Times)

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for Health whether he has any information concerning the comparative average waiting times and numbers of patients currently on the waiting lists for ophthalmological procedure at present *(a)* in the Nottingham district health authority and *(b)* on average in England and Wales.

Mr. Mellor: There were 625 patients on the inpatient waiting list for ophthalmology in Nottingham at 31 March 1988 compared with an average of 420 patients for the 152 English health authorities which provide inpatient ophthalmology treatment. Nottingham health authority serves a much larger population than most health districts. The median waiting time for ophthalmology patients treated in the quarter ending 31 March 1988 was 10 weeks in Nottingham compared with 11 weeks for England as a whole.

Questions about waiting lists in Wales are for my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales.

Locum Doctors

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will give the cost by year, for the last five years, to the Trent regional health authority, by area health authority, for employing locum doctors; what has been the national average over the same period; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Mellor: I shall let the hon. Member have such information as can be obtained without incurring disproportionate cost as soon as possible.

Care in the Community

Mr. Andrew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will make a statement on the Government's proposals for care in the community.

Mr. Mellor: We are currently framing our own proposals in the light of Sir Roy Griffiths' recommendations and the many views expressed on his report.

Nursing Homes (London)

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he has any plans to give additional resources to Inner London district health authorities for nursing home provision.

Mr. Mellor: We allocate funds to regional health authorities. It is for them to distribute funds to districts for the provision of health care, including long-term nursing care for elderly people, and in doing so they take account of local circumstances. We shall be announcing 1989-90 allocations to regions in the near future.

Cervical Smear Tests

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what action he is taking to ensure a quicker turnover of the results of cervical cancer smear tests.

Mrs. Currie: As at 1 September 1988, the latest date for which we hold information, almost 75 per cent. of health authorities reported that they were meeting the Department's target of ensuring that laboratories report the results of cervical smear tests within one month to the doctor who submitted the smear. Health authorities' performance is closely monitored and those not meeting this target are asked to detail the action they are taking to remedy the situation. Specific policy options are discussed with health authorities as appropriate and these include:

(a) recruitment of additional laboratory staff;
(b) consideration of staff grading structures in the light of the recently agreed new pay and grade structure for medical laboratory scientific officers and support staff;
(c) overtime working;
(d) use of other NHS laboratories;
(e) use of private laboratories;
(f) reducing the numbers of excess smears, for example those taken more frequently than the locally agreed interval.

Barnet Health Authority

Mr. John Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is the number of patients registered with National Health Service general practitioners in Barnet health authority; and what is the population of Barnet health authority.

Mr. Mellor: There were 372,400 names registered with a general medical practitioner in October 1988 with an address in the Barnet family practitioner committee area. The latest available (mid-1987) population estimate for Barnet district health authority, which is coterminous with Barnet FPC, is 305,900.

Prescription Charges

Sir Anthony Meyer: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will extend exemption from prescription charges to sufferers from *(a)* Crohn's disease and *(b)* other chronic and incurable conditions.

Mr. Mellor: We have no plans to do so.

Hepatitis B

Mr. Pike: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will make additional resources available to district health authorities for vaccination of all Health Service employees at risk of hepatitis B infection.

Mr. Mellor: We have advised health authorities that it is the responsibility of their occupational health services to decide which staff should receive priority for vaccination against hepatitis B, in the light of guidance which we have issued from the joint committee on vaccination and immunisation. We believe that many authorities have already taken the necessary steps to ensure that this advice is followed.

Infant Mortality

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will place in the Library the document entitled "Geographical Variations in Infant Mortality In Relation To Birthweight" referred to on page 50 of the chief medical officer's annual report for 1987.

Mrs. Currie: A copy of the draft paper "Geographical Variation In Infant Mortality In Relation To Birthweight" (dated April 1988) will be placed in the Library shortly. A revised version of the paper will be incorporated into the forthcoming OPCS "Decennial Supplement On Mortality And Geography" (series DS), to be published in 1989.

Hospital Buildings

Mr. Nellist: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if, pursuant to his Parliamentary Under-Secretary's reply to the hon. Member for Coventry South-East of 6 December, concerning the average age of hospital buildings, he will place the results of the information collected in the Library and publish the results in the *Official Report* at the appropriate time.

Mrs. Currie: Information about the age of hospital buildings is used by health authorities in the management of their estates. But the condition of buildings is not necessarily related to age and we shall not be collecting the information centrally.

Salmonella

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) whether his Department issues guidance on the preparation and cooking of snipe and woodcock; and if he will make a statement;

(2) what is his assessment of the risk to the public of salmonella poisoning from the consumption of wild and reared game; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Currie: The ubiquitous nature of salmonella and other food poisoning organisms suggests that the meat of any food animal has the potential to be contaminated. I have no evidence that game is a significant vehicle for food poisoning. However, the Department advises that as a general rule it is safest to cook food thoroughly and game is no exception. If frozen, cooking should be preceded by adequate thawing. Additional advice to consumers on the preparation and cooking of game is deemed unnecessary.

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) what is his assessment of the risk to the public of salmonella poisoning from the consumption of duck and goose eggs; and if he will make a statement;

(2) what is his assessment of the risk to the public of salmonella poisoning from the consumption of quails' eggs; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Currie: Duck eggs have always been recognised as being at risk of salmonella contamination but there is no evidence to suggest that there has been any increase in the level of contamination.

I understand that culinary practice is to hard boil duck and quail eggs. Goose eggs are rarely eaten.

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is his advice to the public concerning the risk of contracting salmonella poisoning from the consumption of turkey; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Currie: As with any other food, turkeys should be thoroughly cooked. If frozen, cooking should be preceded by adequate thawing. Cross-contamination with other foods should be avoided.

The Department will be issuing the usual advice to consumers about thawing and cooking poultry at Christmas time.

Mr. Wray: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many eggs were infected by salmonella in 1987 and 1988.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: It is not possible to give a precise estimate but, as I told the House on 5 December at column *19*, the risk of infection to any individual is small and the risk to the healthy adult is very small so long as the egg is cooked.

Nurses and Midwives (Pay)

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for Health on what date the next nurses and midwives pay award will be implemented.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: Decisions on implementation of the review body's recommendations will be taken in the normal way after the review body has submitted its report to my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister.

Hypothermia

Mr. Wray: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what new measures his Department is seeking to implement in order to minimise the risks of hypothermia this winter.

Mrs. Currie: On 17 November the Government launched this year's "Keep Warm Keep Well" campaign. This is a health promotion campaign designed to give people information and advice about how to combat the risks of cold weather and is supported by the Departments of Health, Social Security, Environment, Welsh Office and Energy and several voluntary organisations.

As well as supporting the "Keep Warm Keep Well" campaign, the Department of Social Security provides cold weather payments, the Department of the Environment runs the home insulation grants scheme, and the Department of Energy supports neighbourhood energy action, which organises community insulation projects.

We printed around 750,000 copies of the campaign booklet and there has already been sufficient demand to order a reprint. The telephone help line on 0800-289404, the Winter Warmth line, is receiving around 200 calls a day.

Immunisation

Ms. Harman: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if children in the *(a)* Lewisham and North Southwark district health authority and *(b)* Camberwell district health authority will be able to have mumps, measles and rubella immunisation at the age of (i) one year, (ii) two years, (iii) three years, (iv) four years or (v) five years.

Mrs. Currie: Following advice from the joint committee on vaccination and immunisation, we recommended to health authorities that MMR vaccine should be offered to infants at age 15 months with an additional "catch-up" programme to take in four to five-year-olds at the time of their diphtheria, tetanus and polio pre-school boosters. Vaccination of children at other ages is a matter for decision by individual clinicians.

AIDS

Mr. Bermingham: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many persons in England and Wales have contracted *(a)* human immunodeficiency virus, *(b)* acquired immune deficiency syndrome and *(c)* hepatitis B since monitoring commenced.

Mr. Mellor: The available information is as follows:

(a) The recently published Cox report estimated that there were 20,000-50,000 cases by the end of 1987.
(b) 1,847 cases reported to the end of November 1988.
(c) 8,074 cases reported from 1982 to mid-1988.

Mental Health Services (Spending)

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how his Department is monitoring the priority given to spending by health regions on mental health services.

Mr. Mellor: We look to regional health authorities, who are responsible for monitoring their services, to promote development of mental health services within their total financial allocations. The Department regularly assesses progress through the annual planning and review process.

Pharmacies

Mr. French: To ask the Secretary of State for Health whether the National Health Service review will consider the way in which the location of pharmacies is decided by family practitioner committees.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke *[holding reply 9 December 1988]:* Separately from the review, we shall be issuing further advice on this matter in the light of experience of the operation of the current system and a recent court judgment.

SOCIAL SECURITY

Attendance Allowance

Mr. Devlin: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will investigate the claim by Mrs. Eva Davison, now deceased, for attendance allowance in 1985; and why no final settlement has yet been made.

Mr. Scott: The attendance allowance board has completed its review of the late Mrs. Davison's claim and its decision will be sent to Mr. Davison as soon as possible. I regret the delay in dealing with this case and I am writing to my hon. Friend.

Cold Weather Payments

Mr. Boateng: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he intends to increase the level of cold weather payments this winter.

Dr. Reid: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he intends to increase the level of cold weather payments this winter.

Mr. Scott: No. We believe the sum of £5 per week is a reasonable amount to pay towards the cost of extra heating needed in particularly cold weather.

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how much he would expect to spend on advertising cold weather payments if a spell of cold weather covered the whole of Great Britain.

Mr. Scott: Local office managers are required to advertise the availability of cold weather payments in the press immediately a spell of cold weather is declared. Costs will vary depending on the size of the geographic area covered by the particular newspaper and the extent of advertising needed. However, total expenditure for the winter of 1986-87, which included a particularly cold spell of weather, was £414,000.

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what additional information local offices of his Department would need in order to identify income support claimants entitled to cold weather payments without requiring them to claim individually.

Mr. Scott: Payment in the manner suggested would require local offices to search through their entire live load of cases to identify case papers for those in the eligible groups. Information would then also be required to establish the amount of capital held by each potential beneficiary.

Leaflets

Mr. Fisher: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what representations his Department has received about the difficulties experienced by public libraries in receiving an adequate stock of up-to-date leaflets from his Department in order to satisfy inquiries from members of the public about social security benefits.

Mr. Peter Lloyd *[holding answer 7 December 1988]:* I understand that the Department has received a number of letters about this matter. The Department has not sought libraries' agreement to their acting as a principal source of social security leaflets for the public and therefore no specific arrangements have been made. We do, however, recognise the valuable resource that libraries represent in directing members of the public to the appropriate agencies and providing reference materials and officials are exploring ways of resolving any supply difficulties.

Mr. Harry Barnes: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security, further to his reply of 14 November, *Official Report*, column *450*, concerning leaflet FB23, what is the practice of his Department in relation to the inclusion of evaluative statements within explanatory leaflets issued for the guidance of the public.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The Department does not include evaluative statements in the information it provides on social security benefits in its explanatory leaflets. The additional information in FB23 concerning the Department of Employment's YTS scheme is fact and relevant to the decisions made by very many of the young people who are likely to consult this leaflet.

Taxes and Benefits

Mr. Squire: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he is able to estimate the latest figures for the numbers of family credit applications awaiting a decision; and if he is able to break down the reasons for the delays in processing them.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: I refer my hon. Friend to my reply to the hon. Member for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks) on 8 December.

Mr. Battle: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how much a full uprating in 1989-90 of the illustrative rates of income support personal allowances would cost as published in the technical annex of the White Paper, "Reform of Social Security", in line with the retail prices index, less housing, in 1988-89, excluding compensation for the 20 per cent. contribution to rates.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: I refer the hon. Member to my reply to the hon. Member for Derby, South (Mrs. Beckett) on 28 November 1988, at column *94*.

Unemployment Benefit

Mr. Battle: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many people claimed unemployment benefit only; and what number and proportion of them had been on unemployment benefit alone for six months or more in each year since 1979.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The available figures relate to the numbers in receipt of unemployment benefit only in November each year rather than to the number of claims.

Number of persons receiving unemployment benefit only

		Number receiving unemployment benefit only	
	Total	*For 6 months or more*	*For 6 months or more as a percentage of total*
November 1979	386,619	78,369	20·3
November 1980	778,606	158,679	20·4
February 1982	837,230	238,650	28·5
November 1982	713,731	230,536	32·3

	Number receiving unemployment benefit only		
	Total	*For 6 months or more*	*For 6 months or more as a percentage of total*
November 1983	684,037	227,617	33·3
November 1984	699,489	228,555	32·7
November 1985	679,005	219,994	32·4
November 1986	741,684	252,871	34·1
November 1987	548,765	189,441	34·5

Notes:

1. Figures are based on a 5 per cent. sample of cases taken on the second Thursday in November.
2. No figures are available for November 1981 owing to industrial action; information was, however, collected in February 1982.

Disabled Persons

Mr. Hannam: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security (1) on what date he plans to implement section 7 of the Disabled Persons (Services, Consultation and Representation) Act 1986; and if he will make a statement;

(2) on what date he plans to implement section 11 of the Disabled Persons (Services, Consultation and Representation) Act 1986; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Scott: As part of the discussions to implement section 7 of the Act, officials met local authority representatives on 17 November 1988. The timetable for implementation will depend on the outcome of further discussions with local authority and health authority representatives. The first report required under section 11 is expected to be laid before the House before the end of 1989.

Benefits

Mr. Blair: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many people were claiming supplementary benefit on 1 April; and how many were claiming income support on 1 May *(a)* for United Kingdom as a whole and *(b)* for each of his Department's local offices in the counties of : (i) Cleveland, (ii) Cumbria, (iii) Durham, (iv) Northumberland and (v) Tyne and Wear.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Information is available in respect of 17 November 1987 for supplementary benefit and 31 May 1988 for income support as follows:

	Supplementary benefit live load at 17 November 1987	*Income support live load at 31 May 1988*
National (Great Britain)	5,045,062	4,508,724
Cleveland		
Eston	8,445	7,572
Hartlepool	12,365	11,083
Middlesbrough	23,141	20,854
Redcar	9,492	8,528
Stockton	20,321	17,597
Cumbria		
Carlisle	8,430	7,913
Kendal	2,732	2,418
Workington	5,755	5,337
Whitehaven	4,617	4,218
Penrith	2,043	1,747
Barrow	8,116	7,504
Durham		
Bishop Auckland	14,762	12,396
Chester-Le-Street	6,794	6,059
Darlington	13,905	13,110
Durham	6,174	5,452
Peterlee	7,396	6,145
Seaham	3,154	2,680
Stanley	10,502	9,482
Northumberland		
Ashington	7,097	6,503
Berwick	1,887	1,738
Blyth	8,872	7,816
Hexham	2,865	2,613
Tyne and Wear		
Gateshead	23,898	21,267
Houghton-Le-Spring	4,541	4,092
Jarrow	8,693	7,582
Newcastle St. James	17,303	15,156
Newcastle East	17,170	15,278
Newcastle West	11,836	10,336
North Shields	11,462	9,812
South Shields	14,040	12,130
Sunderland North	20,612	18,670
Sunderland South	16,131	15,014
Wallsend	9,202	8,035

(The source is a 100 per cent. count of cases in action. These figures may, however, overstate the number of people receiving supplementary benefit. Claims records were updated during the conversion to income support. The exercise showed that some claims were still recorded as live even though the person was no longer receiving supplementary benefit. This means that some counts of the number of supplementary benefit claims do not reflect the fall in the number of people receiving supplementary benefit.)

Mr. Blair: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many claimants will not receive any overall increase in their benefit income in April 1989 *(a)* for the United Kingdom as a whole and *(b)* for each of his Department's local offices in the counties of (i) Cleveland, (ii) Cumbria, (iii) Durham, (iv) Northumberland and (v) Tyne and Wear, both numerically and as a percentage of benefit claimants.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Estimates are readily available only for those receiving income support. The latest figures for Great Britain as a whole indicate that about ½ million or 11 per cent. of claimants will not receive any overall increase in their income support in April. The information is not available on an office by office basis.

Single Parents

Mr. Wallace: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many persons in Shetland, who are in receipt of income support, receive the single parents supplement.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: On 31 August 1988, the latest date for which information is available, 145 people were receiving the lone parent premium.

Mr. Frank Field: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will estimate the number of single parents on income support who have ceased working since the change in the disregard rules.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: I regret this information is not available.

Grants and Loans

Mr. Corbett: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security (1) how many applications for a loan or community care grant have been made for help with payment of a fuel supply since April 1988 to the Erdington and Perry Barr offices of his Department; how many of these have been awarded; and what is the total cost of such grants;

(2) how many applications for a loan or community care grant have been made for reconnection of a fuel supply since April to the Erdington and Perry Barr offices of his Department; how many of these have been awarded; and what is the total cost of such loans and grants.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Other than where the need arises as a consequence of an emergency or disaster, awards from the social fund in respect of the cost of mains fuel consumption and associated standing charges are excluded from payment by direction of the Secretary of State. In the period from April 1988 in the Erdington and Perry Barr local offices the latest available figures show that there has been a total of 72 applications for assistance with fuel meter reconnection, installation or re-siting costs of which 36 have received awards totalling £4,787·43.

Mr. Corbett: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security (1) how many community care grant applications have been made each month since April 1988 to the Erdington and Perry Barr offices of his Department; how many have been awarded; and what is the total cost of such grants;

(2) how many applications each month have been made for a community care grant for families under stress; how much was awarded; and what percentage this represents of the community care grant budget each month since April to the Erdington and Perry Barr offices of his Department.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Information on the numbers, by month, of applications for social fund community care grants, together with the numbers and value of awards made is available in the Library. Details of applications for awards of such grants to families under stress are not recorded as a separate identifiable category and the information which the hon. Member seeks could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Mr. Corbett: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many social fund loan applications have been made each month since April to the Erdington and Perry Barr offices of his Department; how many of these have been awarded; and what is the cost of such loans.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Information on numbers of applications for social fund loans received, processed and awarded, listed by local office, including information on budget allocations and expenditure, is available in the Library.

Relocation of Work

Mr. Hind: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will make a further statement on the relocation of some work from London local offices.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Our plans for relocating some work from some local social security offices in London are still under detailed consideration. Final decisions have not yet been taken, but we hope to make a full announcement shortly. The offices currently under consideration are Acton, Brixton, Camberwell, Chelsea, Cricklewood, Crystal Palace, Ealing, Euston, Finsbury Park, Greenwich Park, Harlesden, Highgate, Hither Green, Kensington, Lewisham, Neasden, Notting Hill, Oval, Paddington, Peckham and Southall.

Housing Benefit

Mr. Robin Cook: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many claimants on transitional protection of housing benefit will lose all of it in April as a result of the application of the erosion factor.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Applications for transitional payments will continue to be received until 31 March 1989. Until they have all been received it is not possible to give figures on the numbers who will cease to receive payments when the erosion factor is implemented. However, as these transitional payments are to be reduced by £2 a week in April anyone receiving less than this amount will cease to receive payments in April 1989.

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security in what way the treatment of payments for rental purchase of a house under the income support regulations differs from the treatment of such payments under the supplementary benefit regulations prior to 11 April.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: There was no change. Payments under rental purchase schemes have not been met from supplementary benefit or income support since 1983, when help with such payments was transferred to the new housing benefit scheme. Housing benefit continued to be available to rental purchasers after 11 April 1988, and as I announced in my reply to the hon. Member for Burnley (Mr. Pike) on 14 November 1988 at columns *631-632* we have no plans to change this.

Availability for Employment

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security whether an income support claimant who is incapable of work but not entitled to sickness benefit, invalidity pension or severe disablement allowance can qualify for exemption from the requirement to be available for employment under paragraph 5 of schedule 1 to the Income Support General Regulations as amended with effect from 10 April 1989.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Yes, so long as the claimant provides medical evidence which satisfies the adjudication officer that he is incapable of work.

Tax Liability

Mr. Ralph Howell: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what is the total net tax liability on earnings of £6,500 for *(a)* two single people sharing accommodation where income is equally divided, *(b)* a married couple with a single wage, *(c)* a married couple with two equal wages, *(d)* a married couple on a single wage with two children, and *(e)* a married couple on a single wage with four children.

Mr. Norman Lamont: I have been asked to reply. Information is given in the table.

Income tax liability less child benefit on earnings of £6,500 in 1988-89

		Income tax liability less child benefit	
		£ per annum	*£ per week*
(a)	Two single people sharing accommodation, each earning £3,250	322·50	6·20
(b)	Married couple, husband earning £6,500	601·25	11·56
(c)	Married couple, each earning £3,250	—	—
(d)	Married couple, husband earning £6,500, with two children	−152·75	−2·94
(e)	Married couple, husband earning £6,500 with four children	−906·75	−17·44

Child Benefit

Mr. Jack: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many tax units paying the higher rate of tax receive child benefit; and how much these payments cost.

Mr. Norman Lamont: I have been asked to reply.

I refer my hon. Friend to the reply I gave him on 17 May 1988 at column *419*.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Prisons (Psychiatrists)

Mr. Grocott: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many full and part-time psychiatrists, respectively, are employed to treat persons detained in Her Majesty's prisons.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: None of the full-time medical staff in the prison service is employed wholly on psychiatric work but over 40 (about 40 per cent.) full-time medical officers have a qualification in psychiatry. Over 130 psychiatrists, most of consultant status, hold appointments to undertake sessional work.

Prison Staff (Psychiatric Training)

Mr. Grocott: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what training staff in Her Majesty's prisons receive in dealing with persons with psychiatric problems.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Opportunities are available to full-time medical officers to acquire additional psychiatric qualifications or experience by study and suitable attachments. Arrangements for medical officer training generally are to be reviewed in the light of the imminent report of an advisory working group chaired by the president of the Royal College of Physicians. Many (over 40 per cent.) full-time medical officers hold post-graduate qualifications in psychiatry.

A qualification in psychiatric nursing is held by some hospital officer and nurse grade staff. A substantial element of the induction training received by hospital officers is concerned with aspects of psychiatric care. Development training is also provided for both hospital officer and nurse grade staff in the form of prison service courses dealing with the principles of psychiatric care in a secure environment and opportunities exist for external studies and placements.

Extradition

Mr. Randall: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many requests for extradition in the last year have been made to the Irish authorities; how many have been refused; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John Patten: In the last year requests by police forces in England and Wales for arrest warrants to be backed in the Republic of Ireland have been made in respect of seven persons. None of these requests have been refused.

Disabled Persons (Staff)

Mr Sean Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what percentage of his Department's staff are classed as disabled.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Excepting staff in prison officer grades (whose duties preclude the employment of disabled persons) the number of registered disabled represents 0·7 per cent. of the Department's staff. There is no record of the number of staff with disabilities who elect not to register.

Information (Security)

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether specific changes of procedure have been introduced to improve the security of information from unauthorised use or disclosure that arise from the prosecution of Mr. C. Gumbrell for use of information from the police national computer for unauthorised purposes.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: I understand from the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis that he has not considered it necessary at this stage to introduce any futher improvements in procedures to protect information available to the Metropolitan police from the police national computer, as a result of the prosecution of Mr. C. Gumbrell. The force is already able to trace the originating officer for all inquiries to the PNC from terminals in the force and indeed this facility was used in the case of Mr. Gumbrell. The procedures, however, are kept under constant review and in this task the force has the assistance of the Home Officer adviser on the protection of data held on the PNC.

Police Liaison Committees

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many London boroughs have police liaison consultative committees; how many are officially supported by the majority party of the local council; which borough council majority parties refuse to nominate representatives to their local police consultative committee; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Police/community consultative groups are now established in all London boroughs. The majority parties of five borough councils have refused to nominate representatives to their local group. They are: Brent, Ealing, Hackney, Haringey and Lambeth.

I congratulate the many people of good will who are working so hard to make the consultative process a success, and I deplore the decision by a small minority of councils not to participate. I hope that they will reconsider their position.

Police (Traffic Duties)

Mr. Adley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the total amount of time spent by the Metropolitan Police on traffic matters; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: At 31 December 1987, 881 police officers, 1,527 traffic wardens, 1,100 school crossing patrols and 150 civilian administrative support staff were deployed on specialist traffic duties by the Metropolitan police. The total police strength on that date was 27,438 and that of the civilian staff was 16,360.

Detailed information about man hours and about the time spent on road traffic matters by non-specialist personnel is not available.

Immigration

Mr. Sillars: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many persons detained under the Immigration Act 1971 have been held at police stations in excess of seven days in *(a)* Scotland, *(b)* England and Wales and *(c)* Northern Ireland.

Mr. Renton: I am not aware of any such current case.

Mr. Sillars: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many persons detained under the Immigration Act 1971 are at present held in police stations in *(a)* Scotland, *(b)* England and Wales and *(c)* Northern Ireland.

Mr. Renton: On 7 December 1988 the number of persons detained in police stations under the Immigration Act 1971 were *(a)* in Scotland-nil *(b)* in England and Wales-37 and *(c)* in Northern Ireland-nil.

Mr. Sillars: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether immigration officers have been instructed to use endorsement under section 3(3)(b) of the Immigration Act 1971 in respect of all persons who are eligible for such endorsement.

Mr. Renton: No. Immigration officers are instructed to make use of section 3(3)(b), which enables conditions of leave already granted to be re-imposed, where the passenger's circumstances following examination on arrival warrant its use.

Mr. Sillars: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) how many persons have been deported under section 3(5)(a) of the Immigration Act 1971 since the coming into force of the Immigration Act 1988; and how any persons were so deported in the same period preceding the coming into force of the 1988 Act;

(2) how many voluntary supervised departures have been effected *(a)* in the period since the coming into force of the Immigration Act 1988 and *(b)* in the same period preceding the coming into force of the 1988 Act.

Mr. Renton: Information on the numbers of deportation orders enforced, and of persons removed under supervised departure procedures is published quarterly in table 14 of Home Office statistical bulletin "Control of Immigration: Statistics". Figures up to the second quarter of 1988—the period immediately preceding that in which the Immigration Act 1988 came into force—were published on 16 September 1988 in issue 27/88; figures for the third quarter—during which the Act came into force—will be published in the next bulletin in this series on 15 December. The extension of the supervised departure procedures under the Act came into force on 10 July 1988, and the other provisions of the Act relevant to deportation procedures on 1 August.

Mr. Sillars: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many persons deported from the United Kingdom in 1988 were detained, prior to their deportation, for *(a)* 110 days or less, *(b)* more than 110 days but less than six months and *(c)* more than six months.

Mr. Renton: The readily available information is given below and does not include those detained who were subsequently released before deportation. A total of 262 of the persons deported between 1 January and 30 September 1988 were detained under the Immigration Act 1971 prior to removal for the following periods:

	Number
Less than 3 months	217
3 to 6 months	35
More than 6 months	10

Mr. Sillars: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department in 1988 how many persons who were not held in detention were deported *(a)* 110 days or less, *(b)* more than 110 days but less than six months and *(c)* more than six months after the decision to deport was intimated.

Mr. Renton: The readily available information is as follows:

Ninety four persons who were not detained immediately prior to removal were deported under section 3(5)(a) and 3(5)(b) of the Immigration Act 1971 between 1 January and 30 September 1988. The number of cases and the respective periods between the issue of a notice of intention to deport and enforcement of the deportation orders were as follows:

	Number
Less than 3 months	11
3 to 6 months	6
More than 6 months	77

Information about deportation orders enforced under section 3(6) is not available in the same way. These deportations follow the recommendation of a court and the length of time taken to enforce deportation, if the recommendation is accepted, will vary considerably depending on the length of any custodial sentence imposed by the court.

Mr. Darling: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what consideration he has given to allowing persons seeking leave to enter the United Kingdom who were aged 18 years or under and who were refused leave to enter and who wish to re-apply for leave relying on a DNA test to prove relationship.

Mr. Renton: A person who makes a fresh application when he is 18 years of age or older will normally be expected to meet the requirements set out in paragraph 51 and 52 of the immigration rules. We have under consideration a number of cases of over-age reapplicants who do not qualify for admission under the rules, but we are not yet in a position to announce any general conclusion.

Mr. Darling: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he has any proposals to introduce the DNA testing scheme for persons seeking leave to enter the United Kingdom; if he has determined what charges would be imposed for such a service; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Renton: My right hon. Friend announced on 26 July that we were considering whether DNA testing should continue to be left to private initiative or organised on a centrally run scheme. He indicated that the cost of any such scheme should not fall on the taxpayer. We shall announce our conclusions on these matters as soon as possible.

Rugby Match (Breathalysing)

Sir Ian Lloyd: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether he will call for and publish a detailed analysis of the offences committed by, or reasons given for stopping and breathalysing, the 300 motorists who were stopped and breathalysed on leaving the varsity match at Twickenham on 6 December.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: I understand from the commissioner that 408 motorists were stopped in the vicinity of Twickenham rugby stadium on 6 December under the provisions of section 159 of the Road Traffic Act 1972. One hundred and seventy five drivers were required to provide speciments of breath under the provisions of section 7(1) of the 1972 Act. All the tests were negative.

Random Breath Testing

Sir Ian Lloyd: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether he will make it his policy that random breath testing will not be introduced surreptitiously or in any other way without prior constitutional process following a full debate in the House.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Random breath testing should not be permitted without primary legislation to amend existing police powers contained in the Road Traffic Act 1972. Any such legislation would be subject to the normal process of debate in the House.

NUS Demonstration

Mr. Fatchett: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether he has responded to the National Union of Students' request to set up a public inquiry into the National Union of Students demonstration on student loans held on Thursday 24 November; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hurd: I refer the hon. Member to the reply given to a question from the hon. Member for Newham, South (Mr. Spearing) on 29 November about the demonstration at columns *174-176*. I see no grounds for a public inquiry and the National Union of Students is being advised accordingly.

Police Numbers

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement on the allocation of additional police officers for Leicestershire for 1989-90.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: My right hon. Friend is not yet in a position to announce his decision on the Leicestershire application, and others, for more police posts. He hopes to do so soon.

Elections (Foreign Nationals)

Mr. Teddy Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will outline the nature of the proposals affecting the right of foreign nationals to vote in United Kingdom local elections and to stand for elected office which have been presented to the Council of Ministers by the Commission; when the directive will be considered; and if it will fall to be considered by majority vote in the Council.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The Commission's proposals are the subject of an explanatory memorandum the Home Office submitted to the Select Committee on European Legislation on 17 October, copies of which are available in the Library. I understand that the proposed directive is not being actively considered by the Council. Since it purports to be based on article 235 of the treaty of Rome, action would require the unaninous support of the Council.

Community Radio

Mr. Fisher: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) how many areas are going to be designated for community radio franchises;

(2) by what date the first batch of community radio franchises will be allocated;

(3) what criteria will be used to decide which applications for community radio franchises are successful;

(4) if any stages of the scrutiny of applications for community radio franchises will be held in public;

(5) if he intends to have public consultations before allocating community radio franchises;

(6) whether he will publish the applications of those who successfully bid for community radio franchises;

(7) whether it is his intention that applicants for community radio franchises will be interviewed by the Independent Broadcasting Authority;

(8) when it is his intention to place advertisements inviting applications for community radio franchises.

Mr. Renton: The Independent Broadcasting Authority's proposal to issue contracts for 20 new community radio stations was approved on 2 November this year. The geographical distribution of the new stations, the application procedure and the award of contracts are matters for the Independent Broadcasting Authority itself to determine, having regard to the provisions of the Broadcasting Act 1981.

Mr. Fisher: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many letters of intent have been received by the Independent Broadcasting Authority prior to applications for community radio franchises.

Mr. Renton: I am told by the Independent Broadcasting Authority that it has received 530 letters expressing interest in applying for a community radio station contract.

Mr. Fisher: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is his policy on whether public bodies should be able to contribute funds to community radio stations for the purposes of specific community programmes projects or training schemes.

Mr. Renton: We propose that new legislation should permit public authorities (and voluntary bodies in receipt of public funds) to give reasonable financial support to local (including community) radio stations for the purposes of projects intended to provide a specific benefit to the community, to promote the arts, or to provide training under a scheme approved by the Government.

Mr. Fisher: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) how many community radio stations will be on *(a)* FM and *(b)* AM;

(2) whether any community radio franchises will be on the existing BBC FM sub-band.

Mr. Renton: Decisions on the assignment of frequencies will be taken after the IBA have received and considered formal applications for community radio franchises.

Satellite and Cable Television

Mr. Fisher: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether he will apply the same regulatory standards to satellite and cable programmes, receivable in the United Kingdom, as presently apply to the pre-recorded video cassette industry under the Video Recordings Act 1984.

Mr. Renton: In our White Paper "Broadcasting in the '90s': Competition, Choice and Quality" (November 1988, Cm. 517) we propose that all United Kingdom satellite, cable and microwave services should be subject to the strict consumer protection requirements set out in paragraph 6.10. These are not directly comparable with the requirements for the pre-recorded video cassette industry, because viewers obtain access to broadcast services and pre-recorded video cassettes under different circumstances. Our proposals for deterring unacceptable foreign satellite services receivable in the United Kingdom are set out in paragraphs 7.13 and 7.14 of the White Paper. Copies of the White Paper were placed in the Library.

Interception of Communications

Mr. Randall: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what criteria he uses in assessing whether a warrant is necessary in the interests of national security for the purposes of section 2(2)(a) of the Interception of Communications Act 1985.

Mr. Hurd: These matters are approached in the way set out when the 1985 Act was before Parliament—12 March 1985, col. 151-258—and in the preceding White Paper of February 1985 (Cm. 9438).

Security Service

Mr. Randall: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will publish in the *Official Report* the criteria he will use in assessing the extent to which, in given circumstances, national security will require the protection of the Security Service.

Mr. Hurd: No.

Unlicensed Vehicles

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will call for a report from the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis as to when the Metropolitan police intend to mount their next special campaign in London to enforce the law in respect of unlicensed vehicles.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Police enforcement of the law in respect of unlicensed vehicles within the Metropolis is an operational matter for the commissioner, and we do not consider it necessary to ask for a report on his intentions.

Prisoners (HIV)

Mr. Bermingham: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many male and female prisoners in England and Wales have been found to have contracted the human immunodeficiency virus since monitoring commenced in March 1985.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Two hundred and eleven cases (181 male, and 30 female) have been reported up to and including 8 December 1988. There is no evidence in any of the cases that the infection was acquired after the prisoner came into custody.

Mr. Bermingham: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many male and female prisoners in England and Wales have contracted acquired immunodeficiency syndrome since monitoring commenced in March 1985.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Three cases had been reported up to and including 8 December 1988. All were male. The prisoners concerned have since been released. In each case the infection appeared to have been acquired before the prisoner came into custody.

Mr. Bermingham: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many prisoners have contracted either human immuno-deficiency virus, acquired immunodeficiency syndrome or hepatitis B since March 1985 in the following prison establishments *(a)* Birmingham, *(b)* Lindholme, *(c)* Pentonville, *(d)* Wakefield, *(e)* Wandsworth, *(f)* Liverpool, *(g)* Maidstone, *(h)* Brixton, *(i)* Cardiff, *(j)* Manchester, *(k)* Wormwood Scrubs, *(l)* Parkhurst, *(m)* Long Lartin, *(n)* Reading, *(o)* Hull, *(p)* Leeds and *(q)* Leicester.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The available information, shown in the table, relates to cases reported between March 1985 and 30 November 1988 (HIV antibody positive and AIDS cases) and between April 1985 and March 1988 (hepatitis B cases in the acute and carrier states). There is no evidence from the central monitoring of cases in categories (a) and (b) that any of the prisoners concerned acquired the infection in prison. Cases in categories (c) and (d) are not similarly monitored.

Establishment	(a) HIV Antibody Positive[1]	(b) AIDS[1,2]	(c) Hepatitis B (Acute)[3]	(d) Hepatitis B (Carrier)[3]
Birmingham	8	1	9	10
Lindholme	—	—	3	1
Pentonville	12	—	7	15
Wakefield	1	—	1	4
Wandsworth	12	1	6	44
Liverpool	—	—	29	35
Maidstone	1	—	—	1
Brixton	29	—	4	14
Cardiff	1	—	11	7
Manchester	7	—	82	18
Wormwood Scrubs	8	1	1	19
Parkhurst	—	—	5	3
Long Lartin	—	—	—	11
Reading	3	—	—	7
Hull	1	—	—	9
Leeds	5	—	61	43
Leicester	1	—	10	5

[1] Cases in columns (a) and (b) have been allocated to the establishment at which the identification was first made.
[2] There is no reported case of AIDS in the prison population of England and Wales at present.
[3] In columns (c) and (d) the figures for Maidstone and Wandsworth are for two years only. Statistics for 1985-86 are not available.

Animals (Experiments)

Mrs. Clwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what steps his Department and the Animal Procedures Committee have taken toward ending the use of animals in cosmetic and toiletry tests since the implementation of the Animals (Scientific Procedures) Act 1986.

Mr. Douglas Hogg *[holding answer 8 December 1988]:* The Animals (Scientific Procedures) Act 1986 introduced a substantially more rigorous system of control over the conduct of scientific procedures on animals.

The purpose of all work now has to be authorised by project licences and all project licence applications for the testing of cosmetic substances are scrutinised by the animal procedures committee and modified as necessary.

In its first annual report laid before Parliament on 5 December, the APC identifies the difficult issues involved but concludes that in the interests of safety there should be no blanket ban on the testing of cosmetics and their ingredients.

Mortgage Fraud

Mr. Sean Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) what steps the Government are taking to combat the problem of mortgage fraud; and if he will make a statement;

(2) whether he will initiate discussions with the Building Societies Association and the Association of Mortgage Lenders on the problem of mortgage fraud with a view to mitigating the incidence of the problem.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Neither association has approached us or suggested that there is a widespread problem, and I see no need for specific Government action at present. But I shall keep the matter under review.

Mr. Sean Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what information he has as to how many cases of mortgage fraud the serious fraud office currently have under active prosecution and as to the estimated money involved.

The Attorney-General: I have been asked to reply.

The serious fraud office is prosecuting before the courts three separate cases involving allegations of obtaining mortgages by way of fraud. In two of the three cases the losses to lenders are estimated to be in excess of £6 million and £4-£5 million respectively. It is not yet possible to quantify accurately the sums of money involved in the third case.

DEFENCE

Disabled Persons (Staff)

Mr. Sean Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what percentage of his Department's staff are classed as disabled.

Mr. Sainsbury: 0·93 per cent.

"Spycatcher"

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if it was with his authority and that of his North Atlantic Treaty Organisation ministerial colleagues that it was decided that a promotional campaign should be mounted for Peter Wright's book "Spycatcher" in the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation bookshop in Brussels.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: No.

RAF Planes (Noise)

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list the total number of noise objections received by his Department concerning Royal Air Force planes from *(a)* individuals and *(b)* local authorities for each year since 1983; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Freeman: Inquiries and complaints specifically about noise from Royal Air Force aircraft are not recorded separately from general flying complaints, which often relate to a number of factors, of which noise may be one. Nor are local authority complaints recorded separately; it is not therefore possible to provide the details requested without disproportionate effort.

Seaton Barracks

Mr. Steen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when he plans to sell off the 40 acres of land at Seaton barracks, Plymouth, surplus to requirements.

Mr. Freeman: Plymouth city council has asked us whether the land at Seaton barracks currently required for training could be released for industrial development. We are still in discussion with it.

Battle Tanks

Mr. Nellist: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on the offset arrangements being offered by General Dynamics as part of its bid to secure the contract for the supply of the new battle tank.

Mr. Sainsbury: No, but all relevant factors will be taken into consideration.

Boeing (Offsets)

Mr. Nellist: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what proportion of the annual and total offset arrangements negotiated by Boeing with the United Kingdom, following the 1986 airborne warning and control system deal, are now being taken up by sales of Rolls-Royce engines to the third parties who have bought Boeing air frames; what proportion of each Rolls-Royce engine counts in this method of accounting; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Sainsbury: The AWACS offset agreement allows for 35 per cent. of the value of any sales of Rolls-Royce engines to Boeing for civil aircraft to be counted towards the fulfilment of Boeing's offset obligation, subject to annual and aggregate ceilings. The maximum allowable over the offset period is $800 million. The value of any sales of Rolls-Royce engines to Boeing for military aircraft is allowed in full. Sales of Rolls-Royce engines to third parties would not be eligible for credit under the offset agreement.

Mr. Nellist: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence (1) how much of the estimated £150 million per year of contracts which Boeing estimated would be initially placed in the United Kingdom following the awarding of the airborne warning and control system deal in 1986, can now be identified; and if he will make a statement;

(2) how much, to the latest available date, Boeing has spent in the United Kingdom in connection with its offset agreement made at the time of the 1986 airborne warning and control system deal;

(3) if he will place in the Library copies of the six-monthly submissions from Boeing listing the work they have placed and with which firms, in relation to the agreed offset deal negotiated following the 1986 airborne warning and control system deal; and if he will publish a regular review of these arrangements.

Mr. Sainsbury: Boeing has to date submitted three progress reports claiming offset for contracts valued at $628·3 million. Of the contract values claimed in the first two reports $147·7 million has been approved and $77·5 million rejected as not complying with the agreement. The balance largely relating to contract values in the third report which has only recently been received is under evaluation. It is not our practice to release details of contracts which are commercially confidential.

Mr. Nellist: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many of the 40,000 new jobs due to be created as a consequence of the Boeing airborne warning and control system deal in 1986 can be identified; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Sainsbury: There is no job content in the AWACS offset agreement. Boeing's offset obligation to the MOD is financial and is measured in terms of the value and quality of contracts placed in the United Kingdom defence industry. We expect that the net effect on job numbers over the life of the offset programme will be very favourable.

Thunderbolt Aircraft (Crash)

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will call for an immediate report on the conditions of the crash on 8 December of the United States Air Force A-10 Thunderbolt aircraft from the United Kingdom Bentwater base; whether the aircraft was involved with other North Atlantic Treaty Organisation planes including any from the Royal Air Force; whether the aircraft was involved in low-flying exercises at the time of the crash; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Freeman: The United States Air Force A-10 aircraft which crashed so tragically at Remscheid on 8 December had been on detachment from RAF Bentwaters to Noervenich in the Federal Republic of Germany. There was no Royal Air Force involvement.

The accident is being investigated thoroughly by the United States Air Force and any conclusions relevant to flight safety will be made available to the appropriate NATO authorities in line with agreed procedures. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Defence has sent a message of condolence to Dr. Scholz and the German people.

Offset Agreements

Mr. Nellist: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is his policy on the signature of new agreements containing counter-trade and offset processes; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Sainsbury: It remains the Department's policy to seek offset proposals from offshore companies when placing major orders overseas.

EMPLOYMENT

Opencast Workings

93. **Mr. Allen McKay:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will commission an investigation of the link between dust from opencast workings and ill health and the report to Parliament.

Mr. Nicholls: Any proper investigation of links between opencast mining and ill health in people living nearby would require a long-term epidemiological study. There is no firm evidence that such a study would be worthwhile. However, the Health and Safety Executive will continue to monitor the position and will take account of any new evidence that may emerge.

Employment Training

Ms. Short: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many redundant iron and steel and mine workers who participated in ET will be likely to lose some of their redundancy-related payments; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Nicholls: No redundant iron or steel worker who qualifies for the iron and steel employees rehabilitation

benefit scheme or mineworker who qualifies for assistance under the redundant mineworkers pension scheme, will lose any redundancy-related payment if they participate in employment training.

Negotiations are continuing with British Steel plc to ensure that steel workers eligible to receive payments under their analogous employment and income security agreement will be similarly treated.

Ms. Short: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what is the overall budget for child care provision in ET, broken down by region; how many single parent trainees he estimates will benefit from these payments; and whether he has any plans to extend them to cover married parents.

Mr. Nicholls: There is no specific budget nationally or regionally for the payment of child care costs in employment training. Child care costs of up to £50 per week per child may be met for every lone parent who enters employment training and who needs their help. No target figure has been set for the total number of lone parents entering employment training. There are no plans to extend child care payments to trainees who are not lone parents.

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what are the monthly statistics since September for employment training showing *(a)* entrants in each monthly period, and the number of cumulative entrants since the scheme started, *(b)* a breakdown of entrants which shows how many were male and female, the length of time they had been out of work, their ethnic backgrounds and whether or not they had any disabilities, *(c)* the number of trainees in each monthly period who entered work placements and the cumulative total of how many are in work places at the latest available date, *(d)* trainees who left the scheme in each monthly period, and the number of cumulative leavers since the scheme started, *(e)* for all those trainees who have left the scheme, how many found work, failed to attend, went on to another course of training or education, completed the course, left for sickness or went back into unemployment and *(f)* the total number of currently filled places for each standard Great Britain region.

Mr. Nicholls: The numbers of new entrants to employment training for each month up to November 1988 are shown in table 1. Comprehensive information on the sex, duration of unemployment, ethnicity and disabled status of those taking up employment training places is not yet available in the form requested. However there are some early indications of the proportion of entrants in each of these groups and this information is provided in table 2. Information is not collected on the numbers entering work placements and information on the numbers leaving employment training and their destinations on leaving is not yet available.

The numbers on employment training for each standard region at 2 December 1988 shown in table 3.

Table 1
New entrants to Employment Training (Great Britain)

Period	*Number of entrants*
4 September 1988—30 September 1988	21,500
1 October 1988—28 October 1988	30,900
31 October 1988—25 November 1988	34,800
Cumulative to 2 December 1988	96,000

Table 2
New entrants to Employment Training (Great Britain)
Period: September 1988—October 1988

	Estimated percentages
Sex	
Male	70
Female	30
Duration of Unemployment (prior to Employment Training)	
less than 6 months	12
more than 6 and less than 12 months	35
more than 1 year and less than 2 years	15
more than 2 years	38
Ethnic Origin	
White	90
Black African/Caribbean	4
Indian/Pakistani/Bangladeshi/Sri Lankan	4
None of these	2
People with disabilities	6

Table 3
Filled places on Employment Training at 2 December 1988

Region	*Filled places*
South East	6,600
London	9,700
South West	6,000
West Midlands	10,800
East Midlands	8,000
Yorkshire and Humberside	14,500
North West	14,100
Northern	10,400
Wales	6,500
Scotland	9,900
Great Britain	96,700

Mr. Fisher: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what plans he has to promote employment training in the arts.

Mr. Nicholls: My right hon. Friend has no specific plans to do so. Arts organisations are welcome to take part in employment training and indeed arts training is already a feature of the programme.

Mr. Fisher: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what plans he has to promote employment training in broadcasting.

Mr. Nicholls: My right hon. Friend has no specific plans to do so. Broadcasting organisations are welcome to take part in employment training and indeed some broadcasting skills are already a feature of the programme.

Vacancies

Mr. Leighton: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what was the number of vacancies notified to the employment service in each year since 1979.

Mr. Lee: The table shows the number of new vacancies notified to jobcentres, in the United Kingdom for each year from 1980 to 1987. The requested information is not available on the same basis for 1979.

Recent research has confirmed that, nationally, about a third of all vacancies are notified to jobcentres.

Inflow of notified vacancies—United Kingdom

	Number
1980	2,119,640
1981	1,799,280
1982	1,991,490
1983	2,180,160
1984	2,326,830
1985	2,419,180
1986	2,546,380
1987	2,716,640

School leavers

Mr. Harry Barnes: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many school leavers there were in Derbyshire in the summer of 1988: and how many people have not yet been employed or placed on a YTS scheme.

Mr. Cope: Information on the number of school leavers in the summer of 1988 for each local education authority is not yet available nor is information available on how many have not yet been employed or placed on a YTS scheme. However, at 31 October (the latest available date) there were 2,620 unfilled YTS places in Derbyshire. I am satisfied that the Training Agency has made sufficient places available to satisfy potential demand.

Manufacturing Industry

Mr. Steinberg: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many people were employed in 1979 in manufacturing industry in the northern region; and what is the comparable figure for the latest date available.

Mr. Lee: In September 1979 there were 411,000 employees in employment in manufacturing industry in the northern region. In September 1988, the latest date for which comparable figures are available, the number was 262,000.

Tourism

Mr. Butterfill: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what steps his Department is taking to encourage more private investment in the tourism industry.

Mr. Lee: Capital investment in the tourism and leisure sector is currently running at record levels. I have taken every opportunity to draw attention to the industry's growth potential in the many contacts I have had with different sectors of the industry and with representatives of financial institutions.

Mr. Butterfill: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many major private sector companies are participating in the English Tourist Board's England for Excellence award scheme; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lee: In 1988, the first year of the England for Excellence scheme 16 private sector companies provided sponsorship for individual awards. Representatives of a further 12 companies sat on the judging panels. The total cost of running the award scheme was covered by support from these private sector sponsors.

YTS

Mr. Leighton: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what is the current average length of stay on YTS.

Mr. Cope: It is currently estimated that the average length of stay for entrants in 1988-89 will be 71 weeks for two-year entitlement trainees and 41 weeks for one-year entitlement trainees.

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many people of YTS eligible age, registered with jobcentres or the careers service were awaiting an offer of a YTS place; and how many of the unfilled places on the scheme available at those dates were on YTS schemes run by *(a)* employers and *(b)* agencies, at the end of October 1986, 1987, 1988 and at the most recently available date.

Mr. Cope: Information on the number of people of YTS eligible age awaiting an offer of a YTS place is not available nationally.

The number of unfilled places on schemes run by employers and agencies at 31 October 1986, 31 October 1987 and 31 October 1988, the latest available date, is given in the table.

	Unfilled places	
	On schemes run by employers	*On schemes run by agencies*
31 October 1986	56,465	72,996
31 October 1987	69,518	108,167
31 October 1988	59,403	59,055

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many YTS trainees were in receipt of a board and lodging allowance to undertake training away from their home at the end of October 1986, 1987 and 1988, respectively.

Mr. Cope: I regret that the information requested is not available and could only be obtained at disproportionate cost.

YTS (Deaths)

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will give details, in the form given by the central health and safety unit annual accidents report, of the circumstances of the four fatalities which occurred during the period July to September.

Mr. Cope: On 5 August a trainee was working at a garage removing dust from the rear of a petrol tanker with an airline whilst the proprietor was welding a crack in the main tank. An explosion occurred causing extensive damage to the building and fatal injuries to the trainee.

On 16 August a trainee electrician was working up a ladder on the side of a building clipping electric cables to trunking. It is understood that the trainee fell from the ladder and received fatal injuries.

On 18 August a trainee was working on an agricultural engineering scheme where he was assisting the foreman who was replacing the rear boom of a mechanical digger/loader. The arm of the digger was supported on a tyre and a trolley jack. The driver of the digger/loader was asked to lower the jack and during this process the rear boom arm and the bucket collapsed and fell on the trainee causing fatal injuries.

On 14 September a trainee offered to drive a workmate (an electrician) to a job as the workmate's car had broken down. The trainee used his own car but on the way collided with a lorry after pulling out of a minor road. The workmate survived but the trainee received fatal injuries.

The inquests or fatal accident inquiries on all four fatalities are still outstanding.

Creches

Mr. David Young: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will introduce a legal requirement for the provision of creche facilities by employers.

Mr. Nicholls: No. The Government welcome action by employers to help employees combine work and family responsibilities through measures such as the provision of creche facilities, and flexible working practices, but considers that it is for individual employers to decide which arrangements best suit their and their employees' needs and resources.

Careers Service

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what plans his Department has for the Inner London education authority careers service after the transfer of educational functions to inner London boroughs in April.

Mr. Cope: Local education authorities have the statutory duty to provide a careers service. After 1 April 1990 this responsibility will pass from ILEA to the inner London boroughs. Discussions are currently taking place with those boroughs and LEAs in the London area about the assumption of these duties and about whether there is a need for some central provision in support of local careers services.

Health and Safety

Mr. Patchett: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will list in the *Official Report* the total number of deaths at work, the total number of accidents at work and the total number of cases of workplace-related ill-health for each of the years 1974 to 1987 inclusive.

Mr. Nicholls: The available statistics, based on reported injuries covering all industries in Great Britain, are set out in the table below. It is believed that all cases of reportable fatal injuries are reported. Statistics for non-fatal major injuries, and over 3 day injuries for 1986-87, are believed to be significantly reduced by under-reporting.

Occupational injuries

Year	*Fatal injuries to*		*Non-fatal major injuries to employees and self employed*	*[1]Over 3 day injuries to*	
	Employees only	*Employees and self employed*		*Employees*	*Employees and self employed*
				(thousands)	
1974	651	..	..	577	..
1975	620	..	..	..	..
1976	584	..	..	553	..
1977	524	..	..	579	..
1978	499	622	..	581	..
1979	492	615	..	509	..
[2]1980	440	579	..	407	..
1981	444	498	12,407	435	..
1982	471	519	12,413	390	..
1983	447	512	12,567	..	..
1984	438	498	12,638	..	..
1985	399	470	13,381	..	..
[3,4]1986	98	108	4,053	..	..
[5]1986-87	356	413	20,872	158	159

.. Not available.

[1] Over 3 day absences leading to claims for industrial injury benefit from DHSS, years starting on 1st Monday in June 1974-80. Claims as notified to HSE under the Notification of Accidents and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations (NADOR) for the calendar years 1981-82. The figures from 1974 to 1982 include absences caused by injuries currently classified as major. For 1986-87 see footnote [5].

[2] 1978-80 fatalities include some to non-employees not covered by then existing legislation, but which were voluntarily reported.

[3] January to March.

[4] 1981-March 1986 fatalities and major injuries to employees and self employed persons reported to the Health and Safety Executive or other appropriate enforcing authority under, and as defined in, the Notification of Accidents and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations (NADOR).

[5] Fatalities, major injuries and over 3 day absences to employees and self employed persons reported under, and as defined in the Reporting of Injuries Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations, 1985 (RIDDOR) in the year commencing 1 April 1986.

Occupational Diseases

The total number of awards under the industrial injuries and disablement benefit schemes for cases of occupational disease arising between 1974 and 1987 is listed below. The figures quoted up to 1983 are for Injury and Disablement benefit cases combined; thereafter they relate only to Disablement Benefit.

Year	*Awards total injury and disablement benefit*
1974	16,010
1975	15,542
1976	15,829
1977	14,806
1978	13,912
1979	12,820
1980	11,435
1981	9,246

Year	Awards total injury and disablement benefit
1982	8,267
1983	5,574
	Disablement Benefit
1984	3,628
1985	3,993
1986	4,975
1987	4,795

Sex Discrimination Act 1975

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what individuals or organisations submitted responses to the consultation document on section 51 of the Sex Discrimination Act 1975 announced on 10 December 1987.

Mr. Nicholls: A total of 83 individuals and organisations submitted responses, including the Health and Safety Commission and the Equal Opportunities Commission, which have statutory functions relevant to the matters covered by the consultation document. The responses are being treated in confidence except where the individual or organisation concerned has chosen to publish.

Disabled People

Sir Michael McNair-Wilson: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many persons are registered disabled within the meaning of section 6 of the Disabled Persons (Employment) Act 1944.

Mr. Lee: The number of people registered as disabled under section 6 of the Disabled Persons (Employment) Act 1944 on 18 April 1988, the latest date for which figures are available, was 374,238.

ENERGY

Coal Industry (Manning Levels)

13. **Mr. McKelvey:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what are the projected manning levels in the British coal industry for each of the next two years.

Mr. Michael Spicer: The Government do not make such projections. The level of employment in the coal industry depends on a number of factors, including the industry's continued ability to raise its competitiveness.

Offshore Safety

22. **Mr. Tony Banks:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what recent consideration he has given to the implementation of the recommendations of the Burgoyne report into offshore safety.

Mr. Peter Morrison: Many of the recommendations of the Burgoyne committee were either implemented before its report was published or shortly thereafter. The current offshore safety regime closely reflects that recommended by the Burgoyne committee.

Electricity (Nuclear Generation)

23. **Dr. Moonie:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what effect the generation of electricity by nuclear power is likely to have on the price paid by consumers over the next five years.

Mr. Michael Spicer: Nuclear generation will help to protect electricity consumers from fossil fuel price increases. The cost of nuclear power is already contained in electricity prices.

Severn Barrage

24. **Mr. Michael:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what is his latest assessment of the earliest date at which the proposed Severn barrage could be providing electricity.

Mr. Michael Spicer: The Severn estuary is one of the best potential sites in the world due to its exceptionally high tidal range. A barrage there would, if required, supply up to 6 per cent. of electricity demand in England and Wales in the year 2003 at the earliest.

Severn Tidal Bore Generation Project

25. **Mr. Dykes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy when he expects to announce a final decision for the River Severn tidal bore water energy generation projects.

Mr. Michael Spicer: The current phase of studies by the Severn Tidal Power Group is nearing completion and a report is expected early next year. The report will not include financing and related issues, which will be addressed in the time scale of electricity privatisation. Thereafter it will be a matter for commercial judgment under the terms of the Electricity Bill before the House as to whether the project goes forward.

Wave Energy

26. **Mr. Fearn:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he will make a statement on the level of investment in research into wave energy.

Mr. Michael Spicer: The level of spend on research and development on the technology this year is expected to be about £150,000.

Electricity Privatisation

27. **Mr. Thurnham:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what recent representations he has received about his proposals for privatising the electricity supply industry.

Mr. Michael Spicer: I continue to receive representations on electricity privatisation. It is clear from my discussions with many interest groups that there is a large body of support for our proposals.

30. **Ms. Armstrong:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what proposals he has for the staffing of the regulator's office consequent on the privatisation of the electricity industry.

Mr. Parkinson: I refer the hon. Member to the answer given to the hon. Member for Sedgefield (Mr. Blair) on Friday 9 November.

39. **Mr. Amos:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what assessment he has made of how the privatisation of the electricity industry will benefit rural areas.

Mr. Michael Spicer: We believe that our proposals will create a more efficient, economic and competitive industry for the benefit of all consumers.

57. **Mr. Galloway:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what are his latest proposals for the price controls which will operate in the event of privatisation of the electricity industry.

Mr. Parkinson: I refer the hon. Member to the answer given earlier today to the hon. Member for Glasgow, Maryhill (Mrs. Fyfe).

Electricity Generation

28. **Mr. Harry Greenway:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy how much electricity is produced from *(a)* coal, *(b)* nuclear energy, *(c)* oil and *(d)* other sources; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Spicer: As state in tabled 9 of the Central Electricity Generating Board's annual report and accounts for 1987-88 (a copy of which is in the Library of the House) electricity supplied by the CEGB's power stations in 1987-88 was as follows:

	TWh	*Per cent.*
Coal	186·4	81·7
Nuclear	32·8	14·4
Oil	9·3	4·1
Other	−0·4	−0·2

49. **Mr. Rooker:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what assessment his Department has made of the relative cost of generating electricity by coal, oil and nuclear energy after taking account of the waste disposal and decommissioning investment allowed for.

Mr. Michael Spicer: This is an operational matter for the Central Electricity Generating Board. I have asked the chairman to write to the hon. Member.

Director General of Gas Supply

29. **Mr. Frank Field:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy when he next intends to meet the Director General of Gas Supply; and what matters will be discussed.

38. **Mr. Haynes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy when he next intends to meet the Director General of Gas Supply to discuss the implementation of the recent Monopolies and Mergers Commission report.

Mr. Peter Morrison: I regularly meet the Director General of Gas Supply and we discuss a range of matters of mutual concern.

Marginal Oil Fields (North Sea)

31. **Mr. Moss:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what representations he has received on the effect of the Petroleum Royalties (Relief) and Continental Shelf Bill on the development of marginal oil fields in the North sea.

Mr. Peter Morrison: I hold frequent discussions about offshore developments with the oil industry. I am happy to say that I have had no adverse representations on the effects of the royalties Bill on marginal developments. Indeed, as I told the House on 30 November, Hamilton Brothers announced earlier this year that as a direct result of the Government's intention to abolish royalties in the southern basin it would develop the Ravernspurn north field.

Retired and Redundant Miners

32. **Mr. Hardy:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he will meet the chairman of British Coal to discuss the position of retired and redundant miners.

Mr. Michael Spicer: I meet the chairman of British coal regularly to discuss all aspects of the coal industry.

CEGB

33. **Mr. Cox:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy when he last met the chairman of the Central Electricity Generating Board; and what subjects were discussed.

34. **Ms. Mowlam:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy when he last met the chairman of the Central Electricity Generating Board; and what matters were discussed.

35. **Mr. Allan Roberts:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy when he next intends to meet the chairman of the Central Electricity Generating Board; and what he proposes to discuss.

Mr. O'Brien: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy when he will be meeting the chairman of the Central Electricity Generating Board; and what subjects he will be raising.

Mr. Parkinson: I regularly meet the Chairman of the Central Electricity Generating Board to discuss a range of issues.

Energy Needs

36. **Mr. Chapman:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what is his estimate of the percentage of United Kingdom energy needs in the year 2000 which will be met by coal, oil, gas, nuclear and renewables; and how these proportions vary from the present.

Mr. Michael Spicer: My Department has not published such estimates for several years. Experience of the energy market has shown that changes in the future composition of energy demand cannot be forecast with any certainty.

37. **Mr. Ward:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what proportion of the United Kingdom's total national energy needs was met by the private sector for the last year for which figures are available; if he will give the comparable figures for 1979; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Cecil Parkinson: In 1987 the proportion of energy used which was produced in the private sector was 74 per cent.; this compares with 41 per cent. in 1979.

Private Mines

40. **Mr. Butler:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he will make it his policy to ease the restrictions on private mines within this Session of Parliament.

Mr. Parkinson: As I said to the House on 7 November 1988 at column 2, changes to the statutory limits on licensed mining have been overtaken by our decision to privatise the coal industry in the next Parliament. In the meantime private mines should benefit from the opportunities from a more open market for coal in this country following the privatisation of the generating companies. I am exploring with British Coal the scope for greater flexibility towards licensed mining within the present statutory framework.

Nuclear Waste

41. **Mr. David Davis:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what was the total volume of waste produced by the generation of electricity by the nuclear industry in 1987; and what are the comparable figures for the coal industry.

Mr. Michael Spicer: This is an operational matter for the Central Electricity Generating Board. I have asked the chairman to write to my hon. Friend.

British Coal

42. **Mr. Janner:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy when he last met the chairman of British Coal; and what matters were discussed.

44. **Mr. Hood:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy when he next intends to meet the chairman of British Coal; and what matters will be discussed.

48. **Mr. Jack Thompson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy when he last met the chairman of British Coal; and what issues were discussed.

Mr. Steinberg: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy when he next intends to meet the chairman of British Coal; and what matters he proposes to discuss.

Mr. Parkinson: I have regular meetings with the chairman of British Coal to discuss all aspects of the coal industry.

Atomic Energy Authority

43. **Mr. Wray:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy when he last met the chairman of the Atomic Energy Authority; and what matters were discussed.

Mr. Michael Spicer: My right hon. Friend last met the chairman of the AEA on 21 September 1988. A variety of matters were discussed.

52. **Ms. Walley:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy when he next intends to meet the chairman of the United Kingdom Atomic Energy Authority to discuss research allocations.

Mr. Michael Spicer: My right hon. Friend and I meet the chairman from time to time to discuss these matters.

Coal Industry Dispute

45. **Mr. Skinner:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what further representations he has received asking him to seek discussions with British Coal regarding the reinstatement of miners sacked during the 1984-85 coal strike; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Spicer: I have nothing to add to the answer given by my right hon. Friend on 28 March 1988 at column 293.

Double Glazing

46. **Mr. Holt:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what new initiatives are planned to encourage or require house builders to install double glazing in all new houses.

Mr. Peter Morrison: Minimum standards of insulation for new housing are specified in building regulations. Draft regulations further increasing standards of thermal efficiency are at present under consideration by the Department of the Environment. In addition, the Energy Efficiency Office promotes a number of measures for improving the energy efficiency of housing, including double glazing where economic.

Scottish Coal

47. **Mr. Douglas:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what assessment he has made of the impact of his privatisation proposal on the levels of imports into England of Scottish coal.

Mr. Michael Spicer: None. After privatisation the sourcing of the coal British Coal supplies to its customers is a matter for commercial negotiations between the parties involved.

North Sea Oil Rigs

50. **Mr. Favell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what assessment he has made of the de-commissioning costs of oil rigs in the North sea.

Mr. Peter Morrison: The estimates of abandonment costs remain very uncertain due to continuing uncertainties as to timing, technology and extent of removal. But for all existing installations and for those currently in the process of, or close to construction my Department currently estimates an aggregate abandonment cost of some £4 billion at 1988 prices.

Coal Burn

51. **Mr. Barron:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what plans he has to increase the Government's funding of research and development on clean coal burn; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Spicer: The increase of over £1 million to £2·6 million next year in my Department's coal-based energy research and development budget will be used to support additional research on the clean use of coal.

Coal Mining Subsidence

53. **Mr. Harry Barnes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he has plans in the current parliamentary Session to introduce measures to improve compensation arrangements for those who suffer from the effects of coal mining subsidence.

Mr. Michael Spicer: Decisions on coal mining subsidence legislation will be taken after careful consideration of all comments received on the Government's consultation Paper issued earlier this year. The legislation will be introduced when the legislative timetable permits.

Oil Fabrication Yards

54. **Mrs. Margaret Ewing:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what discussions he has recently held with individuals or groups who are concerned with achieving secure employment and orders for oil fabrication yards.

Mr. Peter Morrison: I have had a number of discussions recently about the oil fabrication industry. Only last week I chaired the offshore industry liaison committee, which includes representatives from the oil and supplies industries and trade unions when the situation in the fabrication industry and its prospects were reviewed. The upturn in UKCS oil and gas activity this year has provided improved opportunities for competitive yards.

Southern Electricity Board

55. **Mr. Colvin:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy when he last met the chairman of the Southern Electricity Board; and what matters were discussed.

Mr. Parkinson: I met the chairman of the Southern Electricity Board and the other area board chairmen on Monday 28 November. We discussed a range of issues concerning the privatisation of the electricity supply industry.

Energy Saving

56. **Ms. Quin:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if his Department plans any further advertising campaigns to promote energy saving.

Mr. Peter Morrison: We continue to publicise and promote energy efficiency through a variety of means, including targeted advertising, for example "The Heat is On" campaign aimed at major energy using sectors of industry (chemical, ceramics and metal). A series of press advertisements was featured strongly in this campaign.

North-East Coalfields

58. **Mr. Clelland:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what assessment he has made of the effects of electricity privatisation on the north-east coalfields.

Mr. Michael Spicer: This is a matter for British Coal.

British Gas

59. **Mr. McAllion:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy when he next intends to meet the chairman of British Gas plc to discuss the report of the Monopolies and Mergers Commission.

Mr. Peter Morrison: I refer the hon. Member to my answer given earlier today to my hon. Friend the Member for Erewash (Mr. Rost).

Wind Energy

1. **Mr. Wallace:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he will make a statement on the level of investment in research into wind energy.

Mr. Michael Spicer: The Government have invested over £25 million in wind energy research and are currently investing over £4 million annually. In addition United Kingdom industry, including the electricity supply industry is currently investing over £5 million annually.

Coal Industry (Subsidy)

10. **Mr. Dickens:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what was the total subsidy paid to the coal industry over the last five years.

Mr. Parkinson: The Government have provided more than £7½ billion in financial support to British Coal in the last five years.

Energy Efficiency Office

14. **Mr. Matthew Taylor:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he will make a statement on the working of the Energy Efficiency Office.

Mr. Peter Morrison: As I have already announced, the Energy Efficiency Office is entering a new phase in which it will offer more specific and targeted services with an emphasis on the regional offices.

Rhoosecote Power Station

21. **Mr. Franks:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he will make a statement on progress on the sale of Rhoosecote power station in Cumbria.

Mr. Michael Spicer: I have asked the chairman of CEGB to write to my hon. Friend as a matter of urgency.

Hinkley Point C

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what is his policy on the allocation of civil servants from his Department to assist the Hinkley Point C inquiry inspector, in the drafting of chapters of his final report.

Mr. Michael Spicer: My right hon. Friend has provided the inquiry inspector with the resources and staff that he (the inspector) felt necessary to conduct the inquiry. It is a matter for the inspector to determine in which way to use these resources and to which tasks to allocate his staff.

Departmental Offices

Mr. Alan Williams: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy how many staff were accommodated in his Department's headquarters in 1986; how many he expects will be accommodated in the new offices in 1989; and in each case what is the area of office space per head.

Mr. Parkinson: In September 1986 the Department's headquarters occupied 242,419 sq ft, accommodating 814 staff in post. The new headquarters will have 184,000 sq ft and we expect to have 840 staff in post. Space per head is therefore 298 sq ft and 219 sq ft respectively.

Coal Mining

Mr. Hood: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he will list the numbers of those employed in the coal mining industry in each of the coalfield areas; and if he will also list the numbers employed by British Coal, giving the percentage in each case.

Mr. Michael Spicer: Information on the numbers of British Coal employees is a matter for the British Coal Corporation.

Power Companies

Mr. Blair: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what will be the salaries of the chairmen and chief executives of the National Power Company, the Power Generation Company and the National Grid Company.

Mr. Parkinson: I shall be determining the salary levels to be paid at flotation in due course. After flotation salaries are a matter for the boards and their shareholders.

Alternative Sources of Energy

Mr. Wray: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy, further to his answer to the hon. Member for Glasgow Provan, *Official Report*, 28 November, column *125*, if he will urgently make it his policy to allocate the same amount of funds for research on alternative sources of energy, as is allocated for research on nuclear energy.

Mr. Michael Spicer: No. There is an inherent difference in scale, and hence in costs, between the R & D needed to achieve results in the different sectors. Nuclear R & D is at the development stage, which is also inherently more expensive than the research stage, at which much of the non-nuclear work is being done at present. The Government look at each research area and programme on its own merits, in the light of advice from ACORD, and allocate resources accordingly, rather than try to seek a spurious balance between them.

Power Station (Malta)

Mr. Harry Barnes: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he will monitor the building of a new power station in Malta as a means of drawing lessons for the siting and nature of energy systems in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Michael Spicer: No.

Generating Costs

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what have been the generation costs of power from coal-fired, oil-fired and nuclear plants, respectively, for the last two years in England and Wales; and what have been the total generation costs for electricity from all types of stations.

Mr. Michael Spicer: This is an operational matter for the Central Electricity Generating Board. I have asked the chairman to write to the hon. Member.

Drax Power Station

Mr. Barron: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy when he expects the Central Electricity Generating Board to place the order for the fluegas desulphurisation plant for the Drax power station.

Mr. Michael Spicer: This is a matter for the board, but I expect the order to be placed shortly.

Coinpower (Sale)

Mr. Barron: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he has been notified by British Coal whether the sale of Coinpower has been completed.

Mr. Michael Spicer: This is a matter for British Coal.

TRANSPORT

Bus Undertakings

Mr. Graham Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many bus undertakings have been subject to management buy-outs or worker share-holdings schemes since 1979.

Mr. Portillo: Thirty-nine National Bus Company subsidiaries have been acquired either wholly or partially by their managements or by their managements and staff jointly. One local authority owned bus company has also recently been taken over by its management and staff with an employee share ownership plan, and in another case the staff acquired a minority shareholding. We have no information available on such takeovers in the private sector.

Written Answers to Questions

Tuesday 13 December 1988

SCOTLAND

Rating Reform

Mr. Allan Williams: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland why the Driver and Vehicle Licensing Centre facilities in Wales were used to have poll tax forms for Scotland prepared for dispatch; and what was the role of Bowie Systems.

Mr. Lang: The arrangements made by community charges registration officers are a matter for them.

Employment Training

Mr. David Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many *(a)* young males and *(b)* young females are unemployed in (i) Scotland, (ii) Strathclyde region, (iii) Glasgow district and (iv) Shettleston constituency; and how many unfilled YTS places are available to (1) young males and (2) young females in each of these areas.

Mr. Lang: The number of male and female unemployed claimants under the age of 18 on 13 October 1988 (the latest date for which information is available) in each of the areas requested is shown in the table.

Unemployed claimants under 18

Area	*Males*	*Females*	*Total*
Scotland	617	444	1,061
Strathclyde region	325	227	552
Glasgow district	130	109	239
Shettleston parliamentary constituency	15	10	25

On 5 December 1988 (the latest date for which an overall Scottish total is available) there were 13,000 unfilled YTS places.

Separate details of unfilled YTS places for individual constituencies are not available and the latest date for which a detailed breakdown of the number of unfilled places is available is 4 November 1988. On that date, the numbers of unfilled YTS places were as follows:

	Number
Scotland	12,227
Strathclyde region	5,072
Glasgow (training agency area office)	2,000

Places on YTS are open to both male and female, as the training agency is fully committed to equal opportunities.

Mr. Leighton: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many trainees are on employment training in Scotland.

Mr. Lang: There were 19,818 trainees participating in employment training in Scotland at 7 December 1988.

Mr. McLeish: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many approved YTS places are available in Scotland; and how many of those aged 16 and 17 years were on YTS on the latest date for which information is available.

Mr. Lang: At 31 October 1988, the latest date for which complete information is available, there were 63,463 YTS places in Scotland, of which 13,425 were unfilled. On the same date 50,038 young people were on YTS. A small number of 18-year-olds are included in this figure as it is not possible to exclude these without disproportionate cost to the Department.

Orthotists

Mr. Alfred Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many orthotists there are in Scotland; and how many orthotists there are in Scotland per 100,000 people.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: There were 25 orthotists employed by the NHS in Scotland at 30 September 1987, representing 0·5 per 100,000 population. Orthotists are also employed by private firms in Scotland, but their number is not collected centrally.

Prosthetists

Mr. Alfred Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many prosthetists there are in Scotland; and how many amputees there are in Scotland per prosthetist.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: There were 23 prosthetists employed by the NHS and private firms in Scotland at 30 November 1988 (excluding trainees and orbital prosthetists), equivalent to 296 amputees per prosthetist.

Assisted Places Scheme

Mr. Strang: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list all the schools which receive pupils paid for in whole or in part under the assisted places scheme, and the number of assisted place pupils each school had in 1987-88.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The information is as follows:

School	*Number of assisted pupils*
Albyn School for Girls, Aberdeen	15
Belmont House School, Newton Mearns	17
Craigholme School for Girls, Glasgow	[1]30
Daniel Stewart's and Melville College, Edinburgh	560
Mary Erskine School, Edinburgh	
George Watson's College, Edinburgh	
Dollar Academy	
Edinburgh Academy	
Fernhill School, Glasgow	[illegible]
Fettes Col[illegible]	28
For[illegible]	43
G[illegible]burgh	[1]221
C[illegible]	42
[illegible]mond College, Perthshire	[1]35
Gordonstoun School, Morayshire	22
The High School of Dundee	[1]170
High School of Glasgow	58
Hutchesons' Grammar School, Glasgow	[1]147
Keil School, Dumbarton	57
Kelvinside Academy, Glasgow	54
Kilgraston, (Convent of the Sacred Heart)	51
Kilquhanity House School, Castle Douglas	17

School	Number of assisted pupils
Laurel Bank School, Castle Douglas	[1]59
Lomond School, Helensburgh	43
Loretto School, Musselburgh	23
Merchiston Castle School, Edinburgh	49
Morrisons Academy, Crieff	[1]155
The Park School, Glasgow	53
Rannoch School, Perthshire	25
Robert Gordon's College, Aberdeen	[1]54
Rudolf Steiner School of Edinburgh	58
St. Aloysius' College, Glasgow	137
St. Columba's, Kilmacolm, Renfrewshire	[1]47
St. Denis and Cranley School, Edinburgh	18
St. George's School for Girls, Edinburgh	16
St. Leonard's School, St. Andrews	22
St. Margaret's School for Girls, Aberdeen	13
St. Margaret's School for Girls, Edinburgh	54
Strathallan School, Forgandenny, Perthshire	34
Wellington School, Ayr	[1]39
Westbourne School for Girls, Glasgow	[1]70
Total	2,672

[1] Provisional figures which may be subject to adjustment following receipt of final audited claims still to be submitted by the schools concerned.

Degree Courses

Mrs. Ray Michie: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many students are taking four-year degree courses at Scottish universities at present.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: In 1987-88 there were 30,600 undergraduate students on four-year full-time and sandwich courses at Scottish universities. This figure includes overseas and other students not in receipt of assistance under British student support arrangements. For those on sandwich courses the four-year period is inclusive of time spent working in industry as part of the course.

School Leavers

Mr. McLeish: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what is the estimated number of young people leaving school at Christmas.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The projected number of school leavers at Christmas 1988 is not available. The number of school leavers in the winter of session 1987-88 was 15,600.

YTS (Lothian)

Mr. Ron Brown: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many young people, because of unsuitability or other reasons, have not so far been placed on YTS in Leith and other constituencies within Lothian region; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Ian Lang: Such information is not collected by the Government.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Official Secrets

Mr. Richard Shepherd: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will list those international organisations from which the United Kingdom Government obtain information in confidence, as referred to in clause 3 of the Official Secrets Bill; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar: It would not be practicable to compile a list as requested. Circumstances might arise in which Her Majesty's Government receive information of the kind specified in the Bill from a number of international organisations.

GCHQ Cheltenham

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what restrictions exist on former Government Communications Headquarters officers wishing to emigrate to the Soviet Union.

Mr. Waldegrave: Former GCHQ employees are not permitted to visit the Soviet Union for three years after the end of their service. Thereafter, they are free to visit or reside in the USSR.

Nuclear Reprocessing Plant

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if any officials from his Department were present at the Lascar review committee meeting on nuclear safeguards applications at large scale reprocessing plants, held in Tokyo on 17-21 October.

Mr. Eggar: No.

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what resource commitment has been made by his Department towards the Lascar group on technical information exchanges on safeguards applications at large scale reprocessing plants.

Mr. Eggar: None.

Mr. P. J. Haseldine

Mr. Campbell Savours: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what action he intends to take in the case of Mr. P. J. Haseldine of the information department of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office following publication of a letter from him in *The Guardian* of 7 December.

Mr. Eggar: The matter is being considered in accordance with procedures laid down in diplomatic service regulations. The action to be taken will depend on the outcome of this consideration.

NATO-Warsaw Pact Communications

Ms. Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what are the present direct channels of communications between member countries of the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation and the Warsaw pact; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Waldegrave: The member countries of the two organisations maintain embassies in each other's capitals. In addition, their representatives meet in various forums discussing security issues, such as the conference on disarmament in Geneva and the conventional stability talks mandate negotiations in Vienna.

EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

Student Loans

Mr. Barnes: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what are his estimates of the effect of the introduction of a scheme for student loans upon the numbers of adult students entering full-time education who are *(a)* women, *(b)* ethnic minorities and *(c)* of working class background.

Mr. Jackson: Top-up loans mean extra resources for students. That will make higher education more attractive to students of all ages and from all backgrounds.

Mr. Straw: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if, pursuant to his reply on 2 December to the hon. Member for Blackburn, *Official Report* columns *406-7*, he will provide a full list of those organisations with whom he is discussing his proposals for student loans; and whether all members of the banking and financial services sector are to be consulted.

Mr. Baker: I have nothing to add to my reply to the hon. Member on 2 December.

Economic and Social Sciences

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will make a statement on his policy towards the European Commission stimulation plan for economic and social sciences (com (88) 98 final/spes) 1989 to 1992; and how it will assist the development of new co-operation in Europe on economic and social scientific initiatives in universities and research institutes.

Mr. Jackson: The Government welcomes this proposal to promote European co-operation in economic science. It complements existing Government policies directed at enhancing appropriate international collaboration in research and development. It will assist co-operation by supporting training, communication, and mobility among European economists.

School Performances (Fees)

Mr. Latham: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science whether he will make a statement on the effect of the new statutory requirements on charging of fees on visiting drama groups, poetry readings or other artistic professionals coming into schools to perform for children; and what representations he has received from head teachers in that regard.

Mr. Butcher: My right hon. Friend has no reason to believe that the level of visits by groups of performers to schools need change markedly as a result of the provisions of the Education Reform Act. The Act clarifies earlier legislation in establishing that schools may not charge for any provision offered during school hours, with the exception of individual music tuition. Charges may be made for activities provided outside school hours, unless these are required for a prescribed examination syllabus or for the national curriculum.

Restrictions on charging do not prevent local authorities or schools from seeking voluntary contributions in support of particular activities, and we are confident that parents will continue to support activities which they regard and have regarded in the past as educationally worth while. There has been a small number of representations from head teachers which mention this issue. A draft circular of advice to local authorities and schools was issued for consultation in September. The Department is now analysing the responses to consultation and plans to issue final guidance early in January 1989.

Disabled Students Allowance

Mr. Hannam: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science whether the payment of the disabled students allowance by local education authorities to registered disabled students in receipt of a mandatory award who incur additional expenditure arising from their attendance on the course and because of their disability, is discretionary or mandatory; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Jackson: The allowance is payable as part of a mandatory award but decisions on whether and at what level it should be paid in individual cases are for local education authorities. Payments of up to £730 may be made where the authority is satisfied that a disabled student is obliged, by reason of his disability, to incur additional expenditure in respect of his attendance on his course.

Teacher Recruitment

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what is his policy on providing resources to local education authorities to support the recruitment, retention and motivation of school teachers, especially in inner London, after April 1990.

Mrs. Rumbold: The school teachers' pay and conditions document 1988 gives LEAs flexibility to take account of the problems of recruiting and retaining teachers in urban areas. The teaching as a career unit, financed by the Department, is already in discussion with LEAs about best practice on recruitment policy. These discussions encompass the inner London boroughs, which will need to liaise with ILEA over the arrangements for teacher recruitment up to April 1990.

Foreign Language Teachers

Mr. Fatchett: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science whether he has made any projections about the potential supply of foreign language teachers once the proposed directive on national reorganisation of higher education diplomas comes into force in 1991; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Butcher: The supply projections included in my Department's memorandum to the Education, Science and Arts Committee on teacher supply assume a very limited increase in the number of teachers recruited from overseas. That assumption is highly tentative. We shall be considering further the scope for increased recruitment from this source.

Inner London Staff Commission

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science when he expects to announce the

full membership of the Inner London staff commission which he is required to establish under section 170 of the Education Reform Act 1988.

Mrs. Rumbold: My right hon. Friend appointed Mr. J. J. Warren, former chief executive of the London borough of Newham, to be chairman of the commission in October. I am pleased to say that Mr. Arthur Capelin, previously secretary of the Greater London staff association, and Mr. Trevan Hingston, former head of personnel relations for the Royal Dutch Shell Group, have agreed to serve as the other two members of the Commission. The secretary to the Commissioners is Mr. M. J. Rabarts. The chairman has already held preliminary meetings with a number of those concerned with the staffing implications of the abolition of ILEA, and the full commission is expected to hold its first meeting before Christmas.

WALES

National Museum of Wales

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales whether a work of art, accepted by the Government in lieu of capital transfer tax, it to be allocated to the National Museum of Wales.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales has accepted the recommendation of the Museums and Galleries Commission and agreed that two paintings by William Hogarth entitled "The House of Cards" and "A Children's Party", should be allocated to the National Museum of Wales. Seventeen institutions applied to house these important paintings, and both I and my right hon. Friend the Minister for the Arts welcome their allocation to a gallery outside London. The level of interest shown by so many institutions shows that the acceptance in lieu scheme is well thought of in the museum world and ensures the preservation of important works of art throughout this country.

PRIME MINISTER

European Commission (Vice-President)

Q92. **Mr. Dalyell:** To ask the Prime Minister what qualities she looks for in making an appointment to the vice-presidency of the European Economic Community Commission.

Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave on 1 December 1988, at column 345.

Enterprise and Employment

Q153. **Mr. Devlin:** To ask the Prime Minister what proposals Her Majesty's Government have to foster enterprise and create employment in the north of England.

The Prime Minister: The Government will continue to operate policies which will reinforce the successes already achieved in the northern region, not least the fall in unemployment of nearly 22 per cent. in the period since December 1986.

Mr. P. J. Haseldine

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Prime Minister when she expects to receive the report from Sir Robin Butler on the case of Mr. P. J. Hasleldine and his letter to *The Guardian*; and if she will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: I do not expect to receive such a report. This case is being considered in accordance with procedures laid down in diplomatic service regulations. These regulations are made under the powers vested in the Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary by the Diplomatic Service Order in Council 1964 which established the diplomatic service as a separate service under the Crown.

Civil Servants (Meetings)

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the Prime Minister what instructions have been given to members of the Civil Service about attending meetings, in their personal capacity as trade unionists, with hon. Members of Parliament from Opposition parties.

The Prime Minister: None.

Griffiths Report

Mr. Tom Clarke: To ask the Prime Minister if she will publish in the *Official Report* her reply to the hon. Member for Monklands, West, dated 8 December, on the Griffiths report and the letter dated 23 November to which it refers.

The Prime Minister: No. It is not my usual practice to publish exchanges of this kind.

Engagements

Mr. Cran: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 13 December.

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 13 December.

Mr. Andrew Smith: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 13 December.

Mr. Macdonald: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 13 December.

Mr. Pike: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 13 December.

Mr. Jack: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 13 December.

Mr. Stern: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 13 December.

The Prime Minister: This morning I went to St. George's hospital in Tooting to visit some of those who had been injured in yesterday's terrible train crash, and to thank the hospital staff.

In addition to my duties in the House, I shall be having meetings with ministerial colleagues and others later today. This evening I hope to have an audience of Her Majesty The Queen.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Warren Springs Laboratory

Mrs. Clwyd: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster how many items of correspondence he has received from hon. Members about the work of the Warren Springs laboratory since 1 July.

Mr. Forth: No such correspondence has been received.

Wool and Knitted Garments (Turkey)

Mr. Steel: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster whether he intends to pursue in the European Community Turkey's breach of Ankara agreement in levying duties of up to 78 per cent. on wool cloth and 122 per cent. on knitted garments; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Robert Atkins: The Government are very concerned about the high level of taxation on Community goods of all kinds entering Turkey.

Following representations from the United Kingdom and other member states, the Commission has established a working group of experts with Turkey to seek to resolve outstanding trade issues between the Community and Turkey. My Department supplied a statement of the United Kingdom's concerns to the Commission in advance of the first meeting of the working group and we shall continue to give full support to the Commission's efforts to improve conditions for competition within the framework of the EC-Turkey association agreement.

Private Investment

Mr. Butterfill: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what was the level of private investment in industry in the United Kingdom for the last year figures are available; and what is the European Community average since 1981.

Mr. Robert Atkins: Figures of private investment in industry in the United Kingdom for 1987 are given in the table "Gross domestic fixed capital formation 1987: Analysis by industry and sector" on page 133 of the 1988 edition of "United Kingdom National Accounts", a copy of which is held in the Library. Comparable figures for the European Community are not available. Some relevant information is contained in the publication "National Accounts ESA-Detailed tables by sector 1970-1984".

Further Education Programme

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will list the sums paid and institutions and courses assisted in each standard region under his support for further education programme.

Mr. Forth: My Department has for several years supported further education under a number of schemes. Details have not been maintained in the manner which would enable provision of the information requested, and to supply it would therefore involve disproportionate cost.

Hearing Aids (High Pressure Sales)

Mr. Shersby: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what information he has concerning the practice of some dispensers in the private sector in exploiting the unsolicited home visit to conduct high pressure sales on vulnerable consumers; what measures are being taken to control misleading hearing aid advertising which encourages unrealistically high expectations by the users; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Forth: I understand that since January 1987 the Hearing Aid Council has received some 70 complaints following unsolicited home visits by hearing aid dispensers, although not usually about the fact that the visit was unsolicited. My Department has received two such complaints during the same period.

The Hearing Aid Council, with which all private dispensers must be registered, has a binding code of practice, which inter alia lays down the circumstances in which a home visit may be made. The Consumer Protection (Cancellation of Contracts Concluded away from Business Premises) Regulations 1987 provide additional protection.

The advertising of hearing aids is governed by specific provisions in the Advertising Standards Authority's code of practice. The Director General of Fair Trading also has powers to take action under the Misleading Advertising Regulations 1988 against persistent abusers of the authority's code.

Steel

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster how much of the non-allotted funds for steel areas under EEC and ESCS schemes remains unspent; what plans there are for finalising further projects under these schemes; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Robert Atkins: The "non-quota" measure of steel closure areas is for grants from the EEC European regional development fund. In England, approximately £2·5 million of the £22·5 million allocation is uncommitted. It is expected that offers of assistance will take up the bulk of this by the closing date of 31 March 1989.

North Peckham Task Force

Ms. Harman: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will specify *(a)* the businesses started or supported by the north Peckham task force and *(b)* the number of new jobs created in each.

Mr. Forth *[holding answer 12 December 1988]*: Task forces do not directly support businesses. However, the information which follows relates to businesses which have been grant aided, or provided with a loan facility, through the task force development fund. The development fund was set up jointly by the north Peckham task force and Lloyds bank.

Business name	*Jobs created*
ARA Security Strap	1
Pecan Limited	1
Rapid Cleaning Supplies	2
Crack'n The Flags	3
El Vergel	4
Good As New	2
Beauty At Its Best	1
Paper Box	3
J & K Hunt Transport Services	4
The Pie & Mash Shop	3

Business name	Jobs created
Rip It Up	2
Ruby Robinson	1
Screening Now	3
Eleanor Williams	1
Doggone	1
Danielle	1
David Games Limited	1
Chris Johnson	1
Mauritius News	2
Fabric Ideas	1
The Patchwork Kids	1
Super Clean Mobile Valeting	1
Mr. Lam Chinese Restaurant	4
Parker Street	1
R & M Contractors	2
FFMI Anthony Oye	1
Thuy Vi's Cleaners	2
Naturally First Limited	2
Viet Hing Restaurant	6
Radford's Interior Metalwork	1
We Paint To Please	2
Corks Cleaning Services	2
Govella	3
L B's Secretarial Services	1
Tojac	1
Felicia	1
Bugas	2
Mode 7	3
Pennie Ray	1
Foto-Mobile	1
Greg & Lyn Staunton	2
41 Total	79

Recycled Paper

Mr. Nicholas Winterton: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster whether he has any information as to who is the major supplier of waste paper to the United Kingdom newsprint industry at present, and as to the total tonnage output of that company.

Mr. Forth *[holding answer 12 December 1988]:* Information on suppliers of waste paper to newsprint producers in the United Kingdom is limited, but I have no reason to believe that there is any one major supplier.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster whether he has any information suggesting the rate of growth in future demand for waste paper by the United Kingdom paper and board and printing industries.

Mr. Forth *[holding answer 12 December 1988]:* No. My right hon. Friend does not have any such information.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what steps he intends to take to help establish efficient systems for the collection and recycling of waste paper in order to meet the future demands of the United Kingdom paper and board industry.

Mr. Forth *[holding answer 12 December 1988]:* My Department is in regular contact with the key players in the waste paper collecting and waste paper using industries. It is my aim to help promote the more efficient operation of the markets and utilise economically the maximum amount of waste paper.

I am always prepared to consider carefully ways of encouraging such efficiency improvements in the light of changing demands, in which connection I recently convened a meeting with the key players in the market to consider as a matter of urgency ways in which the system for collecting and recycling the appropriate grades of waste paper might be improved in the light of forecast demand. I hope to make an announcement in the new year about further steps to be taken.

I am also ready to consider any proposals which may come forward for further commitment conferences aimed at increasing the use of waste paper.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster (1) what information he has concerning the percentage volume of United Kingdom newsprint which has contained de-inked paper pulp in each of the last five years for which figures are available;

(2) what information he has concerning the total tonnage consumption of waste paper by the United Kingdom newsprint industry in each of the last five years for which figures are available.

Mr. Forth *[holding answer 12 December 1988]:* I do not have information on the extent to which de-inked paper pulp has been used in the manufacture of imported newsprint. But the position as regards United Kingdom-produced newsprint is given in the following table. For these purposes, consumption of waste paper is equated with consumption of de-inked paper pulp.

Year	United Kingdom newsprint production Tonnes	Consumption of waste paper used in United Kingdom newsprint production Tonnes	Percentage volume of United Kingdom newsprint production containing de-inked paper pulp Per cent.
1983	80,000	80,000	100
1984	236,000	190,000	81
1985	352,000	221,000	63
1986	476,000	222,000	48
1987	497,000	285,000	57

Source: WSL and industry December 1988.

Mergers and Takeovers

Mr. Wray: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster whether, pursuant to his reply in the *Official Report* of 28 November, column *102*, to the hon. Member for Glasgow, Provan he will *(a)* list the academic evidence monitored by his Department, *(b)* indicate the dates of the reports he received from his Department with information about the effects of mergers and takeovers on British industrial companies; and *(c)* list the higher education departments and centres and academics consulted by his Department on these matters.

Mr. Maude *[holding answer 12 December 1988]:* The range of available academic evidence monitored by my Department is indicated in annex E of the Blue Paper on

mergers policy which was published on 3 March this year. In addition, the economists of my Department provide me with a wide range of economic advice on United Kingdom industrial performance.

Works of Art (Exports)

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster how many export licences for works of art have been granted for each year since 1983; to which countries the items have been exported; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Alan Clark *[holding answer 12 December 1988]:* The number of export licences granted for works of art of United Kingdom origin, or in transit through the United Kingdom, for the period since 1983, is as follows. Statistics are not available by country of destination.

Export licences for works of art, 1983-88

Year	*United Kingdom origin*	*In transit*	*Total export licences*
1983	3,100	2,200	5,300
1984	3,800	2,800	6,600
1985	2,960	2,370	5,330
1986	3,010	2,870	5,880
1987	3,060	3,150	6,210
[1]1988	3,010	3,500	6,510

Source: Department of Trade and Industry
[1] Up to November 1988

Dixons Group

Mr. Madden: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what grants or financial assistance from his Department have been paid since 1979 to Dixons Group plc.

Mr. Atkins *[holding answer 12 December 1988]:* There is no record of any grant or other financial assistance by my Department to Dixons Group plc, but I understand that, under the revised regional development grant scheme, £141,000 was made available to Dixons Colour Laboratories Ltd in 1988 by the Industry Department for Scotland.

Post Office Counters Ltd

Mr. James Wallace: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster whether he has considered the recommendations of the Monopolies and Mergers Commission in respect of Post Office Counters Ltd; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Forth *[holding answer 12 December 1988]:* My right hon. Friend is considering the Post Office's response to the recommendation of the Monopolies and Mergers Commission report on Post Office Counters services, and expects to make a statement shortly.

ODA

Cape Verde Islands

Mr. Allason: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how much aid is given to the Cape Verde Islands.

Mr. Chris Patten: Bilateral aid to Cape Verde in 1987 amounted to £38,000. This was spent on training awards in Britain mainly for English language training, a books presentation programme and support for an English language seminar in Mindelo.

Multilateral aid agencies to which we contribute also help Cape Verde. We estimate that aid attributable to the United Kingdom through these agencies was about £2 million in 1986, of which about £1·4 million went through the European Community.

War Service (Pensions)

Mr. Fearn: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if pensioners who served in the colonial service are now able to count in full their war service towards their pension years.

Mr. Chris Patten: The rules governing eligibility for war service credit for colonial pensioners are still being worked out, but they will relate as closely as possible to those which apply to other public servants. One of the basic provisions of all other public service schemes is that war service immediately prior to appointment attracts benefits at half-rate.

DEFENCE

ALARM Development

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence why the then Ministry of Defence research establishment at Westcott was unable to fulfil its subcontract obligations to British Aerospace in respect of the ALARM missile rocket motor development; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Sainsbury: I refer the hon. Member to the evidence provided by British Aerospace to the Defence Committee, published as part of the Committee's fifth report for the 1987-88 Session. The subcontract on Royal Ordnance Westcott (formerly the propellants, explosives, and rocket motor establishment) was terminated by BAe, the ALARM prime contractor, because the motor could not predictably be developed in an acceptable time-scale or at an acceptable cost to meet the BAe requirement.

Contracts

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will ensure that all new contracts include penalty clauses to enable his Department to seek redress for a contractor's failure to perform; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Sainsbury: All relevant factors are considered case by case in seeking to secure the best value for money in negotiating contract terms. The Ministry's policy is to negotiate taut terms and conditions which define the requirement in terms of specification and delivery, and which enable redress to be sought where appropriate.

Computer Systems

Mr. Darling: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if, pursuant to his answer to the hon. Member for Edinburgh, Central on 29 November, *Official Report*, column 568, he will indicate whether any interference by computer hacking has taken place on defence computer systems concerning low-classified information; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: There is no evidence that computer hackers have gained access to any classified information held on Ministry of Defence computers. Precautions are also taken to deny unauthorised access to information held on unclassified systems, and there is no evidence of problems arising from any attempts to interfere with these systems.

Low Flying

Mr. Hood: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how much compensation has been paid by his Department to farmers for damage to livestock from the effects of low-flying aircraft each year since 1979.

Mr. Freeman: The information requested is not readily available and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost. However, compensation for all animal losses as a result of military low flying activities totalled about £95,000 in 1987, and payments to date this year have amounted to approximately £220,000.

Mr. Hood: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will give details of the cost to his Department of low-flying training; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Freeman: Low flying is an integral and essential part of military flying training. In common with other aspects of training, costs are not identified separately and their production would require disproportionate effort.

NATO Modernisation

Ms. Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list the modernisations carried out by the Warsaw pact countries to which proposed North Atlantic Treaty Organisation modernisations are a response.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: For NATO, periodic modernisation of nuclear weapon systems is an essential part of the process of maintaining effective deterrence with the minimum level of forces. There is no direct relationship between modernisation programmes currently under consideration within the Alliance and specific modernisation programmes currently under way inside the Warsaw pact.

NATIONAL FINANCE

Taxation

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the percentage of the increase in tax relief in 1988 for people of working age which will go to two-earner married couples; and what is the corresponding figure in the case of his proposals for separate taxation of men and women on the present tax basis.

Mr. Norman Lamont: It is estimated that the 1988 Budget increased income tax allowances for taxpayers of working age by £5½ billion, of which 49 per cent. was for married couples where the wife was earning. The corresponding figures if the system of independent taxation of husband and wife were in place would be £5 ½ billion and 47 per cent. The estimates are based on the 1985-86 survey of personal incomes projected to 1988-89, and are provisional. They take no account of possible behavioural changes on the introduction of independent taxation.

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer (1) whether he has come to a decision on the option in paragraph 4.16 of Cmnd. 9756 of restricting the additional personal income tax allowance to those in receipt of one-parent and other appropriate benefits;and if he will publish in the *Official Report* a table showing what the effect of such a change would be in terms of the number of allowances claimed and the savings to the revenue;

(2) if he has come to a decision on the option in paragraph 4.15 of Cmnd. 9756 of converting the additional personal income tax allowance into increased social security provision; and if he will provide an estimate of *(a)* the amount of revenue which could be transferred to the social security budget in this way and *(b)* what increase in benefits would be required to ensure that nobody is worse-off as a result of the change;

(3) what is his estimate of the amount of the mortgage taken out by the median mortgagee claiming mortgage interest relief, the increase since May in the rate of interest, the amount of interest payable in a full year, and the total amount of relief at the standard rate payable in a full year at the standard rate of income tax;

(4) what was the economic case for reducing income tax on investment income in the case of those with an income in excess of the ceiling below which there is an entitlement to income support; and if he will publish in the *Official Report* an estimate of the saving to the revenue from increasing the tax on investment income by eight percentage points;

(5) what is the percentage of the increase in tax relief in 1988 for people of working age which will go to two-earner married couples; and what is the corresponding figure in the case of his proposals for separate taxation of men and women on the present tax basis.

Mr. Norman Lamont: These questions are duplicates of questions tabled for answer on Monday 28 November. I have nothing to add to the answers I gave in reply to those questions.

Mr. Frank Field: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what would be the cost of lowering the standard rate of tax to 20p.

Mr. Norman Lamont: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave to the hon. Member for Great Grimsby (Mr. Mitchell) on 5 December, at column *53*.

Bank Loans

Mr. Allen: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer (1) how much payment was received by United Kingdom registered banks arising from loans of under one-year maturity to public and private borrowers in *(a)* Latin America and the Caribbean, *(b)* Africa and *(c)* south-east Asia for each year from 1982 to 1987;

(2) how much payment was due to United Kingdom registered banks arising from loans of under one year maturity to public and private borrowers in *(a)* Latin America and the Caribbean, *(b)* Africa and *(c)* south-east Asia for each year from 1982 to 1987 and allowing for the effects of any rescheduling agreements;

(3) how much was lent by United Kingdom registered banks in loans of under one-year maturity to private and public borrowers in *(a)* Latin America and the Caribbean, *(b)* Africa and *(c)* south-east Asia for each year from 1982 to 1987, respectively;

(4) how much payment was received by United Kingdom registered banks in amortisation, interest, margins and fees arising from loans of over one-year maturity to public and private borrowers in *(a)* Latin America and the Caribbean and *(b)* Africa for each year from 1982 to 1987, respectively;

(5) how much was lent by United Kingdom registered banks in loans of over one-year maturity to private and public borrowers in *(a)* Latin America and the Caribbean, *(b)* Africa and *(c)* south-east Asia for each year from 1982 to 1987, respectively;

(6) how much payment was due in amortisation, interest, margins and fees to United Kingdom registered banks arising from loans of over one-year maturity to public and private borrowers in *(a)* Latin America and the Caribbean, *(b)* Africa and *(c)* south-east Asia for each year 1982 to 1987, and allowing for the effects of any re-scheduling agreements.

Mr. Lilley: I regret that information is not available in the form requested. I would, however, refer the hon. Gentleman to the analysis which can be found in table 15 of the November 1988 edition of the *Bank of England Quarterly Bulletin*.

Independent Taxation

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, further to paragraph 3.18 of Cmnd. 9756 how his proposals for separate taxation for husbands and wives will affect families where the wife wishes to remain at home to care for young children; and if he will publish in the *Official Report* figures for his revised proposals corresponding to those in chart 3.1 of Cmnd. 9756.

Mr. Norman Lamont: Under independent taxation, husband and wife will each be entitled to a personal allowance which can be set against any kind of income. The husband will also get the married couple's allowance. The personal allowance and married couple's allowance added together are equal to the present married man's allowance.

On the change to independent taxation, the total amount of income tax allowances used by married couples of working age will rise by about £2¼ billion at 1988-89 levels of income and allowances. This figure takes no account of possible behavioural changes. The total amount of allowances used by single people will, of course, remain unchanged.

Estimates of the percentage of income tax allowances used by taxpayers of working age, by family type, are as follows:

	Present system per cent.	*Independent taxation per cent.*
Single	30	29
Married, wife not earning	22	23
Married, wife earning	48	48

Funeral Services (VAT)

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what revenue would be forgone if value added tax on services relating to funerals was withdrawn.

Mr. Lilley: I regret that information is not available on which to base an estimate.

Imports

Mr. Boswell: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what information he has on the marginal propensity to import by individuals according to convenient bands of personal income.

Mr. Major: The information is not available in the form requested.

Competitive Tendering

Mr. Galbraith: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will give for Scotland the number of private concessions resulting from competitive tendering in the National Health Service in which value added tax was waived, giving the total amount.

Mr. Lilley: I regret that this information is not available.

HMSO

Mr. Madden: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many items of correspondence he has received from hon. Members about the work of Her Majesty's Stationery Office since 1 July.

Mr. Lilley: My right hon. Friend and I have received four items of correspondence from hon. Members about the work of Her Majesty's Stationery Office since 1 July.

Government Data Network

Mr. Haselhurst: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make a statement about progress concerning the implementation of the Government's data network.

Mr. Brooke: Installation and implementation of the network is proceeding to plan and it is expected to complete acceptance testing of the initial phase network by the end of January.

Crown Estate Office

Mr. Chapman: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what plans he has for the setting and publishing of performance targets for the Crown Estate Office.

Mr. Lawson: The Crown Estate, in consultation and agreement with the Treasury, has undertaken to prepare the following annual cycle of targets and assessments:

(a) An autumn statement of five-year targets of total returns from income and capital growth, prepared independently by a leading firm of chartered surveyors—Hillier Parker May and Rowden. It will be prepared from economic models developed to forecast rental and yield movements as a device to calculate capital value changes.

(b) A late spring broad programme, prepared by the Crown Estate, of the budget of revenue and expenditure for the following year, with estimates of income and expenditure for the two succeeding years. This programme will, as at present, be discussed and agreed with the Treasury.

(c) A late-summer monitoring by the Crown Estate and Hillier Parker of the outturn for the previous year in relation to the broad programme and the

longer-term targets. It would also take into account the financial results achieved by other major property concerns.

(d) The independently prepared target of total returns, and the budget of net revenue, for the following year will be published in the annual reports of the Crown Estate. The other assessments of future developments, being commercially sensitive, will not be published, but will be reviewed and discussed with the Treasury in this annual cycle of monitoring performance.

ENERGY

Nuclear Reprocessing Plant

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if details were exchanged at the Lascar meeting in Tokyo on 17 to 21 October, in regard to the facility attachments and particular safeguards provisions arranged for the MBA III reprocessing section of the Windscale reprocessing works at British Nuclear Fuels Ltd., Sellafield, under article 35 of Euratom regulation No. 3227/76 of 19 October 1976.

Mr. Michael Spicer: These matters were not discussed at the Lascar meeting. The Lascar programme is concerned with the application of safeguards to future large scale reprocessing plants.

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what commitment has been made by his Department to the Lascar review group on the implementation of safeguards to large-scale reprocessing plants.

Mr. Michael Spicer: The safeguards office of the Department will be represented at all meetings of the Lascar group.

Mr. Frank Cook: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he will make a statement on the recent revisions of the costs of decommissioning British Nuclear Fuel's magnox reprocessing plant, indicating how and what compulsion the operators have to provide for these costs in their accounting policies.

Mr. Michael Spicer: British Nuclear Fuels plc's annual report for 1987-88, published on 8 November, reported on a review which had been undertaken of the company's policy towards and provisions made for decommissioning of BNFL plant, including the Magnox reprocessing plant. The decommissioning policies adopted by BNFL and the provisions made to meet liabilities formed part of the company's annual accounts which were audited in accordance with approved auditing standards and accepted by the company's auditors.

Offshore Supplies

Dr. Michael Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what statistics his Department collects about United Kingdom owned capability in major areas of offshore supplies.

Mr. Peter Morrison: None.

Dr. Michael Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what factors prevent him from quantifying in the Brown Book United Kingdom-owned capability in major areas of offshore supplies.

Mr. Peter Morrison: The factors are:

(1) that our analysis of orders for the UKCS recognises all companies established in the United Kingdom and making a substantial contribution to the United Kingdom as British without any distinction on the grounds of ownership. This definition is in accordance with Government policy on inward investment and we are firmly opposed to changing it;

(2) the data supplied by the oil industry since 1974 is on the above basis and a considerably increased workload would be involved in checking the ownership of companies, monitoring changes, and calculating orders on ownership basis. That extra work for the oil industry and for the Department is not justified.

Radioactive Waste

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy when the discussions on nuclear waste to which he referred in his answer of 27 July, *Official Report*, column *287*, will be completed; and if he will make a statement on progress to date.

Mr. Michael Spicer: The IAEA convened an advisory group meeting on safeguards related to final disposal of nuclear material in waste and spent fuel in September 1988. Further discussions are planned in 1989.

Greenhouse Effect

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if any departmental representation was made, and papers presented at *(a)* the 33-nation international conference on greenhouse effect and global warming, held in Geneva in November and *(b)* the world congress on climate and development and the greenhouse problem held in Hamburg from 7 to 10 November.

Mr. Michael Spicer: No representatives from my Department attended either meeting. Representatives from the Department of the Environment and the Meteorological Office actively participated in the Geneva meeting of the intergovernmental panel on climate change. Dr. Houghton, director general of the Meteorological Office, is to chair one of the three working groups that were set up at the meeting. A representative from the Department of the Environment attended the Hamburg conference.

Nuclear Reactors

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he will publish a table for each of the United Kingdom reactor types *(a)* magnox, *(b)* advance gas-cooled reactor, *(c)* SGHWR, *(d)* EBR, *(e)* Harwell research reactors and *(f)* future pressurised water reactors, the annual quantities of nuclear waste arising in cubic metres from (i) reactor operation, (ii) reactor decommissioning and (iii) reprocessing activities in terms of spent fuel, high-level wastes, intermediate-level wastes and low-level wastes.

Mr. Michael Spicer: These are matters for the operators of the reactor types in question. I have asked the chairman of the Central Electricity Generating Board and the chairman of the United Kingdom Atomic Energy Authority to write to the hon. Member.

Mr. Frank Cook: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what proportions of the cost of decommissioning

British Nuclear Fuels' magnox fuel reprocessing plant at Sellafield will be borne in part by each of the civil magnox nuclear power station operators; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Spicer: The costs of decommissioning the Magnox reprocessing plant at Sellafield will be shared between British Nuclear Fuels plc and other customers on the basis of the relevant share of usage of the facilities concerned.

Electricity Supply (London)

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy when he next intends to meet the chairman of the London electricity board to discuss the supply of electricity to the metropolis.

Mr. Michael Spicer: My right hon. Friend and I meet with the chairmen of the area electricity boards regularly and discuss a wide range of issues.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Infant Life Preservation Act.

Sir Michael McNair-Wilson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether he has any plans to seek to amend the Infant Life Preservation Act.

Mr. John Patten: We have no present plans to do so.

Mr. Bowis: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what information he has on the longest sentence served by a doctor for performing an abortion contrary to sections 57 and 58 of the Offences Against the Person Act 1861 and Infant Life Preservation Act 1929.

Mr. John Patten: It is not possible from the records held centrally to distinguish the occupation of offenders given custodial sentences. However, the records held centrally show only one offender, aged 21, who was convicted during the last 10 years under the Infant Life Preservation Act 1929.

Shops Act

Mr. Tim Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he has received the proposals of the Shopping Hours Reform Council for amendments to the Shops Act.

Mr. Renton: Yes. We are studying these closely.

Discharged Prisoners (Assistance)

Mr. Harry Barnes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether he has any plans to improve assistance to discharged prisoners.

Mr. John Patten: We provide assistance to discharged prisoners in many ways through the prison service, probation services and voluntary organisations. Efforts are constantly being made to improve this service.

Charter 88

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he has any plans to implement the proposals of Charter 88 for constitutional reforms.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: We have no plans to do.

Mr. Wallace: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he has any plans to implement the recommendations of Charter 88 with regard to reform of the judicial system.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: We have no plans to do so.

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he has any plans to implement the recommendations of Charter 88 for reform of the electoral system.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: No.

Correspondence

Mr. Wheeler: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when the hon. Member for Westminster, North will receive a definitive response in respect of the case of Mrs. R. Raedler of Lausanne for the registration of her two sons, Marc and David, as British citizens, about which he first wrote to the Department in January.

Mr. Renton: Applications for the registration of Mrs. Raedler's sons as British citizens were made at the British consulate general in Geneva on 9 February and received in the Home Office on 29 February.

Following the large number of applications for citizenship which were received last year, the average waiting time for processing registration applications is 13 months. We shall deal with these applications as soon as possible and inform Mrs. Raedler of the decision.

My hon. Friend will also be advised of the decision.

Mr. Wheeler: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when the hon. Member for Westminster, North will receive a definite response in respect of case M 524399/2(s), Mr. and Mrs. M. S. Badrawi, about which the hon. Member first wrote to him in October 1986.

Mr. Renton: My right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Ribble Valley (Mr. Waddington) replied to my hon. Friend's letters of 30 October 1986 and 19 November 1986 on 13 January 1987, setting out the position in Mr. Badrawi's case. A further letter dated 13 July 1987 from my hon. Friend to the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office, was copied to the Home Office and a reply sent by my private office on 18 September.

Mr. Badrawi's application was granted on 3 November 1988.

Electronic Tagging

Mr. Barry Field: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when the proposed pilot projects to use electronic monitoring for people on bail will begin; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John Patten: Next summer.

Police National Computer

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the role of the police national computer in contingency plans for the internment of possible subversives in the event of war.

Mr. Hurd: There are no plans relevant to this question.

Metropolitan Police (Road Traffic)

Mr. Adley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will call for a report from the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis, for the latest year available, on the number of man-hours spent by the Metropolitan police on road traffic matters and the cost thereof, and the percentage both these figures represent, of the annual total, by time and by cost.

Mr. Hurd: I refer my hon. Friend to my reply to his question on 12 December.

Firearms Amnesty

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will publish a table in the *Official Report* to show so far as the information is available to him the number of rounds of each calibre of ammunition surrendered to the police during the recent firearms amnesty and indicate whether it was *(a)* rifle, *(b)* shotgun, *(c)* pistol or revolver, *(d)* other firearms, or *(e)* air or gas powered weapons ammunition.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Information as to the calibre of rounds of ammunition surrendered during the recent firearms amnesty in England and Wales is not available. Details of the type of ammunition surrendered is as follows:

	Rounds
Prohibited ammunition	390
Bulletted ammunition	1,165,934
Shot gun ammunition	167,212
Other ammunition	119,171
Total	1,511,000

The total includes estimates for two police forces.

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will publish a table in the *Official Report* to detail so far as the information is available to him the number of firearms surrendered to the police in each of the following categories during the recent amnesty *(a)* self-loading rifles, *(b)* bolt action rifles, *(c)* pump action rifles, *(d)* under lever action rifles, *(e)* single shot rifles, *(f)* double rifles, *(g)* other types of rifle, *(h)* revolvers, *(i)* self-loading pistols, *(j)* single shot pistols, *(k)* other types of hand guns, *(l)* shotguns, *(m)* combination shotgun/rifles, *(n)* antique firearms by type and *(o)* air and gas-powered weapons, and indicate for each of the above how many were in useable condition, and for how many of the above firearms in each group ammunition is currently available; and what his estimate is of the market value of each class of firearms surrendered.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: A breakdown by type of firearms surrendered in England and Wales during the recent amnesty is as follows:

Firearms	*Number*	*Number*
Fully automatic weapons		178
Self-loading rifles	315	
Manual operation rifles	4,856	
All rifles		5,171
Pistols and revolvers		18,005
Total firearms		23,354
Shotguns		
Traditional long-barrelled shotguns	10,601	
Other long-barrelled shotguns	171	
All long-barrelled shotguns		10,772
Traditional short-barrelled shotguns	404	
Other short-barrelled shotguns	78	
All short-barrelled shotguns		482
Total shotguns		11,254
Other firearms		
Prohibited firearms		69
Air rifles and air pistols		6,126
Other firearms (including imitations)		1,922
Total other firearms		8,117
Total firearms and shotguns		42,725

The other information requested is not available.

Illegal Parking

Mr. Tebbit: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what evidence he has that more stringent penalties for illegal parking have led to reduction in the number of such offences.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: A number of measures have been introduced in recent years to deter illegal parking, including new fixed penalty procedures and, in London, wheelclamping and contracted out vehicle removals. The transport and road research laboratory has monitored the impact of wheelclamping since it was introduced on an experimental basis in 1983. The latest surveys show that clamping has reduced the incidence of illegal parking by up to 40 per cent. in some areas.

Traffic Offences

Mr. Tebbit: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what evidence he has that the humiliation of persons accused of offences under the Road Traffic Acts will act as a deterrent to other potential offenders.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The prospect of arrest, charge, prosecution and conviction should act as a deterrent to all potential offenders. This applies to offences under the Road Traffic Acts as much as to any other serious criminal offences.

IBA Levy

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement on the future of the Independent Broadcasting Authority levy for the period 1990 to 1992.

Mr. Hurd: In conjunction with the Treasury, my Department has reviewed the arrangements in the Broadcasting Act 1981, as amended by the Finance Act 1986, for additional payments by independent television contractors (the levy). The review was undertaken to consider transitional arrangements for the 1990-92 contract extension period prior to the restructuring of

independent television on the lines proposed in the Government's recently published White Paper on broadcasting. It also took into account the recommendations of the 43rd report of the Committee of Public Accounts in 1987-88.

Following consultation with the IBA, we have decided that the levy for the period 1 January 1990 to 31 December 1992 will be raised both from the net advertising revenue and from the profits of the independent television contracts. It is intended that the overall yield of the levy during this period should be of broadly the same amount as would have arisen under the arrangements which existed prior to 1986. The structure of the new levy will be such that about three quarters of the total yield is expected to arise from net advertising revenue and the remainder from profits.

The purpose behind these changes is to encourage cost-consciousness amongst the independent television contractors and to ensure an adequate return to the Government for use of a scarce national resource during the contract extension period.

Precise details of the levy structure will be published in the spring of next year. The Government's detailed response to the 43rd report of the Public Accounts Committee will be published in a Treasury minute early next year.

Immigration

Mr. Sillars: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what steps he has taken to carry out the undertakings given by Lord Ferrers, *Official Report*, columns *367* and *401*, 4 March, with regard to regulation 2(b) of the Immigration (Restrictive Right of Appeal Against Deportation) (Exemption) (No. 2) Order 1988 (S.I. 1203); and if he will exclude persons returning to the United Kingdom who are entitled to remain in terms of sections 3(3)(b) of the Immigration Act 1971 from the operation of section 5 of the Immigration Act 1988 even if they do not obtain re-entry by virtue of section 3(3)(b) of the 1971 Act.

Mr. Renton *[holding answer 12 December 1988]:* The Immigration (Restricted Right of Appeal Against Deportation) (Exemption) No. 2 Order 1988 exempts from the provisions of section 5(2) of the Immigration Act 1988 those persons who leave the United Kingdom and are re-landed during the currency of the earlier leave for the remainder of the terms and conditions of that leave. The order fully reflects the Government's intention to make an exception for such persons. To extend the scope of the exception so that it applied to those whose absence abroad was followed by re-admission other than by virtue of section 3(3)(b) would negate much of the purpose of section 5 of the 1988 Act.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Salmonella

Mr. Alan W. Williams: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will introduce legislation seeking to ban the practice of feeding chickens with the recycled carcases of slaughtered and dead chickens.

Mr. Ryder: I have no present plans to do so.

The Protein Processing Order 1981 requires all animal protein for incorporation in animal feedingstuffs to be manufactured free from salmonella contamination. My officials routinely inspect all plants producing such protein to ensure that this requirement is met. Carcases of chickens which have died from disease are not used in animal feedingstuffs but are disposed of separately.

Mr. Meale: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will introduce a new Government guideline which would include a more stringent health check system for egg production.

Mr. Ryder: I have recently introduced a new voluntary code of practice on the control of salmonella for poultry health scheme members. A copy of this document is deposited in the House of Commons Library. A code of practice for commercial egg producers has now also been agreed and is being issued. Further measures will be taken.

Mr. Fearn: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will give details of the statutory code of practice which includes control of feedstuffs and the handling of eggs by producers.

Mr. Ryder: I have recently introduced a new voluntary Code of Practice on the control of salmonella for poultry health scheme members. Also a code of practice for commercial egg producers has now been agreed and is being issued. A copy of this document is deposited in the House of Commons Library.

My officials are discussing with industry representatives details for codes of practice on the production of feedstuffs. Meanwhile general guidelines on the production of feedingstuffs will be issued. I am also reviewing the existing legislation controlling these areas, to ensure that they are being implemented as effectively as possible.

Milk Quotas

Mr. Cox: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what has been the number of milk quotas allowed to be purchased by new milk producers in the last 12 months; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Donald Thompson: I regret that this information is not available.

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many United Kingdom dairy farmers participated in the milk non-marketing scheme or dairy herd conversion scheme and subsequently made applications for quotas to his Department.

Mr. Donald Thompson: It would be disproportionately expensive to estimate this figure.

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food when he expects the increase in the provision of extra milk quota in the European Community to reach 1 million tonnes.

Mr. Donald Thompson: Community milk quotas excluding the quota allocated to Spain on its accession in 1986 have in fact been reduced, from some 104 million tonnes in 1984-85 to 94 million tonnes in the current year. The Commission has proposed an increase in the quota reserve of 500,000 tonnes as part of its response to a judgment of the European Court and this is being considered at the Agriculture Council which commenced yesterday.

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what the criteria will be for the allocation of extra milk quota, available after the Mulder judgment between eligible United Kingdom farmers; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Donald Thompson: The criteria for the allocation of extra milk quota are to be discussed at this week's meeting of the Agriculture Council. I shall make my usual statement after the Council.

Cod Farming

Mr. David Porter: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what assessment his Department has made of the outcome of experimental cod farming in *(a)* Norway and *(b)* Scotland; and if he will make a statement on the viability of such farming for the United Kingdom domestic cod market.

Mr. Donald Thompson: Scientists of my Department have kept a close watch on cod farming experiments in Norway and Scotland. For the foreseeable future the farming of salmon, and the potential for farming higher value marine fish species such as turbot and halibut, are likely to prove more commercially viable.

Research

Ms. Armstrong: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what will be the cost of replacing the current system of seed testing for cereals at the National Institute of Agricultural Botany at Cambridge with an enforcement system, as proposed in his review.

Mr. Ryder: Financial estimates of the proposal are given in paragraphs 394, 403 and 476 of the report on the plant variety testing and seed certification systems in the United Kingdom.

Ms. Armstrong: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food whether he will make a statement as to the future of the testing and evaluation of new plant varieties and seeds being carried out by the National Institute of Agricultural Botany at Cambridge University.

Mr. Ryder: The National Institute of Agricultural Botany is an independent body but I understand that it has no plans at present to carry out such activities at Cambridge university.

Ms. Armstrong: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what effect he anticipates that his review of agricultural research will have on the work of the National Institute of Agricultural Botany at Cambridge.

Mr. Ryder: It was announced earlier this year that grant-in-aid to the National Institute of Agricultural Botany for its non-statutory work would be phased out over a period of three years between 1989 and 1992. The institute is seeking alternative funding from the industry which benefits from the institute's services and has already secured funding for next year's recommended list for cereals. Funding for the statutory work which the institute carries out on the Ministry's behalf will continue.

Ms. Armstrong: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what responses he has had from industry to his proposal in the agricultural research review that recommended list testing, carried out by the National Institute of Agricultural Botany at Cambridge should be financed by the industry.

Mr. Ryder: Following the announcement to withdraw grant-in-aid to the National Institute of Agricultural Botany, comments have been received from or on behalf of a number of industry interests. In addition, consultations with industry organisations are taking place so that industry can consider what near-market research, including the institute's recommended lists, it would be prepared to fund. The institute has been successful in obtaining funds from the home grown cereals authority for the cereals recommended list next year and is continuing to urge the industry to support its other services.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Fishing

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will publish a table in the *Official Report* to show how many of each of the following fishing engines operate in the area covered by the Fisheries Conservancy Board for Northern Ireland and their location or approximate location and the total number and total weight of fish taken by each method: draft net for the capture of salmon and freshwater fish on Lough Neagh, draft net for the capture of freshwater fish other than trout and rainbow trout on Lough Erne, draft net for use in freshwater other than Lough Neagh or Lough Erne, single wall set net or trammel net for the capture of trout in Lough Neagh, per 91 m (100 yd), single wall set net or trammel net for the taking of freshwater fish other than trout and rainbow trout, per 91 m (100 yd), bait net for the taking of freshwater fish other than trout and rainbow trout for use as bait per net, long line for the capture of pike on Lough Erne, fixed tidal draft net, fixed tidal draft net which operates in the estuary of a river upstream of the defined mouth, tidal draft net, drift net for the taking of salmon in the sea, bag net used in tidal waters, and salmon box or crib.

Mr. Viggers: The latest available information on these areas is as follows:

1987 catches in relation to type of fishing engine

Type of engine	*Total number*	*Location*	*Total number of fish caught*	*Total weight of fish caught*
1. Lough Neagh draft nets	15	All Lough Neagh	Not available	No figures available
2. Lough Erne draft nets	1	All Lough Erne	Not available	356 kgs
3. Draft net other than Lough Neagh or Lough Erne	0	—	—	—
4. Single wall set nets or trammel net for capture of trout in Lough Neagh	112	All Lough Neagh	Not available	No figures available

Type of engine	Total number	Location	Total number of fish caught	Total weight of fish caught
5. Single wall set net or trammel net for capture of freshwater fish other than trout	596	Lough Neagh and Lough Erne	Not available	Lough Erne: 8,687 kgs Lough Neagh: No figures available
6. Bait net	20	Lough Neagh and Lough Erne	Not available	No figures available
7. Long line—Lough Erne (Pike)	1	All Lough Erne	Not available	70 kgs
8. Fixed tidal draft net	8	6 East Antrim coast 2 North Antrim coast	1,925	5,227 kgs
9. Fixed tidal draft net operating in the estuary of a river upstream of the defined mouth	0	—	—	—
10. Tidal draft net	7	All County Down coast	69	215 kgs
11. Drift net for taking of salmon in the sea	8	1 East Antrim coast 7 North coast of County Antrim and Londonderry	248	789 kgs
12. Bag net used in tidal waters	14	North Antrim coast	5,924	17,593 kgs
13. Salmon box or crib	4	All on the River Bann	Figures unable to be disclosed due to being owned by one concern. Disclosure would contravene statutory confidentiality.	

Sheep Movements

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many sheep, and what area of land in Northern Ireland, were originally placed under movement restrictions as a result of the Chernobyl disaster; what are the numbers of sheep and area of land still so affected; what were and are the classes of sheep; what was the level of radioactivity in the sheepmeat and in the vegetation when first detected, at the maximum levels, and at the latest available dates; and what were these dates.

Mr. Viggers: The restrictions on the movement and slaughter of sheep introduced in September 1987 as a result of monitoring of young lambs applied to some 21,612 acres containing an estimated 35,000 sheep. There was no breakdown of sheep by class available at that time. The restrictions continue to apply to this land area which is estimated to contain some 23,000 sheep—comprising 18,000 ewes/rams and 5,000 lambs.

The maximum readings of radiocaesium from monitoring of sheep and lambs as required by the restrictions were found in young unfinished lamb and was 4,761 bq/kg recorded on 17 September 1987 while monitoring through the current year has identified a maximum reading of 2,199 bq/kg recorded on 19 August 1988. Of the 358 sheep presented in the week ended 13 November 1988 by farmers wishing to take them out of the restricted areas the maximum was 857 bq/kg of radiocaesium for ewes and 159 for lamb. A report on monitoring results is published by the Department of Agriculture on a regular basis.

Routine monitoring of vegetation which gave a maximum result of 830 bq/kg was stopped during 1986 as such data could not be taken as a reliable guide to levels in growing livestock.

Extradition

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will publish in the *Official Report* the numbers of extradition requests made to the Republic of Ireland in each year since 1967, indicating how many of those requests were for crimes of a terrorist nature and how many requests were for other types of crimes, and show for each year the number of those extradition requests which were granted for *(a)* crimes of a terrorist nature and *(b)* other types of crimes and how many were refused for each class of crime; if he will indicate for each of those years, and each class of crime, how many extradition requests and warrants were found by the Irish Authorities and the Irish Courts to be unacceptable; if he will also publish in the *Official Report* the same information for extradition requests made to the United Kingdom by the Republic of Ireland; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Ian Stewart *[holding answer 8 December 1988]:* Statistical material about extradition requests both to and from Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland has been collected by the RUC since 1971. The information is not available precisely in the form requested. In particular, it has not proved possible to identify cases where, for example, the warrant was returned because the subject was subsequently found not to be in the Republic or to differentiate between those persons wanted for crimes of a terrorist nature and other crimes. The available information is however summarised in the following tables.

Requests from the Republic of Ireland to Northern Ireland

Year	Requests made	Requests refused	Persons extradited as a result of the requests	Requests still pending or not acted on for other reasons
1971	7	—	5	2
1972	8	—	5	3
1973	26	—	19	7
1974	7	—	6	1
1975	21	—	15	6
1976	11	—	8	3
1977	11	—	5	6
1978	9	—	8	1
1979	8	—	4	4
1980	13	2	9	2
1981	8	—	4	4
1982	8	—	7	1
1983	8	—	7	1
1984	14	—	9	5
1985	—	—	—	—
1986	6	—	5	1
1987	3	—	1	2

Requests from Northern Ireland to the Republic of Ireland

Year	Requests made	Requests refused	Persons extradited as a result of the requests	Requests still pending or not acted on for other reasons
1971	32	6	7	19
1972	20	9	—	11
1973	16	3	3	10
1974	30	4	9	17
1975	20	8	1	11
1976	34	6	8	20
1977	25	9	10	6
1978	40	4	15	21
1979	14	1	8	5
1980	23	3	12	8
1981	23	1	6	16
1982	36	1	18	17
1983	27	1	11	15
1984	12	—	[1]2	10
1985	33	—	5	28
1986	5	—	[1]1	4
1987	21	1	1	19

[1] Robert Russell and Gerard Harte were returned during August 1988.

River Drainage Works

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will list in the *Official Report* a list of the rural maintenance river drainage works for 1989 which will be carried out by the Department of Agriculture, indicating the river and appropriate location.

Mr. Viggers: The rural maintenance river drainage works programme for 1989-90 to be carried out by the Department of Agriculture will not be finalised until next spring. A copy will be sent to the hon. Gentleman at the time.

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will list in the *Official Report* the arterial river drainage schemes, and major river maintenance works under consideration and those on which he expects work to start in 1989.

Mr. Viggers: The works programme in relation to new schemes and major maintenance works for the financial year 1989-90 has not yet been finalised. The programme will be sent to the hon. Gentleman when available.

Drainage schemes at present under consideration to start in 1989 are as follows:

Downpatrick
Dunmurry
Omagh—Johnston Park
Omagh—Dromore Road
Londonderry—Springtown
Newry—Drumcashellone
Newry—Derrybeg
Strand Lough (Killough)

Schemes are also under consideration for sections of the following rivers:

Fairwater
Cusher
Mourne
Colebrook

Floods

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what progress has been made towards repair of the damage to river banks, woods, and bridges caused by the floods of October 1987; what sums have been expended to the latest available date; what he expects the final cost of repairs to be.

Mr. Viggers: The Department of Agriculture has undertaken an extensive maintenance programme to repair river banks damaged by the flooding on 21 and 22 October 1987. Floodbanks breached on the Rivers Roe, Mourne, Strule and Faughan have now been repaired. In addition, measures have been taken to arrest erosion adjacent to floodbanks, particularly on the Moyola river. A programme to strengthen floodbanks on the River Roe is in progress. Repairs to river banks on the Rivers Blackwater and Tynan have also been carried out. Tree planting to replace trees carried away by the flood has been and will continue to be done.

To date expenditure on this work amounts to some £370,000. It is estimated that a further £40,000 will be required to complete the river bank repairs.

The majority of damaged bridges have been repaired by the Department of the Environment roads service at a cost of £403,000. Work is either already underway or planned to start soon on the remainder. The final cost of repairs is estimated to be £800,000.

30

VAT

Mr. Heddle: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what assessments he has made as to the likely effect on *(a)* his Department's capital building programme and *(b)* the rent the Department will pay under occupational leases of implementation of the European Court of Justice's judgment on value added tax on non-domestic buildings.

Mr. Ian Stewart: Implementation of the European Court of Justice's judgment on VAT will have no effect on our capital building programme, since compensating adjustments have been made to the relevant expenditure provisions. At this stage, before landlords have decided whether to exercise their option to tax rents, it is not possible to offer meaningful estimates of the effects of the judgment on rental costs.

Member's Correspondence

Mr. McNamara: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland when the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, North will receive a reply to his letter of 9 November to the Minister for Industry in Northern Ireland requesting the evidence relating to the view of the Tanaiste of the Irish Republic on the MacBride principles.

Mr. Viggers: I replied to this letter on 7 December.

Redundancy and Insolvency Payments

Mr. Page: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland whether he plans to implement changes in relation to redundancy and insolvency payments in Northern Ireland following the announcement in the House on 31 October of proposed changes in Great Britain; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Viggers: Yes. It is planned to make similar changes in Northern Ireland to those announced in the House on 31 October, but as redundancy and insolvency payments in

Northern Ireland are made under different legislation from that governing Great Britain payments, it will be necessary to introduce separate legislation to effect the changes in Northern Ireland.

TRANSPORT

Railway Inspectors

Mr. Bill Michie: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many railway inspectors are currently in post; and how many vacant posts for railway inspectors are currently unfilled.

Mr. Portillo: A total of 16 railway inspectors are currently in post. There are vacancies for eight inspectors and as a result of our recent recruitment exercise, we hope to fill most of these early in the new year.

Mr. Bill Michie: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many railway inspectors were in post in each of the last five years.

Mr. Portillo: The number of railway inspectors in post in each of the last five years, as at 31 December, was:

Year	*Number*
1983	22
1984	23
1985	23
1986	19
1987	19

London Regional Transport

Mr. Steinberg: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will publish in the *Official Report* a list of bus garages closed by London Regional Transport since 1984, including vehicle capacity, numbers of employees, employees made redundant, and present use of the site and buildings.

Mr. Portillo: These are matters for London Regional Transport and its subsidiary London Buses Limited. It is for them to decide what garages are needed to support their operational requirements.

Mr. Steinberg: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will publish in the *Official Report* a list of routes put out to competitive tender by London Regional Transport since 1984, showing the companies which won the contracts.

Mr. Portillo: Tendering of bus routes in London is a matter for London Regional Transport.

Mr. Steinberg: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will seek to introduce greater openness into London Regional Transport's system of awarding contracts, whether for routes or services.

Mr. Portillo: London Regional Transport has a statutory duty to invite tenders for such of its activities as it determines to be appropriate, and to accept any tender which would result in those activities being carried out satisfactorily and at less cost. Subject to that, the award of contracts is a matter for LRT.

Coastguard Services

Mr. Campbell-Savours: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what are the financial considerations which he took into account in drawing up proposals for the closure of coastguard services at each of Hartland, Moray and Ramsey.

Mr. Portillo: Expenditure on coastguard services is planned to increase from £21·8 million in 1986-87 to £26·2 million in 1989-90. This increase reflects a steadily improving service with more effective radio and telecommunications equipment such as VHF direction-finding aerials, and better search and rescue helicopter coverage. The decision to merge the area responsibilities of the maritime rescue sub-centres at Hartland, Moray and Ramsey with those of adjacent stations will save about £600,000 a year, which is reflected in the planned figure for 1989-90. These savings allow other improvements in the service to be made, with no significant loss in operational effectiveness in the sea areas concerned.

Vehicle Licensing Centre

Mrs. Clwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many items of correspondence he has received from hon. Members about the work of the driver and vehicle licensing centre since 1 July.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Ministers received 324 letters between 1 July and 7 December. Hon. Members also addressed 111 letters direct to the driver and vehicle licensing centre.

To save time, hon. Members may wish to write direct to DVLC on executive rather than policy issues. That way, it is possible to reply faster.

Road Licence Refunds

Mr. Robert Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list the number of refunds of car road licences for each of the years 1985-86, 1986-87 and 1987-88 which were on first time registrations of new cars and the average refund value and the number of refunds and value to motor vehicle dealers in all cases.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: This information is not available.

No distinction is made between refund applications relating to the first licence for a new vehicle and those for other vehicles. The DVLC records are not structured in a way which would make such an analysis practicable. Applications from motor dealers are not separately identifiable.

Road Maintenance

Mr. Adley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will state the annual cost of providing maintenance in respect of *(a)* lighting and *(b)* drainage for roads, for the latest year available.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The information requested is as follows:

Expenditure 1986-87

£ million

	Lighting	*Drainage*
Department of Transport	13·3	5·8
Local Authority	145·2	66·2
Total	158·5	72·0

Notes:
Expenditure in England only.
Lighting includes energy costs.

Road Construction

Mr. Adley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list the cost per mile of contructing a mile of *(a)* motorway and *(b)* double track railway line.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Construction costs of motorways vary substantially depending on factors such as location and the need for structures. As announced in the answer to my right hon. Friend the Member for Arundel (Mr. Marshall) on 11 June 1986 at column *188*, the Department decided to discontinue the preparation of general average costs.

Construction cost (excluding land) of recently completed motorways and motorways under construction (all three lane) are as follows:

	Scheme	*Miles*	*Cost £ million*	*Average cost £ million per mile*
(i) Recently completed				
Completion date				
May 1986	M4/25 Airport Spur	0·9	8·0	8·9
June 1986	M42 Tamworth-Water Orton	2·7	27·0	10·0
June 1986	M42 Bromsgrove	4·3	16·5	3·8
August 1986	M42 Tamworth	7·6	22·2	2·9
August 1986	M27 Swaythling Link	0·7	2·6	3·7
October 1986	M25 Micklefield-South Mimms	13·0	94·3	7·3
December 1986	A1(M) Roestock-Stanborough[1]	3·1	57·0	18·4
March 1987	M5/M42 Junction Southern Turn	1·4	4·8	3·4
(ii) Under construction				
	M40 Banbury Bypass	27·6	151·4	5·5
	M40 Warwick Section	11·1	55·5	5·0
	M63/M66 Portwood-Denton	5·0	40·6	8·1

[1] Including Hatfield tunnel.

The M25 is 117 miles long, and cost nearly £1 billion over the construction period from 1975 to 1986 (average £8·5 million per mile).

It is difficult to give costs for railways as there are few examples in recent years of new stretches of line being built. The cost of providing a suitable alignment can be considerable, and variables such as the cost of stations, junctions and tunnels mean that it is impossible to provide an average figure.

BR has provided the following examples of construction costs (excluding land):

Selby diversion—costs of infrastructure, track, earthworks, signalling, overhead wiring and station alternations: average of £4·5 million per mile (1983 prices: equivalent to £5·8 million per mile current prices).

Stansted airport link—costs of infrastructure, track, earthworks, signalling and new junction but excluding the new station and tunnelling: average of £5·1 million per mile (1985 prices: £5·9 million per mile current prices); costs including tunnelling but excluding station: average of £7·7 million per mile (£8·8 million at current prices). The average figures include the single track section under the runway as well as the double track section: it is not possible to differentiate between these.

The figures exclude the cost of locomotives and rolling stock.

Traffic (Damage to Buildings)

Mr. Adley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will estimate, for the latest year available, the cost of damage caused to roadside buildings by passing traffic.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Information is not held centrally from which to estimate the cost of damage to roadside buildings.

Road Accidents

Mr. Adley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will estimate for the latest year available the total cost to the National Health Service of treatment which is a direct result of road traffic accidents.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: I refer my hon. Friend to the answer that I gave to the hon. Member for Southport (Mr. Fearn) on 28 November at columns *164-65*.

Heavy Vehicles

Mr. Teddy Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when the proposal by the EEC Commission that 40-ton lorries should have the right of access to United Kingdom roads by 1997 is being considered by the Council of Ministers; and if the matter will fall to be considered by majority vote.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: I understand that the Commission report will be submitted formally to the Council shortly. It should be considered during the forthcoming Spanish Presidency.

The United Kingdom derogations from 40 tonnes and from 11·5 tonnes axle loading were granted under article 75(3) of the treaty which requires unanimity.

We shall have to demonstrate that the conditions under which the derogations were granted will still apply as we progress with our bridge-strengthening programme.

Taxis

Sir David Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he has any plans to improve the accessibility of taxis for the mobility-handicapped in London.

Mr. Portillo: This morning I hosted a press conference at my Department at which I was pleased to announce a new development for wheelchair-accessible taxis. Following discussions with the Metropolitan police, which is responsible for day-to-day taxi licensing questions, from

1 Feburary 1989 all newly licensed London taxis will need to be able to carry a passenger in a wheelchair and from 1 January 2000 every taxi operating in London will be required to take wheelchairs.

Accidents (Heavy Goods Vehicles)

Mr. Mullin: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if, pursuant to his answer of 2 December, there was any change in the method of calculation of the number of accidents involving heavy goods vehicles between 1979 and 1980.

Mr. Peter Bottomley *[holding answer 9 December 1988]:* There was no change in the method of calculation of the number of accidents involving heavy goods vehicles between 1979 and 1980.

The fall in the number of fatal accidents involving heavy goods vehicles between 1979 and 1980 is part of a long-term trend going back to 1969. This trend is illustrated in terms of the numbers of goods vehicles involved in fatal accidents. Between 1969 and 1975, the number of heavy goods vehicles involved in fatal accidents fell from 1,700 to just over 1,000, a drop of nearly 40 per cent. This number remained fairly constant until 1980, when it fell further to 850 heavy goods vehicles in fatal accidents. The fall is likely to have been caused in part by the trend towards fewer, but larger, vehicles, and partly by the shift towards higher standard roads.

A brief article on this trend was included on page 12 of "Road Accidents Great Britain 1982".

Trunk Roads

Mr. Amos: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list the trunk road schemes planned for starting in 1989-90 referred to in his Department's news release of 2 November, showing where possible the planned date for construction to start.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The following schemes are planned to start in 1989-90:

(A) Schemes for which statutory procedures are complete
M3 Compton—Bassett widening
M40 widening junction 4-5
A13 Blackwall Tunnel—Cotton Street junction improvement
A13 West India Dock Road junction improvement
A16 Boston—Algakirk
A16 Louth bypass
A30 Plusha—Bolventor
A40 Long Lane junction improvement
A41 Bicester bypass stage 1
A47 Castor and Ailsworth bypass
A47 Eye bypass
A69 Brampton bypass
A282 Dartford third crossing approach roads
A303 Ilchester—South Petherton
A650 Drighlington bypass

(B) Schemes for which statutory procedures are not complete
M40 Oxford—Birmingham: Waterstock—Wendlebury
A1 Bramham—Wetherby
A5/A49 Telford—Shrewsbury
A6 Quorn and Mountsorrel bypass
A23 Waddon Marsh Bridge
A23 Warninglid—Brighton
A27 Brighton bypass
A30 Zelah bypass
A35 Axminster bypass
A35 Yellowham Hill—Troytown
A38 Marsh Mills improvement
A41 Chester improvement
A41 Whitchurch bypass
A42 Castle Donington North
A65 Addingham bypass
A65 Draughton bypass
A66 Bowes bypass—County boundary improvement
A127 Rayleigh Weir GSJ
A140 Dickleburgh bypass
A303 Mere—Wincanton
A523 Macclesfield Inner Relief Road
A604 M1-A1 Link: Kettering Southern bypass
A604 M1-A1 Link: Rothwell—Kettering
A604 M1-A1 Link: Thrapston—Brampton
A604 M1-A1 Link: Advance BR bridge works
A1079 Market Weighton bypass

(C) Local Authority schemes approved for S272 grant
M1 junction 34 improvements
A418 Leighton Linslade bypass

Mr. Amos: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list those trunk road schemes which his Department planned to start in 1988-89 but which have not yet started, showing where known the planned date for construction to start.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Subject to the satisfactory completion of statutory procedures, our current intention is to start the following schemes as indicated:

	Target month
M20 Maidstone to Ashford	January 1989
M40 Oxford to Birmingham Gaydon section	January 1989
A6 Barton bypass	December 1988
A27 Pevensey bypass	March 1989
A30 Launceston to Plusha	February 1989
A35 Charmouth bypass	February 1989
A36 Beckington bypass	February 1989
A36 Codford bypass	March 1989
A406 Chingford Road to Hale End Road	March 1989
A435/A422 Alcester bypasses	March 1989
A604 M1-A1 Link: Kettering to Thrapston	March 1989
A696 Woolsington bypass	February 1989

We aim to start the following schemes as early as possible. Our current expectation is that they may slip into early 1989-90.

M3 Compton to Bassett widening
A27 Brighton bypass
A35 Axminster bypass
A41 Bicester bypass stage 1
A65 Addingham bypass
A127 Rayleigh Weir GSJ
A282 Dartford to Thurrock crossing: approach roads
A303 Ilchester to South Petherton
A418 Leighton to Linslade bypass
A604 M1-A1 Link: Rothwell to Kettering
A604 M1-A1 Link: Thrapston to A14 ST 1
A650 Drighlington bypass

Mr. Rooker: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a statement regarding the capacity of the trunk roads between the west midlands and the ports situated on the coast of East Anglia, outlining any proposals he has in mind for improvement.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: We are taking forward several schemes to improve routes from the west midlands to the east coast ports including the A11, A47 and A428. In addition, work is to start soon on the new M1-A1 link road which, with the A11 and the A45, will provide the main route between the west midlands and East Anglia.

A review of the trunk road programme is currently in progress. We expect to make an announcement in the spring.

Motorways

Mr. Amos: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list those sections of motorway in England which *(a)* are built to dual two-lane standard and carry average annual daily traffic flows in excess of 54,000 and *(b)* are built to dual three-lane standard and carry average annual daily traffic flows in excess of 79,000.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The sections of motorway in England which are built to dual two-lane standard and which are estimated to carry average annual daily traffic flows (combined directional) in excess of 54,000 in 1987 are listed below.

Road	Junctions From	To
M63	1	2
M63	5	7
M20	5	6
A57M	A5103	C
M4	1	2
M5	6	7

The sections of motorway in England which are built to dual three-lane standard and which are estimated to carry average annual daily traffic flows (combined directional) in excess of 79,000 in 1987 are listed below.

Road	Junctions From	To
M1	5	6
M1	8	9
M1	11	14
M1	31	32
M25	6	13
M25	15	19
M25	23	28
M4	2	4B
M4	5	9
M5	1	2
M56	4	6
M6	6	8
M6	9	10
M6	17	19
M6	20	21A
M6	30	31
M62	12	13
M62	M61	19
M63	2	3
M63	10	Spur
A38M	M6	C

The sections of motorway in England which are built to dual four-lane standard and which are estimated to carry average annual daily flows (combined directional) in excess of 79,000 in 1987 are listed below.

Road	Junctions From	To
M25	13	15
M61	1	2
A40M	A40	M41

Bottesford Bypass

Mr. Latham: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport (1) what representations he has received dated 9 November from Mr. Reginald Boyce, chairman of Bottesford parish council, regarding proposed alterations to two junctions on the A52 Bottesford bypass; and what reply he has sent;

(2) what representations he has received from Councillor A. Burton of Melton borough council dated 15 November regarding proposed alterations to the A52 Bottesford bypass at three specific locations; and what reply he has sent.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: We received letters from Mr. Boyce and Councillor Burton on 14 and 28 November. The Department's regional office replied reflecting the advice I gave to my hon. Friend in my letter of 14 October.

The junction layouts on the A52 Bottesford bypass are appropriate for the conditions and the volume of turning traffic. We shall monitor the situation once the bypass is open to traffic early next year.

North Devon Link Road

Mr. Speller: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will arrange to have 60 mph maximum speed limit signs erected along the north Devon link road between Tiverton and Barnstaple.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: It is not our policy to restate the 60 mph national speed limit, which applies to the north Devon link road west of Tiverton, by the erection of speed limit signs.

Driver and Vehicle Licensing Centre

Mr. Alan Williams: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what security clearance procedures were undergone by Bowe Systems and Machinery United Kingdom staff before being allowed to use the Driver and Vehicle Licensing Centre processing equipment between 7 and 17 November, and what clearance is required by the Driver and Vehicle Licensing Centre's own staff before they are allowed access to this area.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The contract of employment signed by all Bowe Systems and Machinery (UK) Ltd. employees has been amended to cover the requirements of the Data Protection and Official Secrets Act. The area at DVLC containing the Bowe equipment is controlled by a Cardkey entry system. DVLC staff not normally employed in the area can only enter by arrangement with line management.

Vehicle Excise Duty

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he expects to launch the next campaign against vehicle excise duty evasion in London.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Next spring—probably May.

Enforcement continues between campaigns throughout the year.

Air Traffic

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what assumptions about the British Airports Authority's holding of land at Heathrow, Gatwick and Stansted are made by his Department in preparing estimates on the future growth of air traffic up to the year 2005.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: We plan to publish new air traffic forecasts for the United Kingdom before the Christmas recess. The commentary on those forecasts will describe the assumptions underlying them.

ENVIRONMENT

House of Commons (Lighting)

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will seek to obtain drawings and specifications of the original chandeliers which illuminated the Chamber before 1941.

Mr. Chope: Investigations on these matters are already in hand in view of the possible relevance to eventual recommendations of the Select Committee on televising.

Water Companies (Foreign Interests)

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what information he has as to in which British water companies foreign companies have control of a sizeable interest and as to what percentage of the shares they own; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Moynihan: My right hon. Friend has no information which is not already in the public domain. Such investment is subject to the normal provisions of competition and merger law.

Red List (Dangerous Substances)

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list the most dangerous substances in the United Kingdom red list.

Mr. Moynihan: A consultation paper was issued in July setting out proposals for a new approach towards controlling inputs of the most dangerous substances to water. The paper included proposals for selecting a "red list" of the most dangerous substances, and a provisional initial list of substances, on which comments were invited. The following substances appeared on the provisional list:

Mercury
Cadmium
Gamma-Hexacholrocyclohexane (Lindane)
DDT
Pentachlorophenol (PCP)
Hexachlorobenzene (HCB)
Hexachlorobutadiene (HCBD)
Aldrin
Dieldrin
PCB (Polychlorinated Biphenyls)
Triorganotin Compounds
Dichlorvos
Trifluoralin
Chloroform[1]
Carbon Tetrachloride[1]
1, 2 Dichloroethane
Trichlorobenzene
Azinphos-methyl
Fenitrothion
Malathion
Endosulfan
Atrazine
Simazine

[1] Comments were particularly invited on whether these substances should be included because they were the subject of EC directives even though they did not emerge as priority substances from the selection scheme.

Comments received in response to the consultation paper are currently being assessed.

River Pollution

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what action he is taking to ban the following from rivers *(a)* mercury, *(b)* lindane, *(c)* dieldrin, *(d)* cadmium, *(e)* carbon tetrachloride, *(f)* pentachlorephenol, *(g)* arsenic and *(h)* lead, chromium, nickel, zinc and copper; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Moynihan: Discharges containing any potentially polluting substances are prohibited without prior authorisation under the normal provisions of the Control of Pollution Act 1974.

Discharges to rivers of all the substances listed are covered by European Community directives. Community-wide limit values and quality objectives are laid down for mercury, lindane, cadmium, carbon tetrachloride and pentachlorophenol. Those for dieldrin come into force on 1 January 1989. All discharges of these substances must be consented by the appropriate water authority in accordance with the provisions of the directives.

Additionally, in order to protect the aquatic environment the Government recently announced that all remaining approved uses of dieldrin as a pesticide will be prohibited from 30 March 1989.

National quality standards are in force for arsenic, lead, chromium, nickel, zinc and copper. These are set out in DoE circular 18/85 (Welsh Office circular 37/85).

Mrs. Clwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he has received a report on the spillage of 20,000 litres of diesel oil into the tidal beaches of the River Llyst near Exeter in the South West water authority; and if he will place a copy in the Library.

Mr. Moynihan: No. The South West water authority has treated this as a local, though serious, pollution incident. I understand that the spillage was successfully contained under the authority's established emergency procedures and that as a result there was limited environmental damage. The authority is now considering the need for any further action arising from the incident.

Exchequer Grants

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will show by standard economic region the proportion and amount at 1988 prices of aggregate Exchequer grants paid to councils within these areas for each financial year from 1981-82; and if, in addition he will show separately figures for inner and outer London.

Mr. Gummer: The information is as follows:

Table 1
Aggregate Exchequer Grant[1]

£ million (1988-89 prices)

Region	*1981-82*	*1982-83*	*1983-84*	*1984-85*	*1985-86*	*1986-87*	*1987-88*	*1988-89*
South East	5,201	5,071	4,808	4,623	4,380	4,428	4,408	4,249
South West	1,289	1,232	1,193	1,188	1,110	1,070	1,077	1,091
East Anglia	503	486	472	466	427	424	433	411
West Midlands	1,593	1,546	1,617	1,584	1,476	1,513	1,491	1,420

Region	*1981-82*	*1982-83*	*1983-84*	*1984-85*	*1985-86*	*1986-87*	*1987-88*	*1988-89*
East Midlands	1,247	1,181	1,178	1,266	1,101	1,028	1,058	1,026
North West	2,594	2,462	2,453	2,391	2,304	2,232	2,297	2,270
Yorkshire and Humberside	1,936	1,867	1,844	1,874	1,700	1,622	1,703	1,681
Northern	1,310	1,188	1,182	1,153	1,107	1,019	1,080	1,083
All Regions	15,673	15,033	14,747	14,545	13,605	13,336	13,547	13,231
Inner London Boroughs (including City of London)[2]	567	569	563	514	566	797	786	760
Outer London Boroughs[2]	1,157	1,168	1,113	1,100	1,050	1,102	1,146	1,155

[1] AEG currently being paid to authorities. These are final amounts for 1981-82 to 1984-85. Cash values have been converted to constant 1988-89 prices using the GDP deflator.
[2] Figures for 1986-87 and following years are not comparable with earlier years because of the abolition of the GLC.

Table 2
percentage of Aggregate Exchequer Grant[1] in each region

Per cent.

Region	*1981-82*	*1982-83*	*1983-84*	*1984-85*	*1985-86*	*1986-87*	*1987-88*	*1988-89*
South East	33·2	33·7	32·6	31·8	32·3	33·3	32·5	32·1
South West	8·2	8·2	8·1	8·2	8·2	8·0	7·9	8·2
East Anglia	3·2	3·2	3·2	3·2	3·1	3·2	3·2	3·1
West Midlands	10·2	10·3	11·0	10·9	10·8	11·3	11·0	10·7
East Midlands	8·0	7·9	8·0	8·7	8·1	7·7	7·8	7·8
North West	16·4	16·4	16·6	16·4	16·9	16·7	17·0	17·2
Yorkshire and Humberside	12·4	12·4	12·5	12·9	12·5	12·2	12·6	12·7
Northern	7·8	7·9	8·0	7·9	8·1	7·6	8·0	8·2
Inner London Boroughs (including City of London)[1]	3·6	3·8	3·8	3·5	4·2	6·0	5·8	5·7
Outer London Boroughs[1]	7·4	7·8	7·5	7·6	7·7	8·3	8·5	8·7

[1] Figures for 1986-87 and following years are not comparable with earlier years because of the abolition of the GLC.

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will show by region in England, showing inner and outer London separately from the south-east region, for each year from 1981-82 to 1988-89 constant prices, the amount of aggregate Exchequer grant received by each region.

Mr. Gummer: I refer the hon. Member to the answer that I gave him earlier today.

Rating Reform

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is the Government's estimate of *(a)* the lowest and *(b)* the highest level of poll tax to be levied by a local authority.

Mr. Gummer: The Government have no plans to introduce a poll tax. We published on 23 June illustrative figures showing what the community charge would have been in each area, had the new system been in force in 1988-89. Those illustrative figures assume existing levels of spending and existing local authority responsibilities. On that basis, the lowest community charge in England would have been £152 with a full transitional safety net (Teesdale) and £132 with no safety net (Isler of Scilly). The highest would have been £488 with a full safety net (City of London) and £639 with no safety net (Camden).

Housing Waiting Lists

Mr. Harry Barnes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many people are on housing waiting lists, by categories, in the districts of Derbyshire, North-East and Chesterfield.

Mr. Trippier: The latest available information was provided by north east Derbyshire and Chesterfield district councils in section B of their 1988 housing investment programme returns (HIP1), copies of which are in the Library.

Wool Textile Industry

Mr. Steel: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he intends to meet representatives of the wool textile industry to discuss common standards on effluent from moth-proofing.

Mr. Howard: My right hon. Friend has no immediate plans to meet representatives of this industry. However, my Department has discussed with representatives of the industry a report by the water research centre setting out possible environmental quality standards in water for certain substances commonly used as moth-proofing agents. We expect to announce the introduction of environmental quality standards for these substances in England and Wales in the near future. The introduction of such standards in Scotland is a matter for my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland.

Resider Programme

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what advice has been given to local authorities on the resider programme; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Chope: Local authorities within the programme area were advised when the programme was first approved and will shortly be invited to submit applications.

Council Home Sales

Sir Geoffrey Finsberg: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment in how many cases under the

right-to-buy legislation to the latest convenient date the London borough of Camden had failed to meet the dates statutorily required.

Mr. Trippier: As at 31 October 1988 there were 40 RTB2 (notice acknowledging or denying the right-to-buy) defaults and 2,590 section 125 (offer notice) defaults.

Local Authority Housing

Mr. Hind: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is his policy on allowing local authorities to opt out of direct housing provision; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Trippier: We have made it clear that we support the idea of councils opting out of direct housing provision, if they do so on the right terms. I have today announced that we have given consent to Chiltern district council to transfer its housing to the Chiltern Hundreds housing association. This is the first such transfer to obtain consent.

Chiltern council has shown considerable vision and enterprise in preparing for this transfer. It has also demonstrated that the needs and aspirations of both the tenants and the Council can be met and furthered by such a scheme. I am sure that other councils who are considering following the same route will be encouraged.

Water Privatisation

Mr. Wray: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether, prior to deciding about the privatisation of the water industry, he gathered information regarding *(a)* the cost of repairing the sewage system within a period not longer than five years, *(b)* the cost of urgently cleaning drinking water of pollutants and poisons and *(c)* the amount of people who now have free access to water and land for the purposes of sporting and recreation activities.

Mr. Moynihan *[holding answer 9 December 1988]:* Information on the estimated costs of improving water and sewerage services is obtained from water authorities each year, while information relating specifically to privatisation is obtained as necessary. It is not possible to estimate the number of people who might make use of water and land for sporting and recreation purposes where there is free access.

Westminster Hall

Mr. Winnick: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether steps are to be taken by his Department to renovate the inscriptions on the memorial plaques in Westminster Hall where such work is urgently needed.

Mr. Chope *[holding answer 9 December 1988]:* Since I wrote to the hon. Member about this matter, English Heritage has advised that no further cleaning of the plaques should be carried out pending a long-term solution to the problem. Discussions with experts at the Victoria and Albert museum's department of metalwork conservation are continuing.

Local Government Finance

Mrs. Ray Michie: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how much subsidy has been paid and is estimated to be paid in respect of authorities for each of the financial years 1979-80 to 1989-90 from the Exchequer, both in total and expressed as a subsidy per dwelling for the total number of dwellings in local authority control and in respect of those authorities in receipt of subsidy; and what is the position, expressed in similar terms, for rate fund contributions, for both negative and positive contributions.

Mr. Trippier *[holding answer 8 December 1988]:* Housing subsidy up to 1980-81 was paid under a different system, so I am using 1981-82 as the first year. The information requested is set out in the tables and is based on data provided by local authorities in their subsidy claim forms. The rate fund contribution figures (RFCs) are net amounts. The main housing subsidy figures are based on the latest entitlement claimed to date by local authorities, and the 1987-88 and 1988-89 figures are their estimates. The figures for 1989-90 are not yet published.

Main housing subsidy and rate fund contributions 1981-82 to 1988-89
Local authorities in England

	1981-82 £	*1982-83* £	*1983-84* £	*1984-85* £	*1985-86* £	*1986-87* £	*1987-88* £	*1988-89* £
Main housing subsidy								
Total (million)	881·5	436·9	346·8	353·5	487·6	464·9	443·8	508·4
Per dwelling:								
All LAs	180	92	74	77	108	105	102	123
LAs in subsidy	184	209	249	263	343	367	381	466
Negative RFCs								
Total (million)	−17·1	−22·1	−22·0	−44·2	−58·3	−101·3	−81·4	−75·2
Per dwelling:								
All LAs	−3	−5	−6	−10	−13	−23	−19	−18
LAs in subsidy	−3	−4	−4	−8	−13	−11	−11	−9
Positive RFCs								
Total (million)	419·6	432·7	495·2	431·3	438·4	378·0	495·1	484·5
Per dwelling:								
All LAs	85	91	106	94	97	85	114	117
LAs in subsidy	87	184	309	206	260	243	306	318

Note: Not all local authorities in receipt of Exchequer subsidy are also making contributions from the general rate fund.

Rural Housing Associations

Mr. David Porter: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) what information he has as to how many properties are now covered by the rural county-based housing associations established under the sponsorship of the National Agricultural Centre Rural Trust;

(2) what level of support grant was given by Government-sponsored agencies to the rural county-based housing associations for the last financial year; and what is the current level of Government support;

(3) what level of support grant was given by Government-sponsored agencies to the National Agricultural Centre Rural Trust for the last financial year; and what is the current level of Government support;

(4) how many new housing associations have been created in the current year in rural areas with support from central Government.

Mr. Trippier *[holding answer 12 December 1988]:* The Housing Corporation has nine rural county-based associations currently registered with it of which one was registered this year. Those associations have 50 properties in management wth a further 144 properties approved for funding or in the pipeline.

In 1987-88 the Housing Corporation allocated grants of £4,547,000 to projects by rural county-based associations. This year the corporation has allocated £5,209,000 to such projects.

In 1987-88 the Rural Development Commission gave a grant of £112,500 towards the National Agricultural Centre Rural Trust's (NACRT's) running costs. The Department has given approval for the Commission to pay grant to NACRT of up to £315,000 in this financial year.

Maxwell House, Holborn

Dr. Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how much has been spent to date by the Property Services Agency on alterations to Maxwell house, Holborn, EC1; what is the proposed use of the office space in question; when it will be occupied; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Nicholas Ridley *[holding answer 8 December 1988]:* Negotiations for Maxwell House began in 1986 on behalf of Customs and Excise as a result of the impending expiry of a lease of one of the buildings occupied by them. Customs and Excise have re-appraised their accommodation needs having regard to the Government's relocation policy and have been able to reduce their requirement for office space in central London. A number of carefully costed options are being considered by Ministers and an announcement will be made shortly. Full account will be taken of expenditure to date on alterations to Maxwell house and its future role as part of the Government's office estate.

SOCIAL SECURITY

Benefit Take-up

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security (1) if he will consider seeking to amend statutes in order that a duty be placed upon his Department to ensure as far as is practicable that benefits are taken up by potential claimants as well as being available for claimants;

(2) if he will introduce legislation imposing a statutory duty on his Department to encourage the take-up of benefits administered by them.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: No. The Department already aims to ensure that members of the public have ready access to comprehensive, accurate and comprehensible information about benefit entitlement. This is done at national level by identifying the most effective and practical means of communication and also by a wide variety of initiatives taken at regional and local levels to promote awareness of the benefits available.

Attendance Allowance

Mr. Battle: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will publish a table showing the latest figures for *(a)* the average length of time in processing claims for attendance allowance and *(b)* the numbers of cases which have been delayed and the reasons for those delays.

Mr. Scott: The average processing time for attendance allowance claims is currently 7·3 weeks. Claims may take longer than average to process for a variety of reasons. These include difficulties in arranging medical examination of the claimant or in establishing a firm prognosis; the need to obtain information from the claimant's general practitioner, hospitals he has attended or a consultant; and inquiries about periods the claimant has spent in hospital or other residential accommodation. Figures are not kept for the numbers of such cases.

Industrial Deafness

Mr. Prescott: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security whether he has received recommendations from the Industrial Injuries Advisory Council on sensorineural hearing loss for merchant seamen in the schedule of prescribed diseases and injuries; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Scott: We received a report on occupational deafness from the council last month. It is being considered.

Mobility Allowance

Mr. Pike: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security whether he proposes to make any changes in the age limit for applications for mobility allowance.

Mr. Scott: As my right hon. Friend announced on 27 October, we shall be bringing forward legislation to extend the upper age limit for receipt of the allowance from 75 to 80, as an interim measure pending our consideration of the series of reports on the survey of disabled people undertaken by the Office of Population Censuses and Surveys.

Disabled People (Benefits)

Mr. Hannam: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many people there are in receipt of *(a)* mobility allowance, *(b)* attendance allowance, lower and higher rates, *(c)* war pensioners' mobility supplement, *(d)* invalid care allowance and *(e)* severe disablement allowance as at the latest available date.

Mr. Scott: The information requested is in the table.

Benefit	*Numbers of recipients*
Mobility allowance	[1]554,000
Attendance allowance	
Lower rate	[2]382,000
Higher rate	[2]259,000
War pensioners' mobility supplement	[3]14,500
Invalid care allowance	[4]108,000
Severe disablement allowance	[2]260,000

[1] At 2 December 1988.
[2] At 4 April 1987.
[3] At 30 September 1988.
[4] At 28 November 1988.

Unemployment Benefit

Mr. Harry Barnes: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what is the latest information he has regarding the numbers and proportion of unemployment benefit disqualification cases in the Chesterfield area in which the disqualification was imposed for the maximum period of 26 weeks.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: I regret that this information is not available. We are currently monitoring the operation of the disqualification rules on the basis of a sample of cases across the country. The results of the survey, which will not allow analysis of the position in any single office, should be available next year.

Attendance Allowance (Mr. Bowell junior)

Mr. Steen: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security why has his Department's overseas branch failed to pay the attendance allowance for Mr. Bowell junior of 23B La Vallesa, Shangrila, Calpe Alicante, Spain, formerly of 80 Blatchcombe road, Paignton, details of which were set out in his letter to the hon. Member for South Hams on 10 October; how much is owing; and when it will be paid.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Arrears of attendance allowance for Mr. Bowell junior, amounting to £774·33 for the period 4 July 1988 to 14 December 1988, have been authorised for payment and will be issued to Mrs. Bowell this week. I very much regret the delay in issuing this payment.

Retirement Pension (Mr. and Mrs. Bowell)

Mr. Steen: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will arrange for £269·80, due to Mr. and Mrs. Bowell of 23B La Vallesa, Shangrila, Calpe Alicante, Spain, formerly of 80 Blatchcombe road, Paignton, to be sent to them immediately through his Department's overseas branch; and why there has been a five month delay in paying their retirement pension.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The Department had not been aware of any problems with Mr. and Mrs. Bowell's pensions. However, checks now show that two payments totalling £334·46 which the Department issued to Mr. Bowell's bank were not received there. The original payments have now been stopped and, assuming that they prove not to have already been paid, replacements will be issued urgently.

Pensioners

Mr. McAvoy: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will specify the income sources that were included in his estimate of the increase in pensioners total incomes since 1979, *Official Report*, 27 October, column *456*, and the percentage by which each category increased in real terms over the same period.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The information requested is as follows:

Source	*Per cent.*[1]
Retirement pension and other state benefits	+19
Occupational pension	+56
Investment income	+64
Earnings	−28
Total gross	+24
Tax and National Insurance contributions	+37
Total net	+23

[1] Percentage increase of average amount (1979-86).
Note: In all cases, the figures are rounded to the nearest percentage point.

Mr. Shore: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how much of the 23 per cent. increase in the real income of the average pensioner between 1979 and 1986 is due to increases in the national insurance pension, how much to the payment of the state earnings-related pension scheme; and how much to the payment of occupational pensions.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The information is not available in the form requested. The available information shows that between 1979 and 1986 pensioners experienced an average real increase in gross incomes of 24 per cent. which was broken down as follows:

	Breakdown of 24 per cent.
Retirement pension (including state earnings-related pension) and income-related benefits	41 per cent.
Occupational pensions	37 per cent.
All other income	22 per cent.

Mrs. Beckett: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what are the weekly payments from occupational pension schemes by decile or quartile with respect to the number of recipients over pension age; and what is the median weekly payment from occupational pension schemes paid to recipients over pension age.

Mr. Peter Lloyd *[holding answer 5 December 1988]:* The information is not available in the form requested. The following table specifies the amount per week (rounded to the nearest 10p) received in 1986 by single and married men and women over pension age in receipt of an occupational pension.

	Single		Married	
	Men Aged 65 and over	Women Aged 60 and over	Men Aged 65 and over	Women With husband aged 65 and over
	£	£	£	£
1st quartile	3·50	5·10	5·70	2·50
2nd quartile	10·80	10·70	17·20	9·00
3rd quartile	27·70	23·70	43·00	20·50
4th quartile	87·20	71·10	131·20	49·30
Median	16·00	14·50	25·70	13·00

Mrs. Beckett: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many persons and what proportion of those over pensionable age are in receipt of payments from an occupational pension scheme.

Mr. Peter Lloyd *[holding answer 5 December 1988]:* The information is not available in the form requested. In 1986 about 3·4 million tax units in Great Britain (that is, single people over pensionable age and married couples where the man is over pensionable age) were in receipt of an occupational pension—a proportion of 50 per cent.

National Insurance

Mrs. Beckett: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what is the most recent estimate of the cost to the national insurance fund for 1988-89 of the 2 per cent. subsidy payable under sections 1 and 7 of the Social Security Act 1986; and how much of this relates to contributions in respect of the year 1987-88.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The general rule is that incentives payable under sections 1 and 7 of the Social Security Act 1986 in respect of 1987-88 and 1988-89, will be paid in 1989-90. The Government Actuary has followed this assumption when deriving the estimate that £310 million of incentives will be paid in 1989-90, of which £80 million relates to contributions in respect of 1987-88, and £230 million relates to 1988-89.

All figures are consistent with the Government Actuary's report on the uprating and rerating orders, (Cm. 537).

Family Credit

Mrs. Beckett: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what average family credit payment was assumed in the 1988 public expenditure White Paper; what was the average payment awarded in each month since April; and what is the average amount now in payment.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The 1988 public expenditure White Paper estimate of £409 million and an average of 470,000 recipients presupposed an average award of £16·73 a week. Indications are that current awards average over £25 a week. Precise information for earlier months is not available. Revised estimates of total expenditure and the numbers of claimants in 1988-89 will be published in the 1989 public expenditure White Paper in the new year.

"Reform of Social Security"

Mrs. Beckett: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security (1) if he will publish a revised version of tables P1 to P6 of the technical annex to the White Paper "Reform of Social Security" taking into account changes in prices, earnings and other relevant factors since 1985;

(2) if he will publish in the *Official Report* the figures given in his answer on social security benefits on 7 December, *Official Report*, column *182*, at 1988 prices.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: I shall let the hon. Member have such information as can be obtained without incurring disproportionate cost as soon as possible.

Social Fund

Mrs. Beckett: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will publish in the *Official Report (a)* the anticipated end of the year out-turn on the numbers of claimants and levels of expenditure, *(b)* the most recent figures for the numbers of claimants and levels of expenditure and *(c)* the anticipated numbers of claimants and levels of expenditure for 1988-89 for (i) funeral payments from the social fund and (ii) maternity payments from the social fund.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: These figures are not yet available and I shall write to the hon. Member when they are.

Income Support

Mrs. Beckett: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many people have *(a)* ceased to claim or lost entitlement of income support since April, to the most recent date as a result of (i) finding employment, (ii) the ruling that work expenses are no longer deductible from earnings for income calculations, (iii) the reduction from 30 to 24 hours of the full-time work qualification, (iv) the removal of benefit rights from 16 and 17-year-olds, and (v) other, *(b)* the amounts saved in each category, *(c)* what he anticipates the end of year outcome will be for numbers and amounts saved for each category and *(d)* what he anticipates the numbers and amounts saved in 1988-89 will be.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: I regret that the information requested is not available.

Housing Benefit

Mrs. Beckett: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what he anticipates will be the end of year cost of housing benefit transitional payments; how many claimants he anticipates will have been awarded such payments; what he anticipates the costs and numbers of claimants in 1988-89 will be following the announcement of the £2 erosion factor; and how many payments and how much in each of the above will be received by pensioners.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: At the time the transitional payment unit was set up it was announced that £65 million was being made available to cover the cost of the payments. Applications for transitional payments will continue to be

received until 31 March 1989. Until they have all been received it is not possible to calculate the final cost of housing benefit transitional payments or to give the final number who will receive payments, either now or after the erosion factor is applied. Information on pensioners as a group is not yet available from the unit; we hope to be able to supply this at a later date.

Child Benefit

Mr. McLeish: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what is the estimated number of summer school leavers currently on extended child benefit.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: As at 5 December 1988 there were 16,109 16 and 17-year-old summer school leavers whose parents were receiving extended child benefit in respect of them.

Cold Weather Payments

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many more people he estimates would be eligible for cold weather payments if entitlement were extended to income support claimants with children aged under 11 years and with savings over £500.

Mr. Scott *[holding answer 12 December 1988]:* If eligibility were extended to families with children under 11 and the £500 capital rule were to be abolished, about 1 million more people could be expected to qualify.

EMPLOYMENT

Labour

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will list *(a)* the changes in regulations or procedures which have had knock-on effects on the unemployment figures and *(b)* the changes made to the basis for calculation of the unemployment figures since 1979, with a brief explanation of the reason for each change.

Mr. Lee: I am sending the hon. Member a list of the changes affecting the unemployment figures since 1979 which was published on page 422 of the October 1986 issue of *Employment Gazette*, a copy of which is in the Library. Since then there has been one further significant change in the coverage of the unemployment count resulting from the recent extension of the YTS guarantee, and the introduction in September 1988 of new benefit regulations, for under 18-year-olds. Further details are given in an article on page 660 in the December 1988 issue of *Employment Gazette*.

In addition, as described on page 56 of the August 1988 issue of *Employment Gazette*, a further minor amendment was made in July 1988 to the denominators used for calculating national and regional unemployment rates, to include those on work-related Government training schemes in line with their inclusion in the statistics of the employed work force. This change did not affect the numbers included in the unemployment count.

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment, further to his answer of Wednesday 7 December, *Official Report*, columns *234-36*, what would be the current level of unemployment if calculated on the same basis as the 1971 figure.

Mr. Lee: My Department does not estimate unemployment on any previous definition as it is impossible to estimate what the various effects of changes in coverage of the unemployment count would now be. I refer the hon. Member to page 422 of the October 1986 issue of *Employment Gazette* and page 660 of the December 1988 issue for more detailed information.

Employment Training

Mr. Leighton: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what percentage of the client group are on employment training at the latest available date.

Mr. Nicholls: It is not possible to estimate the total number of people in the employment training client group. However, in October 1988 some 1,143,000 claimants aged 18 to 60 had been unemployed for over six months. There are currently some 97,000 people on employment training.

Mr. Leighton: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment whether Lloyds Bank, Midland Bank, the Ford Motor Co., British Airways, British Gas, British Coal and Marks and Spencer are participating in employment training.

Mr. Nicholls: The companies listed are not yet involved in employment training as training managers or training agents, although they may be providing places to other training managers. Marks and Spencer, British Coal, British Gas and the Ford Motor Co. are in the process of consultation with the Training Agency about becoming involved in employment training as training managers or as placement providers.

A full list of training agents and training managers will be published in January, although details of employers who are involed in employment training as placement providers will not be included.

Mr. Leighton: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment whether the London borough of Wandsworth is taking part in employment training.

Mr. Nicholls: The London borough of Wandsworth is providing support for the Wandsworth Training Consortium which is operating as a training manager.

Training Places (Nottingham)

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what assessment he has made of the adequacy of the number of training places available under YTS for those aged 16 to 17 years in Nottingham.

Mr. Cope: I am satisfied that there are more than sufficient places available to meet demand.

Child Care

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment under what conditions claimants on employment training schemes are entitled to child care payments; and what is the total number of *(a)* cases who have so far been granted child care payments on employment training and *(b)* requests for child care support on employment training, in each standard region.

Mr. Nicholls: All lone parents entering employment training may have child care costs of up to £50 per week

per child paid on their behalf. Payments are made directly to the child minder, day nursery or creche by the training manager who is responsible for organising the training programme.

Information on the number of employment training participants qualifying for child care payments is not available. It is planned to collect the information at the end of March. The results will be available at the end of April.

Economic League

Mr. David Young: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will instruct staff at jobcentres to scrutinise cases of persistent refusal by employers to employ particular individuals; if he will instruct such staff to inquire of prospective employers if they use the services of the Economic League or similar bodies; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Nicholls: It is for employers to make their own decisions about who they should employ. However, staff at jobcentres are already instructed to question employers whom they suspect are not operating within the equal opportunities or other legislation. My right hon. Friend has no plans to amend the present arrangements.

Mr. David Young: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will make an assessment of the implications of the activities of the Economic League and similar organisations for the job prospects of those placed on their lists.

Mr. Nicholls: No.

Information on Employees

Mr. David Young: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will introduce legislation to establish an offence of supplying false information on a prospective employee, or information without the knowledge of that employee, to an employer; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Nicholls: My right hon. Friend has no such plans.

School Leavers

Mr. McLeish: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will provide a breakdown on summer school leavers by the following categories *(a)* the number in higher or further education, *(b)* the number in employment, *(c)* the number in YTS and *(d)* the number on extended child benefit.

Mr. Cope: The estimated number of this summer's school leavers in higher or further education will not be available, for England and Wales, until spring 1989 and, for Scotland, until late 1990. Information on the number of school leavers in employment is not available.

At 31 October, the latest available date, there were 435,200 young people in YTS, but it is not possible to say how many of those left school this summer.

Child benefit is a matter for my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Social Security.

YTS

Mr. McLeish: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will supply monthly totals for those aged 16 and 17 years not eligible for income support indicating *(a)* the number receiving extended child benefit, *(b)* the number on bridging allowance, *(c)* the number not on bridging allowance and who have not yet received an offer of a YTS place and *(d)* the number on YTS.

Mr. Cope: Child benefit is a matter for my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Social Security.

Information on the number of young people on bridging allowance is available on request. It is not possible to provide information on the number not on bridging allowance and who have not yet received an offer of a YTS place.

Figures on the number of people on YTS are published monthly in the *Employment Gazette*.

Training Schemes

Ms. Armstrong: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what is the average time taken for payments in respect of child care costs for the children of lone parents on employment training schemes to be paid to the carers; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Cope *[holding answer 6 December 1988]:* The arrangements for payment of child care costs for lone parent trainees in employment training should enable training agents and training managers to make the payments without delay, both when a trainee first qualifies for payment and subsequently.

Ms. Armstrong: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many participants in employment training schemes qualify for child care payments; what is the percentage take up; and what is the total cost *(a)* nationally, *(b)* in the northern region and *(c)* in Durham, North-West constituency.

Mr. Nicholls *[holding answer 6 December 1988]:* Information on the number of employment training participants qualifying for child care payments is not yet available. It is planned to collect information at the end of March and results should be available by the end of April.

HEALTH

Waiting Lists (North West)

11. **Mr. Burt:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what were the in-patient waiting list figures in March for the North Western regional health authority; and what were the figures for the previous year, and 1979.

Mr. Mellor: There were 61,800 patients on the inpatient waiting list in North Western region at 31 March 1988. This compares with 63,900 at March 1987 and 77,400 at March 1979.

Vaccinations (Charges)

12. **Mr. Gill:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what consideration he has given to introducing charges for vaccinations obtained for the purpose of foreign travel.

Mr. Mellor: We have no plans to introduce special charges for this purpose.

RAWP (Dorset)

13. **Mr. Ian Bruce:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will make a statement on the transfer of

resources under the resources allocation working party to the east and west Dorset area authorities; and what overall increases in total resources have been achieved since 1979.

Mr. Mellor: The resource allocation working party formula governs allocation to regional health authorities. In making allocations to district health authorities, regions are not expected strictly to follow RAWP principles. The Wessex regional health authority in 1988-89 allocated revenue resources of £81,326,000 to east Dorset and £40,188,000 to west Dorset. Since 1982, when they were established, east Dorset's allocation has increased by 15·4 per cent. in real terms. West Dorest, which is nearer to its regional target, has received a 4·1 per cent. increase.

Children in Distress

14. **Miss Lestor:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will introduce precautionary measures to prevent unsuitable individuals from establishing telephone counselling services for children in distress; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Currie: No. I have no reason to believe that this is necessary. If the hon. Member has evidence of unsuitable operation of such services she should send it to the police and the director general of Oftel Telecommunications.

AIDS and HIV

15. **Mr. Tony Banks:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will adopt as his policy the model policy and guidance on AIDS and HIV infection services provided by the Association of London Authorities.

Mr. Mellor: It is important that local authorities should respond positively to the challenge of HIV infection and AIDS. Government Departments have issued guidance to assist authorities in this, but it is for individual authorities to decide whether and to what extent they wish to adopt the model policy developed by the Association of London Authorities.

27. **Mr. Strang:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what representations he has received following his announcement that health authorities will screen patients anonymously for HIV.

79. **Mr. Yeo:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what representations he has received regarding his decision to introduce anonymous blood tests for AIDS.

Mr. Mellor: None.

32. **Sir David Price:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will give his reasons for not accepting the advice of the Select Committee on Social Services relating to the anonymised screening of blood for HIV.

Mr. Mellor: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply given by my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State to the hon. Member for Edinburgh, East (Mr. Strang) on 2 December at columns *439-40*.

Patients (Statistics)

17. **Mr. Knox:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many patients were treated in National Health Service hospitals in the most recent year for which figures are available; and what were the comparable figures for 1978-79.

Mr. Mellor: There were 6·62 million in-patient cases treated in National Health Service hospitals in England during the 1987-88 financial year. Earlier figures were for calendar years and in 1979 5·40 million in-patient cases were treated, a rise of over a million or more than 22 per cent.

Mentally Handicapped People

18. **Mr. Devlin:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what new proposals his Department has to improve care for the mentally handicapped.

Mrs. Currie: Our current policy is to develop at local level, in collaboration with statutory and voluntary agencies, a comprehensive and integrated range of health and social services for mentally handicapped people and their families.

To this end the Department this year issued guidance to health authorities that by 1991 every district should have policy statements and action plans for meeting the needs of mentally handicapped people including those with special needs.

Grading

20. **Mr. Fearn:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he has any plans to meet representatives of the nursing unions to discuss the regrading of nurses and midwives.

24. **Mr. Canavan:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health whether he will now arrange to meet trade union representatives of Health Service employees to discuss regrading.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: I met representatives of the Royal College of Nursing on 5 December and representatives of the Royal College of Midwives on 7 December. I am not prepared to meet representatives of those trades unions whose members are taking part in industrial action over the current regrading exercise while that action continues.

I should also make it clear that negotiations over the terms and conditions of nurses and midwives employment are a matter for the relevant Whitley council. I cannot take over the role of the Whitley council management side and direct meetings between me and trade union leaders should not be seen as a substitute for Whitley council discussions.

28. **Ms. Mowlam:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what representations he has recently received from nursing unions concerning the current regrading procedure.

49. **Mr. Evennett:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what representations he has recently received concerning the regrading of midwives by district health authorities.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: I have received a number of representations about the re-grading exercise for nurses and midwives, including some from trade unions. I have made it clear, however, that I will not meet representatives of trade unions engaged in attempting to organise industrial action. Neither the Royal College of Nursing nor the Royal College of Midwives have done so and I

therefore met representatives of these Colleges on, respectively, 5 and 7 December. Both unions joined me in condemning industrial action, and agreed to support measures designed to help the appeals process work more quickly and effectively. We agreed to continue our efforts to dispel some misunderstandings which appear to have arisen over the regrading exercise. As a result of these friendly and constructive meetings, I am more certain than ever that the new grading structure will come to be seen as a turning point in securing a properly rewarded career structure for the country's nurses and midwives.

33. **Mr. Illsley:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what percentage of nurses who have received a new grade under the recent review procedures *(a)* nationally and *(b)* in the Barnsley district health authority have appealed against their grade.

Mr. Mellor: We do not hold this information centrally.

64. **Mr. Win Griffiths:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many appeals have been made by nurses against their new grading; and when he expects the appeals procedure to be completed.

78. **Mr. Nellist:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many appeals are currently being heard concerning health workers' regrading; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: Appeals against grading are a local matter and we do not hold information centrally on the number of appeals lodged. I recognise the importance of dealing with appeals quickly as well as fairly and I have asked RHA chairmen to adopt a number of measures designed to speed up the appeals system. These include setting up officer level investigations to resolve any obvious mistakes and points of difficulty before the formal appeal stage is reached, and establishing wherever possible more than one appeals' panel. The great majority of officer level investigations for current appeals can be completed by the end of January, and I shall be discussing with chairmen whether it will be possible to have completed the appeals process locally by the spring. However, I have made it clear that no appeals will be heard in any unit from staff who are not working normally so long as they continue their industrial action.

65. **Mr. Tim Smith:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will make a statement on the nurses' grading dispute.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: The vast majority of nurses and midwives are working normally and are very satisfied with the outcome of this year's pay award and the associated regrading exercise. This is hardly surprising because it gives them an average pay increase of 17·9 per cent. at a cost to the taxpayer of almost £1,000 million.

Mr. Morley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many nursing, midwifery and health visiting staff from each of the old grades have been assimilated to each of the new grades in the recent clinical grading structure in Scunthorpe district health authority.

Mr. Mellor *[holding answer 12 December 1988]:* The information requested is given in the table.

The new clincial grading structure for nursing, midwifery and health visitor staff
Percentage of old clinical grades assimilated to each of thenew clinical grades on the basis of duties and responsibilities on 1 April 1988: Scunthorpe

Previous grade	*Staff in post (whole time equivalents)*	*Numbers transferred to each new clinical grade*								
		A	*B*	*C*	*D*	*E*	*F*	*[1]G*	*H*	*I*
Nursing Auxiliary	265·30	245·80	19·50	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Staff Nursery Nurse	4·20	—	4·20	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Enrolled Nurse[2]	238·70	—	—	150·40	88·30	—	—	—	—	—
Enrolled District Nurse[2]	1·70	—	—	—	1·70	—	—	—	—	—
Senior Enrolled Nurse[2]	1·40	—	—	—	1·40	—	—	—	—	—
Staff Nurse[2]	227·30	—	—	—	67·70	143·90	15·70	—	—	—
Staff Midwife[2]	17·50	—	—	—	—	17·50	—	—	—	—
Deputy Sister[2]	11·60	—	—	—	—	5·00	6·60	—	—	—
Nursing Sister II[2]	137·00	—	—	—	—	—	59·20	77·00	0·80	—
Midwifery Sister II[2]	41·50	—	—	—	—	—	14·30	27·20	—	—
District Nurse (Sister II)[2]	37·90	—	—	—	—	—	1·20	33·70	3·00	—
Nursing Sister I	1·00	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	1·00	—
Midwifery Sister I	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Health Visitor	36·20	—	—	—	—	—	—	35·20	1·00	—
Senior Nurse 8	5·00	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	4·00	1·00
Senior Nurse 8 (Midwife)	1·00	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	1·00	—
Senior Nurse 7	14·50	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	14·50
Senior Nurse 7 (Midwife)	3·00	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	3·00
Clinical Teacher	3·30	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	3·30	—
Fieldwork Teacher	5·00	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	5·00	—
Practical Work Teacher	6·00	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	6·00	—
Tutor	6·00	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	6·00
Tutor Midwife	0·50	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	0·50
Post Basic Students										
Enrolled	19·00	—	—	19·00	—	—	—	—	—	—
Staff Nurse	2·00	—	—	—	2·00	—	—	—	—	—
Deputy Sister	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Sister II	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Others	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—

Previous grade	Staff in post (whole time equivalents)	Numbers transferred to each new clinical grade A	B	C	D	E	F	[1]G	H	I
Totals	1,086·60	245·80	23·70	169·40	161·10	166·40	97·00	173·10	25·10	25·00

[1]Excludes some additional G posts which health authorities have indicated they intend to create in future on existing two-sister wards.
[2]Excludes Post Basic Students.

Community Care

21. **Dr. Godman:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what representations he has received on the implementation of the recommendations of Sir Roy Griffiths' report on community care.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: I refer the hon. Member to the reply that I gave to the hon. Member for Barnsley, East (Mr. Patchett) earlier.

37. **Mr. Randall:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what recent representations he has received about future policies on community care.

39. **Mr. Tom Clarke:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what representations he has received seeking expedition of his response to the Griffiths report on community care.

40. **Mr. Harry Barnes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what representations he has received on the implementation of the recommendations of Sir Roy Griffiths' report on community care.

53. **Mr. Martlew:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what recent representations he has received about future policies on community care.

59. **Mr. Allen McKay:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what recent representations he has received about future policies on community care.

66. **Mr. O'Brien:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what representations he has received on the implementations of the recommendations of Sir Roy Griffiths' report on community care.

74. **Mr. Ronnie Campbell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what recent representations he has received about future policies on community care.

Mr. Mellor: I refer the hon. Members to the reply to my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State to the hon. Member for Barnsley, East (Mr. Patchett) earlier today.

Medical Personnel (Statistics)

22. **Mr. McLoughlin:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health, what are the net increases in the numbers of doctors, dentists, nurses and midwives since 1979.

Mr. Mellor: The overall changes in doctors, dentists, nurses and midwives between September 1979 and September 1987 are:

		Whole-time equivalents	Percentage change
Medical	Increase	4,030	+11·1
Dental	Decrease	50	−1·7
Nursing	Increase	42,430	+12·5
Midwifery	Increase	3,170	+15·5

Bolton General Hospital

23. **Mr. Thurnham:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he has any plans to visit the new genito-urinary department at Bolton general hospital; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Currie: I have no plans to visit the Bolton general hospital in the near future. The new genito-urinary medicine department has been developed at a cost of £116,000. The facilities that it contains will allow the provision of improved services for the counselling, diagnosis and treatment of patients with genito-urinary infections, including those with conditions related to the HIV infection.

RAWP (Northern Region)

25. **Mr. Amos:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health when he expects the funding for the Northern regional health authority will be brought up to the resources allocation working party level.

Mr. Mellor: We hope to be able to announce the 1989-90 resource allocations to regional health authorities shortly. The Government are considering the National Health Service management board's report on the review of the resource allocation working party (RAWP) formula in the wider context of the National Health Service review. Longer-term resource allocation decisions will be informed by the outcome of that wider review.

Hypothermia

26. **Mrs. Golding:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what plans he has to assist elderly people to combat hypothermia during the winter months.

30. **Mr. Bradley:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health, what plans he has to assist elderly people to combat hypothermia during the winter months.

61. **Mr. Cunliffe:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what plans he has to assist elderly people to combat hypothermia during the winter months.

63. **Mr. Frank Cook:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what plans he has to assist elderly people to combat hypothermia during the winter months.

Mrs. Currie: On 17 November the Government launched this years "Keep Warm Keep Well" campaign. This is a health promotion campaign designed to give people information and advice about how to combat the risks of cold weather and is supported by the Departments of Health, Social Security, Environment, Welsh Office and Energy and several voluntary organisations.

As well as supporting the "Keep Warm Keep Well" campaign, the Department of Social Security provides cold weather payments, the Department of the

Environment runs the home insulation grants scheme, and the Department of Energy supports Neighbourhood Energy Action, which organises community insulation projects.

We printed around 750,000 copies of the campaign booklet and there has already been sufficient demand to order a reprint. The telephone helpline on 0800-289404, the Winter Warmth line, is receiving around 200 calls a day.

Mr. Meale: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what advice his Department gives to the elderly about wrapping up more warmly during winter periods.

Mrs. Currie: Advice on keeping warm in winter is given in the "Keep Warm Keep Well" campaign.

We firmly believe that vulnerable people should be encouraged to take sensible precautions including dressing warmly in cold weather.

Office Space (London)

29. **Mr. Bidwell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will make a statement on his Department's plans to rent further office space in central London.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: We have no plans to rent additional space in central London. We intend to relocate the work of at least 1,000 posts away from the south east to areas where recruitment is easier and rents lower. We plan to vacate some buildings which are in areas of London with high rents.

Medical Techniques

31. **Mr. Adley:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will make a statement on the effect of improved medical techniques on his Department's budget.

Mr. Mellor: There is no precise measure of the resource implications of medical advance, which can both raise or lower costs of treatment and care.

Pensioners (Health in Winter)

34. **Mr. Steinberg:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he plans to give any further advice to pensioners on keeping healthy during the winter months.

45. **Mr. Loyden:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he has received any representations from pensioners or pensioners' organisations about the advice given by the Under-Secretary of State, the hon. Member for Derbyshire, South (Mrs. Currie) at Reading, on the subject of keeping healthy during the winter.

46. **Mr. Buckley:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he plans to give any further advice to pensioners on keeping healthy during the winter months.

48. **Mr. Ashton:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he has received any representations from pensioners or pensioners' organisations about the advice, given by the Under-Secretary of State, the hon. Member for Derbyshire, South (Mrs. Currie) on the subject of keeping healthy during the winter.

76. **Mr. Haynes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he plans to give any further advice to pensioners on keeping healthy during the winter months.

77. **Mr. Michael:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he has received any representations from pensioners or pensioners' organisations about the advice given by the Under-Secretary of State, the hon. Member for Derbyshire, South (Mrs. Currie) on the subject of keeping healthy during the winter.

Mrs. Currie: I refer the hon. Members to the reply that I gave to the hon. Members for Edinburgh, Central (Mr. Darling) and for Wentworth (Mr. Hardy) earlier today.

Resource Management

35. **Mr. Irvine:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what assessment he has made of the results of pilot projects on resource management in hospitals.

Mr. Mellor: The pilot projects will, in accordance with the agreement entered into by the joint sponsors of the initiative, the NHS management board and the joint consultants committee of the British Medical Association be evaluated fully in October 1989. Recently, interim progress reports have been produced by the various sites and organisations involved in the initiative. These reports indicate that good progress has been made, the commitment of local doctors and staff has been strong and parts of the approach can already usefully be recommended to other health authorities.

Medical Diagnoses

36. **Mr. Holt:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what new arrangements his Department is planning to ensure that untried and untested medical diagnoses are properly validated before acceptance within the profession and the courts.

Mrs. Currie: No new arrangements are planned. It is a matter for the clinical judgment of individual clinicians to decide what use they should make of novel diagnostic techniques. On occasion, to assist the medical profession, we issue guidance with the help of the standing medical advisory committee, as with the diagnosis of child sexual abuse. The courts reach their decisions on the basis of the evidence put to them.

Food Poisoning

38. **Mr. Ashley:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what proposals he has received which could help to reduce the incidence of food poisoning.

Mrs. Currie: The Food Act 1984 and the Food Hygiene Regulations are being reviewed and it is proposed to include provisions giving greater control over suspect food and hazardous food premises, making food hygiene training of food handlers a statutory requirement and extending statutory temperature control of food from the catering sector to include food sold by retail.

Specific measures are of course introduced to deal with particular food poisoning problems, as in our present concern over salmonella in eggs.

Eggs

Mr. Meale: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) if he will make it his policy to require eggs to carry Government health warnings;

(2) what advice his Department is issuing to employers and employees about eating eggs.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: The matter must be kept in proportion. As a sensible precaution, those most at risk —the elderly, the sick, babies and pregnant women— should follow the advice of the chief medical officer and eat only eggs that have been cooked until the white and yolk are solid. However, the risk is very small and healthy people can continue to eat eggs cooked however they wish. We will continue to reassure people on these points as necessary.

Mr. Fearn: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will give consideration to involving local government environmental health departments in the control of egg production.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: Environmental health departments of local authorities are responsible for environmental issues arising from egg production and for hygiene issues post-production.

We have asked them to assist in promulgating my Department's advice to manufacturers, caterers and consumers locally. We have no current plans to involve them in the control of egg production.

Midwives

41. **Mr. Flannery:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he has any plans to discuss conditions of service with representatives of the midwives.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: Negotiations over the terms and conditions of nurses' and midwives' employment are a matter for the relevant Whitley council. However, I met representatives of the Royal College of Midwives on 7 December and had a friendly and useful discussion about a range of issues, including the new grading structure and the appeals process.

72. **Mr. Alton:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what account was taken of clinical experience when setting the grades of midwives; and what representations he has received from Merseyside midwives concerning their regrading.

Mr. Mellor: I have received some 50 representations from midwives in the Mersey region. I have nothing to add to what I told the House in the debate on the Adjournment on 7 December at columns 407-16.

NHS (Yorkshire)

42. **Mr. Riddick:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what steps he is taking to improve efficiency in the National Health Service in the Yorkshire region.

Mr. Mellor: Ministers and the National Health Service management board regularly review the performance of all regional health authorities, culminating in an annual ministerial review meeting after which an action plan is set for the coming year. Yorkshire RHA's latest review was in July. A record of that meeting, together with the action plan for 1988-89 which included a number of measures to improve efficiency, was placed in the Library.

Donor Cards

43. **Mr. Kirkhope:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will make a statement on progress on the current campaign on donor cards.

Mrs. Currie: As a result of the Department's advertising campaign and media concern, particularly television, public interest in organ donation is high. So far this year some 14 million cards have been distributed compared with 5 million last year.

The range of high street outlets for the cards has been considerably extended through the Department's recent joint venture with the Healthcare Foundation and other initiatives are being discussed. The Departments of Health and Social Security recently issued donor cards to all members of staff.

Kidney transplants in the United Kingdom have risen by 76 per cent. between 1979 and 1987 and other organ transplants have also increased. This year has been a particularly good year for transplants. Because of excellent publicity at the beginning of the year, the first six months saw a 32 per cent. increase in transplants over last year. We expect that 1989 will be a record year for donations.

Health Care Facilities

44. **Mr. Nicholas Bennett:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what progress is being made towards the establishment of an internal and external market in the provision of health care facilities in the National Health Service.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: We are considering a number of proposals for improving the delivery of health care and will bring forward our proposals in a White Paper to be published in the new year.

Royal College of Nursing

47. **Mr. Andrew MacKay:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health when he last met representatives of the Royal College of Nursing; and what matters were discussed.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: I met representatives of the Royal College of Nursing on 5 December.

We agreed that we should redouble our efforts to explain the regrading exercise and to publicise the very substantial pay increases that the overwhelming majority of nurses and midwives are now receiving. As a result, for the first time the nursing profession will have the proper career structure for which the RCN in particular has consistently argued.

Our discussion concentrated on the working of the appeals procedure, which we both agreed was the outstanding issue. We regretted that the process had been clogged up by the number of spurious claims that nurses and midwives had unfortunately been encouraged to submit. These were clearly delaying progress for those few with genuine grievances. In order to help those nurses and midwives, we agreed that in future health authorities should set up a sifting process at officer level which would enable them to identify and correct any obvious errors in grading in advance of a full appeal hearing. In addition, I have asked RHA chairmen to see that the sifting process is completed, if at all possible, by the end of January. General managers will also be asked to make sure that the operation of the appeals procedure is regarded as a management priority.

The RCN joined us in condemning industrial action and stressed its commitment to putting patients first.

Benzodiazepines

50. **Mr. Wareing:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what plans he has to introduce restrictions on the represcribing of benzodiazepines.

Mr. Mellor: I share the hon. Member's concern about represcribing of benzodiazepines, but we have no plans to introduce restrictions because doctors must be free to prescribe in a way that best suits the needs of each patient. All drugs should be represcribed under controlled conditions and I welcome the initiative of those general practitioners who have begun the difficult process of reviewing the treatment of those of their patients who are on long-term benzodiazepine therapy.

Maternity Units (Leicestershire)

51. **Mr. Latham:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health whether he has now received details of the decision by Leicestershire community health council to oppose the closure of the maternity units at St. Mary's hospital, Melton Mowbray, and the Rutland Memorial hospital; and whether he will now advise Leicestershire health authority to abandon those proposals rather than proceed to statutory determination by himself.

Mrs. Currie: The views of the community health council have not been formally sent to my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State.

Leicestershire health authority is currently consulting on these proposals; the consultation period ends on 31 December. It would not be right for me to intervene in the way proposed. I must remain impartial as the final decision on the proposals may have to be taken by Ministers, if the community health council opposes the proposals.

Nurses and Midwives

52. **Mr. Madel:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is his estimate of the number of nurses and midwives who have accepted the current pay offer; what percentage of the total number of nurses and midwives employed by the National Health Service this represents; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: The Government's decision to implement in full the recommendations for 1988-89 of the review body for nursing staff, midwives and health visitors was accepted in April by the representatives of all nursing staff, midwives and health visitors within the National Health Service. The acceptance was very prompt, which is not surprising given that this year's pay award and regrading have resulted in an average increase of 17·9 per cent. for nurses and midwives. We do not know how many nurses and midwives are still appealing against the grade that they were given in the light of that acceptance, but the vast majority have accepted their grade and all nurses and midwives have received their pay rise.

Nurses (West Midlands)

54. **Mr. Rooker:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what proportion of *(a)* state enrolled nurses, *(b)* staff nurses and *(c)* ward sisters in (i) the west midlands region and (ii) nationally have received less then 5 per cent. pay increase in 1988.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: No staff nurse or enrolled nurse has received an increase of less than 7 per cent. and 39 per cent. of hospital nursing sisters have been graded at scale F and have received increases ranging from 4·2 per cent. to 13·3 per cent. depending on the incremental point on the pay scale at which the individual is entitled to be paid. We do not hold information about the incremental position of those in each of the new grades centrally.

Drugs

55. **Mr. Stevens:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will make a statement on progress on the current campaign against drugs.

Mr. Mellor: The Government national publicity campaigns against drugs misuse are part of an overall strategy to reduce both the supply of and the demand for illegal drugs. Independent evaluation shows that the campaigns so far have been widely noticed and reinforced young people's resistance to drug misuse. On 21 November a new phase of GB-wide publicity was launched to emphasise the dangers associated with injecting any drug.

Leukaemia (North Humberside)

56. **Mr. Cran:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health when he expects to announce the findings of the research programmes funded by his Department on factors affecting the incidence of leukaemia among children in parts of north Humberside.

Mrs. Currie: Research into biomedical questions is primarily the responsibility of the Medical Research Council, which receives its grant-in-aid from the Department of Education and Science. The report by Dr. Ray Cartwright on the incidents of childhood leukaemias on north Humberside, which also included information on the incidence of other cancers in children and adults, has been referred for an independent expert assessment and advice as to whether further research may be needed. We will announce the results as soon as possible.

Wandsworth Health Authority

57. **Mr. Bowis:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health when he next intends to visit the Wandsworth health authority; and what issues he expects to discuss.

Mrs. Currie: My right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State has no plans to visit Wandsworth health authority, but I visited the authority on Monday 5 December when I went to the drug dependency unit at Springfield hospital and also the women's day unit at St. George's hospital, Tooting. In both cases services have transferred smoothly from other facilities and are functioning well.

Cancer Screening

60. **Mr. George Howarth:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what steps he is taking to improve the administration of the cervical cytology testing service in Merseyside; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Currie: We issued Departmental guidance on the provision of cervical cancer screening in circular HC(88)1, a copy of which is available in the Library. Its local

application is a matter for the health authorities and family practitioner committees concerned. The hon. Member may wish to pursue any local matters with the chairman of the appropriate health authority or family practitioner committee.

62. **Mr. Andrew Bowden:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what plans he has routinely to include women aged 65 years and over in screening programmes for breast cancer.

Mrs. Currie: The NHS breast cancer screening programme is modelled on the recommendations made in the Forrest report. Having considered the incidence of the disease and the evidence on the benefits of screening in different age groups, the report recommended that the 50-64 age group should be the first to be selected for routine screening. We are following this recommendation. The Forrest report also suggested that screening should be available on request for women aged 65 and over. We have accepted this advice and, once the service becomes available in an area, any woman aged 65 and over who wants to be screened should be able to contact her local screening office to make an appointment.

Our main effort now is to get the arrangements running throughout the country and we would not expect to make any changes until we have had some experience of the present system. The advisory committee on breast cancer screening, which is advising on the development of the service, is keeping the question of age under review.

Any woman, irrespective of her age, who has the slightest cause for concern—for example, a small lump —should arrange to see her GP at once.

Cook-chill Food

67. **Mr. Hinchliffe:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many hospitals are currently providing maternity patients with food produced through the cook-chill process.

Mrs. Currie: Health authorities are responsible for the delivery of catering services which meet the needs of all their patient groups. Information on the production of food for specific categories of patients is not collected centrally.

"Promoting Better Health"

68. **Mr. John Marshall:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will report on progress on the primary health care reforms as outlined in "Promoting Better Health."

Mr. Mellor: Discussions are well advanced with representatives of the primary care professions on the implementation of measures to achieve the objectives of the White Paper, "Promoting Better Health" (Cm. 249). Some changes are currently being introduced. For example, dental practice advisers are being appointed and will take up posts early in the new year and extra funds have been made available in the present financial year for the training of family doctors' practice nurses. The Health and Medicines Act 1988, which received Royal Assent on 15 November this year, gives the Secretary of State powers to implement proposals in the White Paper for which powers did not already exist.

"Look After Your Heart"

69. **Mr. Brandon-Bravo:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will make a statement on progress of the "Look After Your Heart" campaign.

Mrs. Currie: The "Look After Your Heart" campaign, which aims to contribute to a substantial reduction in the high incidence of coronary heart disease in England, has been most successful during its first 18 months in supporting and encouraging widespread activity at national and local level. Industry and commerce have supported the campaign through joint promotions and a scheme of "healthy living" contracts, which almost 100 companies employing about 2·5 million people have signed. "Look After Your Heart" has also encouraged local activity, providing funding of £395,000 in 18 months for 160 projects. A "heartbeat award" scheme for restaurants and eating establishments which offer healthy food choices and no-smoking areas is also proving most successful.

The campaign, run jointly by the Department and the Health Education Authority, has been continuously evaluated and results show that knowledge of the main risk factors for coronary heart disease has grown, particularly amongst target social class groups.

We plan to develop the campaign with a major drive involving industry, local groups, primary health care activity and special promotions. A new publicity campaign involving television and other advertising will be starting at the end of December 1988.

Air Ambulance Services

70. **Mr. Key:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health whether he will update his Department's circular to health authorities on ambulance service emergency conveyance of patients by air (HSC (I.S.) 196) dated September 1975.

Mrs. Currie: The advice contained within HSC (I.S.) 196 remains valid. However, we are reviewing, with the NHS, the policy on helicopters in the light of developing interest in this form of transport for patients with major trauma.

Hospital Building

71. **Mr. David Davis:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is the progress of major hospital building schemes costing more than £1 million in the Yorkshire regional health authority area.

Mrs. Currie: The Yorkshire regional health authority's building programme continues to make good progress. Information held centrally shows there are currently 12 schemes, each costing over £1 million, under construction and 32 more at various stages of design and planning. The total value of the region's building programme is over £300 million.

80. **Mr. Burns:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many new hospital building projects have been initiated since 1979; and what was the comparable figure for the 1974 to 1979 period.

Mrs. Currie: Information held centrally on health building schemes, each costing over £1 million, shows that 466 schemes have been initiated since 1979 compared to 148 in the period 1974 to 1979.

Coronary Units

73. **Mr. John Evans:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is per capita spending on coronary units in hospitals *(a)* in England and *(b)* in the north west region.

Mrs. Currie: I regret that we cannot identify spending on coronary units as such centrally. If the hon. Member wishes to pursue these inquiries, I suggest that he discusses the matter with Mr. Bruce Martin QC, chairman of North Western regional health authority, who is responsible for overall management of hospital services within the region.

Trauma Centre

75. **Mr. Cousins:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health when he expects to announce the first British trial of the trauma centre concept.

Mrs. Currie: We are considering the Royal College of Surgeons' report on the management of major injuries, which recommended the establishment of trauma centres. No decisions will be taken until that consideration has been completed.

Ancillary Workers (Pay)

81. **Mr. Andrew F. Bennett:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what representations he has received regarding the pay of ancillary workers in the Health Service; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Mellor: Since the last time this matter was raised during questions on 1 November we have received one more letter from an hon. Member.

NHS Review

82. **Mr. Eastham:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what progress he is making with his review of the National Health Service.

83. **Mr. Lofthouse:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what progress he is making with his review of the National Health Service.

84. **Mr. Duffy:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what progress he is making with his review of the National Health Service.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: I refer the hon. Members to the reply that I gave to the hon. Members for Norwich, South (Mr. Garrett) and for Leyton (Mr. Cohen) on 1 November at columns *816-18*.

Water

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what are the future implications for his Department's brief of the recently published Water Bill.

Mrs. Currie: The Department will continue to carry out its present functions.

Mental Health

Mrs. Ray Michie: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what representations he has received from interested groups concerning women and mental health.

Mrs. Currie: We have received several representations from a variety of sources, including, most recently, the report of the Women's National Commission.

I am particularly concerned about the problems some women experience with tranquillisers. There are a number of initiatives to encourage more careful prescribing on benzodiazepines, handle the problems of withdrawal, promote alternatives to tranquillisers, and to provide alternative help for those dependent upon them.

I am sure that the hon. Member is aware of the particular interest that I am taking in this topic.

In-patients

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many people were treated as in-patients in 1978 and in the latest period of 12 months for which figures are available.

Mrs. Currie: In National Health Service hospitals in England, there were 5,370,319 in-patients treated in 1979 and in 1987-88 there were 6,619,354. This represents an increase of 23 per cent.

Wheelchairs

Mr. Hannam: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many *(a)* powered and *(b)* non-powered wheelchairs are currently on issue from his Department.

Mr. Mellor: These are matters for the Disablement Services Authority, to which the hon. Member should address his questions.

Organ Transplants

Mr. Shersby: To ask the Secretary of State for Health when he expects to publish the circular setting out procedures for the donation of organs for transplantation.

Mrs. Currie: We issued health circular HC(88)63 yesterday. It provides guidance on procedures for organ donation. We believe this will increase the number of organs available for transplantation. The circular also asks health authorities to carry out an audit of deaths in intensive care units. The audit will reveal the total potential for organ donation and the reasons why donation sometimes does not take place.

Prosthetists

Mr. Alfred Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) how many prosthetists there are in England; and how many amputees in England there are per prosthetist;

(2) what plans he has for increasing the training facilities for prosthetists: and how many he proposes should be trained each year.

Mr. Mellor: These are matters for the Disablement Services Authority, to which the hon. Member should address his questions.

Health Authority Buildings (Closure)

Mr. Meale: To ask the Secretary of State for Health whether any adopted criteria exist within *(a)* the central Nottinghamshire or *(b)* other health authority areas which give financial incentives to managers of services for (i) closure or (ii) temporary closure of health authority buildings.

Mrs. Currie: No. Managers are required to provide, on behalf of their authority, health care for their local community. Closures are made for many reasons and may be essential to improve services.

Mr. Meale: To ask the Secretary of State for Health whether in-use health authority properties can be closed on a temporary basis after consultation documents have been issued and prior to the expiry date of such consultations.

Mrs. Currie: Yes. Under the Community Health Council Regulations 1985 a closure may be made without consultation if the district health authority is satisfied that this is in the interests of the Health Service.

Central Nottinghamshire Health Authority

Mr. Meale: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) if he will give a breakdown of transfer moneys payable to Central Nottinghamshire health authority from other health authorities for the provision of services for the mentally ill residing in the Central Nottinghamshire health authority since June 1987;

(2) if he will list sales of National Health Service property and land in the Central Nottinghamshire health authority area since 1979;

(3) if he will list all temporary closures of National Health Service premises in the Central Nottinghamshire health authority area since 1979, showing which facilities so closed are currently open;

(4) if he will list the occasions since 1979 when consultation documents have been issued in the Central Nottinghamshire health authority area on properties in use by them, which have been closed on a temporary basis by the authority prior to the expiry date of consultation.

Mrs. Currie: The responsibility for the provision of local health services rests with the district health authority concerned, in this case Central Nottinghamshire health authority, which is best placed to determine the most effective and efficient way of delivering health care, taking account of patient demand and budgetary constraints.

The hon. Member may, therefore, wish to contact the chairman of the Central Nottinghamshire health authority to obtain the information that he seeks. I understand that the district general manager has indicated that she would be happy to meet the hon. Member at any convenient time.

Health Buildings

Mr. Meale: To ask the Secretary of State for Health whether he has any plans for changing the current guidelines contained within HSC (IS) 207 entitled, "Closure or Change: Use of Health Buildings"; and if consultations will take place before any new guidelines are issued.

Mrs. Currie: Yes. We plan to revise the guidelines in the near future. Before the new guidelines are issued we shall consult all interested parties.

NHS Beds

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many National Health Service beds were lost in *(a)* Waltham Forest and *(b)* the United Kingdom since 1979.

Mrs. Currie: From 1979 to 1988, the number of patients treated in Waltham Forest per available bed rose from 9·9 to 17·8 and in England from 14·9 to 22·3. The figures for the rest of the United Kingdom are matters for my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland, my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales and my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland.

Average daily available beds and number of in-patients treated in Waltham Forest and in England are as follows:

	1979	*1987-88*	*Difference*
Waltham Forest			
Average daily available beds	3,311	2,254	−1,057
In-patients treated	32,753	40,052	+7,299
England			
Average daily beds available	361,670	296,777	−64,893
In-patients treated	5,400,120	6,619,354	+1,219,234

Primary Health Care

Mr. Patnick: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how he intends to raise standards of primary health care and make services more responsive to the needs of the consumer.

Mr. Mellor: I refer my hon. Friend to the replies given on 12 July 1988 to my hon. Friends the Members for St. Ives (Mr. Harris) and for Edgbaston (Dame J. Knight) at column *554*.

Medicine Commission

Mr. McLoughlin: To ask the Secretary of State for Health when he expects to receive the Medicine Commission's annual report for 1987.

Mr. Mellor: I have received the report and copies have today been laid before both Houses of Parliament in accordance with section 5(2) of the Medicines Act 1968.

Bound volumes will shortly be placed in the Libraries containing the 1987 reports of the Medicines Commission, the Committee on Safety of Medicines, the Veterinary Products Committee, the British Pharmacopoeia Commission, the Committee on the Review of Medicines and the Committee on Dental and Surgical Materials.

The bound volumes also include the code of practice on declaration of interests in the pharmaceutical industry which is followed by members of the Medicines Commission, the Committee on Safety of Medicines, the Committee on Review of Medicines and the Committee on Dental and Surgical Materials, and their sub-committees. The code provides that members should declare personal interests in the industry to the Department of Health. They should also declare them where relevant at meetings of the commission or committees when they should in addition declare any interests their academic departments may have in the products under discussion. The code provides that information about members' personal interests shall be published with the annual reports. This information is published for the first time with the 1987 reports. I have decided to extend the range of interests to be declared and published so as to cover the interests of members' departments as well as personal interests. These interests will be published with the 1988 annual reports. This code is not appropriate for the British Pharmacopoeia Commission, which is not involved in licensing matters. I

understand that a similar code has recently been adopted by the Veterinary Products Committee under which members must declare interests to the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food and that the necessary follow-up action is in hand.

I am glad to pay tribute to the valuable work done in the public interest by the distinguished members of the Medicines Act advisory bodies. Members follow the ethical standards set by the code of practice, and any involvements they may have in research sponsored by the pharmaceutical industry helps them to keep in touch with important aspects of drug development while avoiding conflicts of interest which might otherwise impair the objectivity of the scientific and clinical advice they give. I have full confidence in the personal integrity of the members concerned.

Nursing Qualifications

Mr. Stern: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will take steps to give a greater role in the examination of nursing qualifications to the Royal College of Nursing.

Mr. Mellor: The statutory responsibility for establishing and improving the standard of nurse training and for approving educational institutions and courses rests with the United Kingdom Central Council and the four national boards for nursing, midwifery and health visiting. The Royal College of Nursing's institute of advanced nursing education is an important provider of post-registration education and training, whose work we fully support. I hope that the institute will continue to develop higher standards of clinical excellence within the profession through its activities.

Written Answers to Questions

Wednesday 14 December 1988

CHURCH COMMISSIONERS

Rectors and Vicars (Contracts)

Mr. Frank Field: To ask the right hon. Member for Selby, as representing the Church Commissioners, how many team rectors or vicars, for each of the last five years, have not had their contract renewed and have been asked to vacate the team rectory.

Mr. Alison: I regret that the commissioners do not have this information. Records are normally kept by the legal secretaries to diocesan bishops.

WALES

Waiting List Fund

Mrs. Clwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will announce the allocation to the Welsh health authority from the waiting list fund for 1989-90; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Grist: Decisions on public expenditure in Wales in 1989-90 are current'y being finalised and will be announced shortly.

Employment Training

Mr. Leighton: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many trainees are on employment training in Wales.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: At 2 December 1988 there were 6,468 participants in employment training in Wales.

Planning Policy

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales (1) what guidance his Department has offered to local planning authorities on when they may consider the needs and interests of communities, including the protection and character and way of life of communities, as a factor in decisions relating to planning permission;

(2) what guidance his Department offers in the form of a planning policy guidance note, to include the needs and interests of communities, including the protection of the character and way of life of communities, within the provisions of their development plans;

(3) if he will make it his policy to require local planning authorities to include the social needs and interests of communities within the provisions of their development plans and local plans; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Walker: I intend issuing guidance on the place of the Welsh language in development plans and planning control in the very near future. The Department's current policy, as regards development plans, is set out in paragraph 4.10 of Welsh Office circular 43/84, a copy of which is in the Library of the House.

OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT

Crown Agents

Dr. Goodson-Wickes: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what plans he has for the future of the Crown Agents; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Chris Patten: In 1984 my right hon. Friend the Member for Aylesbury (Mr. Raison) announced measures to improve the efficiency and competitiveness of the Crown Agents with a view to their privatisation in due course. Those measures, which included staff reductions, a change from public sector terms of service to private sector terms and the sale of the organisation's principal property at Millbank, have been implemented.

Her Majesty's Government have no immediate plans to privatise the Crown Agents. They have agreed with the Crown Agents certain further measures to put them on a sounder footing in the public sector. These measures involve further changes in the business and capital structure of the organisation designed to improve profitability. The Crown Agents will retain their core activities of procurement, financial and technical services. They have given up, or will give up, speculative trading and certain other activities which are not closely related to their main business. These other activities include two postage stamp production and sale companies, which the Crown Agents have sold, and some pensions services which are being taken over by the Overseas Development Administration.

The measures introduced from 1984 onwards reduced permanent staff numbers from some 1,100 to about 800. The further changes will involve a reduction in staff numbers of about 55. Most of these jobs will be transferred with the activities that are taken over by other organisations. The balance of the reduction in staff will be achieved through agreed redundancies or natural wastage.

The Crown Agents have customarily provided, and continue to provide, valuable services to the Overseas Development Administration, their major client, in respect of procurement and loan and grant administration. These services have demonstrated their worth in terms of securing better value for money and ensuring propriety and expedition in the international delivery of goods and services provided under the overseas aid programme. In recent years the Crown Agents have diversified their sources of business to reduce their dependence on the Overseas Development Administration and, in international competition, have won substantial business financed by other governments and by multilateral agencies.

The proposed changes in the capital structure will provide a more commercial basis for the Crown Agents, in particular a debt equity ratio more appropriate to the size and nature of the business. Subject to parliamentary approval of the new estimate in the supplementary round, I propose to use existing powers to make a grant of about £15·8 million effectively to convert to equity all but about £2·8 million of the Crown Agents' commencing capital debt to the national loans fund, which they assumed under the Crown Agents Act 1979. The normal rules for premature repayment will apply. These sums will be additional to the Overseas Development Administration's existing public expenditure survey provisions and will

involve a net charge to the Reserve of around £3 million; they will not therefore add to the planned total of public expenditure.

The Crown Agents have undergone a continuous process of change since incorporation in 1980. It reflects credit on the board, senior management and staff of the organisation that this process has been carried through successfully in a difficult period. I am confident that the additional measures announced today will strengthen the Crown Agents' position and leave them better placed to meet the challenges of the 1990s.

TRANSPORT

New Railway Line (Kent)

100. **Mr. Rowe:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what representations he has received about the environmental effects of British Rail's proposals to build a new railway line through Kent.

Mr. Portillo: I have received a large number of representations on this subject. It will be important for British Rail to take proper account of the environment in its design of the line.

Refrigerated Vehicles

Mr. Robert Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what steps have been taken to ensure that the new maximum width of refrigerated vehicles will be enabled to pass each other with safety on class A roads from January 1989.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The increase in permitted width of refrigerated vehicles—of 2 cm—is too small to require particular steps to be taken to enable them to pass safely on class A roads.

Channel Tunnel

Mr. Hind: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a statement on British Rail's proposals for terminals and new rail links in central London to connect with the Channel tunnel.

Mr. Portillo: British Rail's plans for the first few years of operation through the tunnel involve a new passenger terminal at Waterloo and the use of the west London line by through trains to the north. BR's report on long-term route and terminal capacity for Channel tunnel train services, published in July 1988, identified three possible sites (White City, King's Cross and Stratford) for a second London passenger terminal and possible route corridors through Kent and London once traffic through the tunnel has grown sufficiently to exhaust the capacity of Waterloo.

Ports

Mr. McTaggart: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what steps he is taking to ensure that British ports will be able to compete on an equal basis in the single European market with other north European ports.

Mr. Portillo: I refer the hon. Member to my answer on 6 December at columns *97-98* to my hon. Friend the Member for Stockton, South (Mr. Devlin).

Mr. McTaggart: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what information he has on the level of subsidy, both direct and indirect, received by the ports of Glasgow, Hamburg, Antwerp and Rotterdam, over the last five years.

Mr. Portillo: We know what percentage contributions the national and local government authorities make to expenditure on certain categories of port facilities in Hamburg, Antwerp and Rotterdam, but not how much money this and any other aid there may be from public funds has amounted to in any given period. The European Commission is studying our proposal for more transparent financial relations between public authorities and port authorities within the EC and for the accounts of port authorities to be published.

Orange Badges

Mr. Hannam: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many people are in possession of an orange badge at the latest available date.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Information supplied by local authorities shows that at March 1987 there were about 840,000 badge-holders in England and Wales—over 14 per cent. more than at March 1986. We estimate that there are currently some 70,000 badge-holders in Scotland.

European Clearway Ferry

Mr. Prescott: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what is the final date by which a decision has to be taken on whether a prosecution will be pursued by his Department arising from the fire on the European Clearway ferry; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Channon: Informations have to be laid within six months of the alleged offences. A decision would need to be taken before the expiry of that period.

Supply Boat Falderntor

Mr. Prescott: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what action he is taking about the fire aboard the supply boat Falderntor in the British sector of the North sea on 26 November.

Mr. Channon: The engine room fire aboard the Falderntor is under investigation by surveyors from the See-Berufsgenossenschaft (SBG) as the vessel is registered in the Federal Republic of Germany and the incident occurred outside United Kingdom territorial waters. My officials are in contact with the SBG.

Buffer Stop Collisions

Mr. Prescott: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many multiple units and locomotives were involved in buffer stop collisions in 1985, 1986 and 1987 for each category; what type of braking system was involved; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Channon: Details regarding the number of buffer stop collisions in 1985, 1986 and 1987 are set out in the table. Data on the type of brake involved are not available as railway authorities are not required to specify such detail in reporting accidents of this sort to the Department.

Locomotive

Class	*1985*	*1986*	*1987*	*Total*
008	3	1	2	6
009	0	1	0	1
020	0	0	1	1

Class	1985	1986	1987	Total
025	1	0	0	1
031	6	0	2	8
033	0	1	0	1
037	1	0	3	4
045	0	2	0	2
047	13	7	2	22
058	0	0	1	1
073	1	1	3	5
085	0	1	2	3
086	0	4	1	5
087	0	1	0	1
Steam	1	1	0	2
TOTAL	26	20	17	63

EMU/DMU

Class	1985	1986	1987	Total
101	2	1	4	7
104	0	1	0	1
105	1	0	1	2
111	0	1	0	1
115	1	0	0	1
116	0	1	0	1
117	0	0	1	1
121	0	1	0	1
141	3	3	0	6
142	0	0	2	2
205	1	0	0	1
207	0	0	1	1
254	1	0	1	2
303	0	3	1	4
305	0	1	1	2
307	0	1	0	1
309	1	0	0	1
310	0	0	1	1
311	0	1	0	1
312	1	0	0	1
313	1	3	2	6
315	1	3	1	5
317	1	1(1)	0	2
318	0	0	2	2
319	0	0	1	1
414	0	1	0	1
415	5	1	5	11
416	1	1	1	3
419	1	1	1	3
423	1	3	2	6
455	8(3)	6(5)	7(1)	21
501	1	0	0	1
507	2	0	0	2
508	1	1	0	2
LUL	0	0	1	1
Total	34	35	36	105

Figures in brackets denote a roll back on starting

Ferries (Fires)

Mr. Prescott: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many fires have been reported to his Department occurring on British-registered ferries sailing out of British ports; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Channon: Eleven such fires have been reported to my Department between 1 January and 8 December 1988. All these incidents have been, or are being, followed up.

Bicester and Waddon Foxhounds

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will call for a report from British Rail into the circumstances leading to the 9 am train from Poole to Glasgow being forced to make an emergency stop at Little Mill crossing, Cropredy on the Oxfordshire/Warwickshire border on Monday, 5 December, when the Bicester and Waddon foxhounds were obstructing the main railway line.

Mr. Portillo: I see no need to call for a report on this incident.

Volunteer Drivers

Mr. Teddy Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what progress he has made in his representations to the EEC Commission about the provision in the second transport directive relating to the practice in the United Kingdom of permitting volunteer drivers to be in charge of small coaches for transporting disabled persons; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The proposals do not appear to go far enough since they would still involve a second test and higher medical standards for minibus drivers. These requirements would cause serious problems for organisations relying on volunteer drivers.

The Government will continue to press for whatever changes are needed to allow these voluntary services to continue their valuable work. We have written to the commission to point out the safety record of minibuses. The table sets out the figures.

Casualty and Accident Rates: Great Britain: 1987

Vehicle type	Casualty rate/100 million passenger kms			Accident rate/1,000 vehicles		Accident rate/100 million vehicle kms	
	Fatal	Serious	Slight	KSI	Total	KSI	Total
1. Ratio of rates for cars/motorcycles to those for minibuses:							
Minibus	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Car	2·5	2·7	2·4	1·0	1·1	1·2	1·3
Motor cycle	65·0	109·1	47·9	—	—	15·2	12·1
2. Casualty and accident rates:							
Minibus	0·2	2·2	12·1	3·6	14·4	19·1	76·2
Car	0·5	5·9	28·7	3·6	16	22·9	102·8
Motor cycle	13	240	580	n/a	n/a	290·0	920·0

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Elders plc

Sir Nicholas Fairbairn: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what assurances were sought from Elders plc that it would not buy shares in Scottish and Newcastle Breweries plc, when it was advised that its bid was to be referred to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission; what assurances were received from Elders; and what alterations he proposes in order to make assurances mandatory and binding in future cases.

Mr. Maude: Elders' advisers were clearly informed by the Office of Fair Trading at the time of the announcement of the reference that undertakings not to purchase further shares in Scottish and Newcastle were being sought. In the light of Elders' action the Secretary of State made an interim order under the Fair Trading Act 1973 requiring Elders not to acquire any further shares and not to vote any shares in Scottish and Newcastle above 15 per cent.

The Secretary of State also announced that in future a similar prohibition on further share purchases will come into effect at the time a reference to the MMC is announced. At present this requires a new order to be made for each reference. It is intended that this prohibition will be put on a permanent footing by inclusion in the provisions relating to mergers in the forthcoming Companies Bill.

FIMBRA

Mr. Nicholas Winterton: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster whether he intends to seek to review and amend the protection afforded by the financial services legislation to FIMBRA members against libel actions and retaliatory loss of business should they report suspicions of wrongful activities to that body; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Maude: If a FIMBRA member properly draws allegations of wrongdoing to the attention of a regulatory body having relevant regulatory functions under the FS Act his position will be no different from that of any other person acting similarly. Such communications should, in the absence of malice, be protected by qualified privilege, under the law of libel. I see no reason at this stage for seeking to change this position. If there has been any wrongful interference with the business of persons who have reported suspicions to a relevant body it shall be open to them to take appropriate legal action.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what information he has concerning the total number of people employed by FIMBRA and each of the other self-regulatory organisations to scrutinise applications for membership; how many such applications were processed in each case in each of the last six months; and how many man hours per application were spent on average on each application.

Mr. Maude: This is a matter for the organisations concerned.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will publish in the *Official Report* a copy of the guidelines issued by the Securities and Investments Board on the procedures which should be adopted by self-regulatory organisations such as FIMBRA when suspending their members.

Mr. Maude: This is a matter for the Securities and Investments Board.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will publish in the *Official Report* a copy of the guidelines adopted by FIMBRA concerning their procedures when suspending members.

Mr. Maude: This is a matter for FIMBRA.

Restaurants and Hotels

Mr. Speller: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster how many trading standards officers there are in the United Kingdom; how many are required to monitor compliance with the proposed voluntary code of practice on service, cover and minimum charges in restaurants and hotels amongst the 67,000 establishments concerned; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Forth: The purpose of the code of practice is to provide guidance to traders to help them to avoid misleading price indications. It would be a matter for each local weights and measures authority to decide if, in respect of particular circumstances, it was necessary for them to monitor compliance with the code.

The number of trading standards officers in the United Kingdom are contained in the following tables.

Table 1
Great Britain
Number of qualified trading standards officers in post with local weights and measures authorities

Year ending 31 March 1987	*Number*
England	1,207
Scotland	139
Wales	97
Total—Great Britain	1,443

Note: The figures have been collated from the annual returns of local weights and measures authorities.

Table 2
Northern Ireland

	Number
Number of qualified trading standards officers in post (as at 13 December 1988)	20

Mr. Speller: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster whether restaurants and hotels which suggest a voluntary service charge are liable to value added tax and national insurance on those charges; and what provision will be made in the voluntary code of practice to be introduced under the Consumer Protection Act 1987 in respect of those items.

Mr. Forth: Restaurants and hotels which suggest voluntary service charges are not liable for VAT on those charges. National insurance would be payable only where an employer controlled the distribution amongst staff of any voluntary service charges received.

The code of practice for traders on price indications advises that all price indications given to ordinary consumers, by whatever means, should include VAT. It further advises that suggested optional sums, in addition to the price, whether for service or any other item, should not be included in bills presented to customers. No reference is made to national insurance, which is outside the scope of the code.

Electronic Communications

Mr. Andrew Mitchell: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster whether he expects to publish the report of the steering group set up in 1987 to advise on the prospects of the development of the electronic communications infrastructure in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Atkins: The report by the communications steering group, "The Infrastructure For Tomorrow", has been

published today by HMSO along with an associated report "Evolution of the United Kingdom Communications Infrastructure" by PA consulting group. Copies of both reports have been deposited in the Library of the House. They are being published as a contribution to the discussion about the United Kingdom's future communications infrastructure needs.

ATTORNEY-GENERAL

Land Registry Office

101. **Mr. Anthony Coombs:** To ask the Attorney-General what is the current number of cases before the Land Registry Office awaiting processing; what is the average waiting time; and what action he proposes to take to reduce this backlog.

The Attorney-General: The total number of cases held at the Land Registry at various stages of processing is 1,168,052.

The average time taken to complete an application is 16 weeks. Dealings with the whole of the land in a title, which represent 74 per cent. of the cases received, are completed in an average of nine weeks.

In addition to the recruitment and training of over 2,000 staff since April 1988, new work initiatives to improve productivity have been introduced. The measures are expected to reduce the backlog, provided that the volume of applications does not rise substantially.

Republic of Ireland (Extradition)

Mr. John D. Taylor: To ask the Attorney-General how many applications for extradition from the Republic of Ireland have had to be resubmitted, because the initial application was deemed by Republic of Ireland authorities to be insufficient in content, during the past 12 months.

The Attorney-General: No requests for extradition submitted to the authorities of the Republic of Ireland during the past 12 months have had subsequently to be resubmitted because they were deemed insufficient in content. In cases unaffected by the Irish Extradition (Amendment) Act 1987, the only documents required of United Kingdom police forces by Irish law are warrants of arrest and affidavits and certificates supporting them. No further explanation of such cases ordinarily is required.

In cases to which the 1987 Act does apply, sufficient information has to be given to the Irish Attorney-General to satisfy him that the relevant United Kingdom prosecuting authority has a clear intention to prosecute and that this intention is founded upon the existence of sufficient evidence.

Six applications for extradition falling into this category have been submitted during the past 12 months. In four of those cases the Irish Attorney-General has authorised the backing of warrants for the fugitive's arrest. In one case, that of Patrick Ryan, he has declined to do so, for the reasons which he has made public. The sixth case, submitted to him on 21 October, is still receiving his consideration.

"Sinclair User"

Mr. Hind: To ask the Attorney-General if he will prosecute the publishers of *Sinclair User* for offering to supply an intoxicating substance within the meaning of section 1 of the Intoxicating Substance (Supply) Act 1985, in an advertisement carried on page 76 of the December 1988 edition; and if he will make a statement.

The Attorney-General: The Director of Public Prosecutions has asked for police inquiries to be made into this matter. I shall write to my hon. Friend once those inquiries have been completed.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Iraq

Mrs. Clwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will list the numbers of Iraqi diplomats expelled in each year from the United Kingdom from 1970 to 1987, inclusive.

Mr. Waldegrave: As the information is not readily available, I shall write to the hon. Member once it is to hand.

Antarctic

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what proposals he has to protect the environment of the Antarctic.

Mr. Eggar: Proposals for consideration at the next Antarctic treaty consultative meeting, to be held in Paris in October 1989, include the creation of a new category of protected area and a revised code of conduct for the disposal of waste. They are the result of requests for advice made by earlier consultative meetings to the Scientific Committee on Antarctic Research (SCAR). The United Kingdom participates fully in such consultative meetings.

Western Europe (Security)

Mr. Hardy: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he has anything to add to his comments made to the Western European Union Assembly on Wednesday 7 December concerning security of Western Europe in the light of the speech made to the United Nations by President Gorbachev on that date.

Mr. Waldegrave: The cuts in Soviet forces announced by Mr. Gorbachev at the United Nations on 7 December represent an important and welcome first step towards securing a better balance of conventional forces in Europe, though they would still leave the Warsaw pact with superiority over the Alliance of some 2.5:1 in tanks and artillery (compared to approximately 3:1 at present). We and our allies hope to build on this hopeful development at the conventional stability talks due to start early next year in Vienna, where we will be pressing for the total and verifiable elimination of disparities in weapon systems relevant to surprise attack and offensive action.

Dependent Territories (Health Services)

Mr. Alfred Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether, prior to the implementation of the findings of the review of health services in the dependent territories, he will take urgent steps to provide assistance to Sterling Clarke, Vera Daniel, Sonia Cabey, Robert Fergus, David Favell, Michael White

and David Harris to enable them to travel to the United Kingdom for cardiac orthopaedic and ocular treatment not available in Montserrat, about which the right hon. Member for Manchester, Wythenshawe has written to him.

Mr. Eggar: The Government of Montserrat are responsible for their own internal affairs, including the provision of health care. This was one of the subjects that I discussed during my recent visit.

EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

Education Reform

Mr. Harry Barnes: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what action has been taken to inform parents and school governors of the provisions of the Education Reform Act 1988, and what costs are involved.

Mrs. Rumbold: Copies of the following have been sent to every governing body since the passing of the Education Reform Act 1988 to help inform school governors and parents.

	[1] *Printing costs £'000*
School governors	
Letter from the Secretary of State for Education and Science to the chairmen of school governing bodies on education reform	21·0
Letter from the Secretary of State for Education and Science to school governors on educational reform	
Guide for county and controlled school governors entitled "A Guide to the Law"	263·0
Booklet and letter for school governors on "How to become a Grant-maintained School"	23·0
Bulletin for school teachers and governors about the Education Reform Act	24·0
Circular on local management of schools	12·0
Circular on grant-maintained schools	9·0
Circular on admission of pupils to county and voluntary schools	21·0
Parents	
Notes for parents and leaflet about grant-maintained status	11·0
Booklet entitled "Our changing schools", a handbook for parents providing information on the education system and forthcoming changes	375·0

[1] To 9 December 1988.

Primary School Head Teachers

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what evidence his Department has received about turnover among primary school head teachers; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Butcher: The Department estimates that in the year ending March 1986 the proportion of head teachers in England leaving the maintained nursery and primary sector was 7·3 per cent.

The most recent survey by the local authorities' conditions of service advisory board, for the calendar year 1987, shows turnover of 4·8 per cent. among primary head teachers in England and Wales, compared with 7·2 per cent. from a similar survey for the financial year 1985-86.

GCSE System

Mr. Butler: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what assessment he has made of the impact of the GCSE system on university courses; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Rumbold: The first awards of GCSE certificates were made in the summer of 1988, and the holders would not expect to enter higher education before autumn 1990. It would be premature to assess any possible effects. The GCE examining boards have taken account, in their continual revision of A-level syllabuses, of changes needed in the light of GCSE. Modifications to A-levels and subsequent higher education courses may be needed, but revolutionary changes are in general neither necessary nor desirable.

"A Strategy for the Science Base"

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what progress has been made towards a response to the advice of the Advisory Board for the Research Councils, "A Strategy for the Science Base", and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Jackson: My right hon. Friend is taking account of the ABRC's strategy advice in the continuing development of detailed policies for the science base. These will be substantially underpinned by the £306 million increase in the science budget over the next three years which my right hon. Friend announced on 1 November at column *605*.

Science Teachers

Mr. Wray: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science how many science teachers there are at present in schools; and how many of these are fully qualified for this subject.

Mr. Butcher: Estimates of the number of teachers of science subjects, with and without a science qualification, available from the 1984 secondary school staffing survey of maintained schools in England are as follows:

Subject	*Number teaching the subject*	*Number of these with a post A-level qualification in the subject*	*Proportion of total tuition in the subject provided by teachers with a post A-level qualification in it*
Biology	14,300	11,800 (82 per cent.)	91 per cent.
Chemistry	11,800	9,400 (80 per cent.)	91 per cent.
Physics	12,600	8,800 (70 per cent.)	83 per cent.
General or combined science[1]	28,400	6,800 (24 per cent.)	28 per cent.
Other sciences[1]	7,500	3,000 (40 per cent.)	56 per cent.

[1] Teachers with a post A-level qualification in "general or combined science" and in "other sciences" exclude those with qualifications specifically in biology, chemistry or physics.

A further secondary school staffing survey was conducted in 1988. The results of this are expected to be available shortly.

Exam Results

Mr. Straw: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will list the percentages of school leavers obtaining no graded result in GCE and CSE for each year since 1970-71.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: The table relates to the percentage of English school leavers with no A-level pass nor any graded result at GCE O-level or CSE.

Leavers with no graded results[1]

England

Academic years	*Percentages*
1970-71	44·1
1971-72	43·0
[2]1972-73	7·3
1973-74	20·4
1974-75	18·6
1975-76	16·5
1976-77	14·8
1977-78	14·3
1978-79	12·8
1979-80	12·2
1980-81	11·4
1981-82	10·6
1982-83	9·6
1983-84	9·5
1984-85	9·4
1985-86	9·6
1986-87	9·4

[1] Subject to sampling error.
[2] The numbers of school leavers fell in 1973 following the raising of the minimum school leaving age from 15 to 16 in September 1972.

Teacher Training

Mr. Fatchett To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what plans he has to ensure that school subjects not specified as foundation subjects of the national curriculum will be safeguarded in courses of initial and in-service teacher training.

Mrs. Rumbold: My right hon. Friend is confident that the full range of what is taught in schools will continue to be included both in courses of initial teacher training and in-service teacher training activities.

Research

Dr. Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if the Natural Environment Research Council has any plans to fund interdisciplinary research into the interactions between sea birds, fish stocks and commercial fisheries in Shetland and neighbouring waters.

Mr. Jackson: I understand from the Natural Environment Research Council that it is considering a proposal from a university group on the interaction between sea birds and sand eels. A decision will be taken in the spring, following a full peer review of the proposal.

Medical Research Council

Mr. John Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science whether he has received the annual report of the Medical Research Council for 1987-88; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: The annual report of the Medical Research Council for 1987-88 has been submitted to me under the requirements of the Science and Technology Act 1965. A copy has been laid before the House, and the report is being published today.

I was most interested to study the report, and in an eventful year for the council, I was particularly encouraged to note:

i. the wide-ranging studies being undertaken on AIDS, including research on the development of vaccines and drugs, epidemiological studies on heterosexual transmission and on infection in infants, research on the social and biological factors influencing transmission in Africa, and the introduction of collaborative international research agreements.

ii. exciting progress on the influence of specific strutural features of the human B-globin gene on its expression, with important implications for the development of new therapeutic agents and new therapies such as for human inherited diseases.

iii. research of direct relevance to the health services, particularly a controlled study of outpatient cataract surgery, monitoring of the performance of intensive care units, and a controlled trial of community based care after hospital discharge.

iv. research on rehabilitation for those with head and spinal injuries, including the treatment of incontinence and the restoration of limb movement in paraplegic and tetraplegic patients.

v. the successful establishment of a centre for collaborative research, dedicated to work jointly with industry on strategic research problems which have the potential to lead to exploitable new products and processes.

Local Authority Employees

Mr. Favell: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what steps he is taking to protect the rights of local authority employees who are re-employed by *(a)* grant-maintained schools and *(b)* city technology colleges or city colleges for technology of the arts.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: It has always been my intention to protect the employment rights of staff moving from the local authority sector to either grant-maintained schools, city technology colleges or city colleges for the technology of the arts. Subject to the outcome of the necessary consultations, my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Employment proposes to bring grant-maintained schools, city technology colleges and city colleges for the technology of the arts within the scope of the Redundancy Payments (Local Government) (Modification) Order 1983, with effect from 1 April 1989.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Harland and Wolff

Mr. Jim Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement on the precise nature and terms of the negotiations presently under way with Bulk Transport Shipping, Mr. Ugur Mengercioglu

and Sealink British Ferries on the proposed sell-off of Harland and Wolff and on the state of his discussions with the management and employees of Harland and Wolff on their proposed buy-out.

Mr. Viggers: No. The companies interested in acquiring Harland and Wolff have asked that negotiations should be confidential. I have met recently Sealink which is considering its future requirement for ferries; and I have also held discussions with senior managers of the company about a proposed management/employee buy-out. No firm proposal has yet been tabled.

Mr. Jim Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will review his policy of preventing Harland and Wolff competing for new contracts while the company remains in public ownership; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Viggers: The Government believe that the best prospects for Harland and Wolff lie in its return to the private sector and they are not willing to permit the company to enter into new contracts until future arrangements for the yard are resolved.

Mr. Jim Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what safeguards on future employment levels the Government are seeking in their negotiations with potential purchasers of *(a)* Harland and Wolff and *(b)* Shorts.

Mr. Viggers: Prospective purchasers of both Harland and Wolff and Shorts are being asked to address a number of specific matters in their proposals, including the future levels of employment in the companies. In the long run, however, employment levels will be determined by commercial success.

Short Brothers plc

Mr. Jim Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement on the proposed timetable for the sale of Shorts and the Government's contingency plans to safeguard the future of the company if no suitable offers are received.

Mr. Viggers: Interested parties have already been asked to register their interest with the Government's merchant bank advisers and an information memorandum is being prepared which will be issued to a selected short list. The Government are committed to the privatisation of Shorts and their preference is that the company should be sold as a single unit. Beyond this, I have nothing to add to my statement of 21 July.

Mr. Jim Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement on his plans to produce a series of mini-prospectuses for potential purchasers of Shorts indicating the availability of sections of the company for separate purchase.

Mr. Viggers: I have no plans to produce a series of mini-prospectuses.

Game Birds

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what tests have been carried out on game birds in the areas of Northern Ireland affected by the Chernobyl disaster; and what has been the result of the tests.

Mr. Needham: During the winters of 1986-87 and 1987-88 the Department of the Environment for Northern Ireland arranged for tests to assess the levels of caesium 134 and 137 in game birds which migrate to the Province from areas in northern Europe which were particularly affected by radioactive pollution from Chernobyl. The results of the surveys, which were published, showed that there was no danger to health from eating game birds. I am arranging for copies of the press statements issued in March 1987 and June 1988, including schedules of the test results, to be placed in the Library.

Health Boards (Grading Appeals)

Rev. Martin Smyth: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement about the machinery to be used by health boards in Northern Ireland to hear appeals about the new grading system; and about the advice he has given to health boards about the methods and time scale for resolving any problems.

Mr. Needham *[holding answer 13 December 1988]:* Health and social services boards are reviewing informally the grades of nurses who are unhappy with their new grades. Staff who remain dissatisfied may make a formal appeal using the normal appeals procedure agreed by the general council. As there is yet no indication of the likely number of nurses who will make use of the formal procedures I have not given advice to boards about the methods and timetable for resolving problems which may arise. I shall keep the matter under review.

HOME DEPARTMENT

United Reform Church

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what response he has sent to letters sent to him dated 8 July, 16 September and 29 November from the Reverend Michael Davies, moderator of the Thames North province of the United Reform Church; and if he will make a statement concerning the delay in responding.

Mr. Renton: I am writing to the hon. Member.

Smoke Detectors

Mr. Burt: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what recent consultations his Department has had with chief fire officers over smoke detectors.

Mr. John Patten: Smoke alarms have been discussed with representatives of chief fire officers, in the context of publicity within the forum of the Central Fire Brigades Advisory Council at its meeting on 22 September and also at recent meetings of some of the council's subsidiary committees. We shall be writing to chief fire officers in the Thames and Granada television regions this week seeking their support for a further public education campaign based on television advertising in the new year.

Mr. Burt: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether he is yet able to report progress on pilot schemes being conducted to place smoke detectors in local authority domestic accommodation; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John Patten: A Home Office research project with Tameside metropolitan borough council and Greater

Manchester county fire service, under which smoke alarms are to be installed in 10,000 homes in the Tameside area of Greater Manchester, was formally launched on 6 December. The neighbourhoods and dwellings are being selected on as random a basis as possible to reflect a wide cross-section of the community and local authority dwellings are included in the scheme.

The results will be monitored over the next three years to find out the overall effectiveness of smoke alarms in alerting occupants to the outbreak of fire and reducing fire casualties.

Mr. Burt: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what recent consultations his Department has had with home safety organisations over smoke detectors.

Mr. John Patten: The Home Office consults widely on fire safety matters but there have been no specific consultations with home safety organisations in recent months.

Mr. Burt: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what recent consultations his Department has had with local authorities over smoke detectors.

Mr. John Patten: Smoke alarms have been discussed with local authorities' representatives in the context of publicity within the forum of the Central Fire Brigades Advisory Council at its meeting on 22 September and also at recent meetings of some of the council's subsidiary committees.

Fires

Mr. Burt: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will give the latest available figures of fires in dwellings and other occupied buildings by source of ignition.

Mr. John Patten: The latest available information relates to accidental fires in dwellings and other occupied buildings in 1986 analysed by source of ignition, and is published in tables 3 and 34 of "Fire Statistics United Kingdom 1986". Figures for 1987 will be published on 20 December in table 3 of Home Office Statistical Bulletin 39/88, "Summary Fire Statistics United Kingdom 1987".

Mr. Burt: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will give the figures for fatal and non-fatal casualties from accidental fires in dwellings by source of ignition in 1984, 1985, 1986 and 1987.

Mr. John Patten: The information requested for 1984, 1985 and 1986 is published in table 11 of "Fire Statistics United Kingdom 1986". Figures for 1987 will be published on 20 December in table 11 of Home Office Statistical Bulletin 39/88, "Summary Fire Statistics United Kingdom 1987".

Cable Television

Mr. Butler: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make it his policy to seek to ensure that all films shown on cable television meet the same standards of classification as those applied under the Video Recordings Act 1984.

Mr. Renton: All cable services are regulated by the Cable Authority, established by the Cable and Broadcasting Act 1984. I understand that the Authority has approved a self-classification process for films not classified by the British Board of Film Classification (BBFC), using a comparable classification scheme. The authority has taken further steps to safeguard viewers, by developing guidelines for the scheduling and identification of films shown on cable according to these classifications. A film or uncut version of a film refused certification by the BBFC would be similarly rejected under the authority's cable classification system.

Immigration

Mr. David Martin: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when the revised guidelines on the handling of representations by hon. Members in immigration cases will come into effect; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hurd: I have made certain amendments to the provisions of the draft revised guidelines first circulated on 18 July in the light of points made to my hon. Friend the Minister of State in the debate on 10 November. My hon. Friend is writing to all Members today enclosing the final text of the revised guidelines and a copy has also been placed in the Library. The revised guidelines will be implemented on 3 January 1989 in respect of all representations received on or after that date.

The guidelines issued on 18 July by my right hon. and learned Friend the Foreign Secretary in connection with Members' representations about the operation of the immigration control overseas will also come into effect as from 3 January 1989.

Mr. Colvin: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether he will make a statement about the outcome of the meeting of European Community immigration Ministers in Athens on 9 December.

Mr. Hurd: This was the fifth such meeting following an initiative taken during the United Kingdom Presidency in 1986 to help prepare the EC's approach to the creation of the single market by the end of 1992 so far as the movement of persons is concerned.

On this occasion the meeting took place after the meeting of the European Council, upon which my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister reported to the House on 6 December at columns 173 to 186. Meeting in Rhodes, the European Council, in its final communiqué on 3 December, noting that the achievement of objectives in relation to frontiers was linked to progress in intergovernmental co-operation to combat terrorism and other serious crime, indicated that member states would each appoint a co-ordinator to help the Community achieve results. Although there are already established arrangements within the United Kingdom, I signified, at the Athens meeting, the United Kingdom Government's support for this proposal whose implementation is now being given urgent study amongst EC partners.

Otherwise the Athens meeting's main work was to review the progress of the ad hoc working group on immigration and its sub-groups on asylum and fraudulent travel papers. Ministers noted the linkages between aligning visa policy, frontier controls and asylum practice in the drive to simplify controls at EC internal frontiers, and took account of various practical measures identified for action or further study. It appears that, if a basis for agreement can be found on which state should be

responsible for considering individual applications for asylum, most EC states will need to legislate to give it effect.

In the context of the meeting, I took the opportunity to mention the Government's intention to introduce next spring a single immigration channel for all nationals of the EC (including British nationals) entering the country. The aim of this change is to reduce, as far as possible, the levels of checks on EC nationals entering the United Kingdom without disturbing our ability to maintain adequate controls on nationals of third countries.

At the same time, I reminded the meeting that there could be no question of abandoning checks on third country nationals at internal frontiers in the foreseeable future. This was a point emphasised by my right hon. Friend on 6 December and in which the United Kingdom is supported by a number of EC partners. This means that checks will have to be maintained on all travellers to ensure that the authenticity of their claims may be verified.

Further, although it arose as part of separate consideration it is relevant to add that the Trevi group's meeting which immediately followed that of immigration Ministers—and upon which I shall be reporting separately—considered the implication of 1992 for the maintenance of successful defence in depth against terrorism and serious crime. It decided to authorise further study of how to strike the right balance between greater freedom of movement for the development of the Community on the one hand and, on the other, creating an open market for terrorists and major criminals.

Mr. Janner: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many and what percentage of overseas applicants for entry to the United Kingdom are awaiting reconsideration of their cases on the basis of DNA tests; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar: I have been asked to reply.

The information requested is not readily available and could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Ban on Drinking in Public Places

Mr. Cran: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will consider extending the experimental ban on drinking in public places to encompass the town of Beverley.

Mr. John Patten: Seven local authorities, including Coventry, are trying out the experimental byelaw which makes it an offence to drink alcohol in a public place and we have no plans to extend the experiment. I believe that it is sensible to wait and see how this measure works out in practice in these areas before deciding whether to offer the byelaw for general adoption by local authorities.

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Members' Services

Mr. Allen: To ask the Lord President of the Council what account he takes of reports of the relevant United States congressional committees when considering improvements in hon. Members' services.

Mr. Wakeham: The House of Commons (Services) Committeee and its sub-committes take account of all relevant information that is available. If the hon. Member has any particular report in mind may I suggest that, in the first instance, he brings it to the attention of the appropriate sub-committee.

Accommodation

Mr. Andrew Welsh: To ask the Lord President of the Council how many hon. or right hon. Members have not been allocated a room.

Mr. Wakeham: Five. However, there are sufficient desks for allocation to all right hon. and hon. Members, whether they choose to accept them or not.

Mr. Andrew Welsh: To ask the Lord President of the Council how many hon. and right hon. Members *(a)* have been allocated a single room, *(b)* share a room with one other hon. or right hon. Member, *(c)* share a room with two other hon. or right hon. Members and *(d)* share a room with three or more hon. or right hon. Members.

Mr. Wakeham: A total of 28[illegible] right hon. and hon. Members occupy single rooms, 230 share a room with one other right hon. or hon. Member, 36 share a room with two other hon. Members and 95 share a room with three or more right hon. or hon. Members.

Mr. Andrew Welsh: To ask the Lord President of the Council how many hon. and right hon. Members have rooms allocated to parliamentary assistants or secretaries.

Mr. Wakeham: None. Rooms are allocated to right hon. and hon. Members and it is up to them to decide what use is made of their accommodation.

Mr. Andrew Welsh: To ask the Lord President of the Council how many parliamentary assistants or secretaries have been allocated a room; and how many share a room with *(a)* one other person, *(b)* two other persons and *(c)* more than three persons.

Mr. Wakeham: None. However there are 422 right hon. and hon. Members who have been allocated a desk for use by either their private secretary or research assistant. A total of 26 share a room with one other, 66 share a room with two others and 321 share a room with three or more others.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Salmonella

Mr. Alan W. Williams: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many inspections have been carried out *(a)* in 1987 and *(b)* in 1988 of protein processing plants making chicken feed; how many of these showed plants to be contaminated with salmonella; and how many prosecutions were brought under the Protein Processing Order 1981 against the infected plants.

Mr. Ryder: In 1987, 83 statutory inspections were carried out and 21 cases of salmonella contamination recorded. So far in 1988, 135 inspections have taken place, with 17 cases of salmonella contamination. In each of these cases advice was given on how to eliminate the contamination and prevent recurrence. On re-inspection all samples of products from these contaminated plants were found to be clear of salmonella contamination and so no prosecutions were brought.

In 1988 the policy has been to inspect each plant at approximately six-monthly intervals, with additional visits to those plants where problems have been found. We are currently considering introducing measures requiring plants to test each day's production for salmonella, and to make the results available to the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food.

Mr. Ashley: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what is the estimated level of contamination of imported animal feedstuffs by salmonella; what powers his Department has to monitor and control such contamination; and whether he plans to seek to increase his powers in this respect.

Mr. Donald Thompson: A very small proportion of compound animal feed is imported. The majority of imports are of the raw materials for incorporation into feeding stuffs.

Statutory controls apply to the importation of all animal protein requiring all imports to be licensed. Importations made in contravention of these controls may be required to be re-exported, destroyed or treated. Importations of animal protein are also monitored and samples are taken for testing for salmonella contamination. The overall contamination rate found in imported animal protein in 1987 was 28 per cent.

Discussions between representatives of the animal feeding stuffs industry and my officials are already under way to consider the application of the present controls and the need for any further measures to reduce salmonella contamination in feedingstuffs and their components.

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will list the names and locations of the 21 protein processing plants that were inspected in 1987 and found to be contaminated with salmonella; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Ryder *[holding answer 12 December 1988]:* Protein processing plants are subject to inspections under the Diseases of Animals (Protein Processing) Order 1986 to ensure that their product conforms with the required bacteriological standard and contains no salmonella. The 21 plants which were inspected in 1987 and failed these tests were given advice on overcoming their problems and when subsequently re-inspected were found to be meeting the required bacteriological standard.

In these circumstances prosecutions were not taken. Information on the identity of the plants concerned is a matter of commercial confidence.

Milk

Mr. Cox: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what proportion of the retail sale value of one pint of milk is paid to the farmer.

Mr. Donald Thompson: Approximately 45 per cent.

Farm Incomes

Mr. Cox: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what is the average yearly farm income in each of the four countries of the United Kingdom.

Mr. Donald Thompson: Detailed information on farm incomes is provided in the Ministry publication "Farm Incomes in the United Kingdom" (1988 edition), a copy of which is in the Library of the House. Table 3.5 (p. 75) provides annual estimates of aggregate farming income for each country and table 2.3 (p. 18) provides estimates of net farm income by farm type, size group and country. This publication also provides further information on farm incomes and definitions of the above terms.

Butter

Mr. Geraint Howells: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many tonnes of butter there are in store within the EEC; what were the corresponding figures for each of the last 10 years; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Donald Thompson: At the end of October 1988, there were 374,922 tonnes of butter in store within the EEC, 162,928 tonnes in intervention, and 211,994 tonnes in aided private storage. Corresponding stock figures for the end of the previous 10 years are given in the table.

EC Butter Stocks at 31 December (to nearest 100 tonnes)

	Intervention tonnes	*Aided private storage tonnes*	*Total tonnes*
1978	231,500	186,500	418,000
1979	270,800	100,600	371,400
1980	128,800	110,600	239,400
1981	11,100	136,100	147,200
1982	111,900	193,800	305,700
1983	692,100	161,300	853,400
1984	841,500	107,400	948,900
1985	995,800	127,700	1,123,500
1986	1,283,300	83,200	1,366,500
1987	859,900	98,200	958,100

Bracken (Sprays)

Dr. Cunningham: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if his Department or any relevant agencies have given any guidance to local authorities, landowners and farmers in respect of the environmental and public health implications of using sprays to control the spread of brackens in national parks or other areas of countryside.

Mr. Ryder: The Ministry has published a leaflet "P190 —Bracken Control". It is available from ADAS staff at local offices of the Ministry.

ENERGY

AERE, Harwell

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what contracts Harwell Atomic Energy Authority research centre has with the Ministry of Defence; whether any of these involve handling plutonium; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Spicer: The United Kingdom Atomic Energy Authority (Harwell) undertakes work, under commercial contract for the Ministry of Defence, which exploits its expertise in a range of matters including plutonium handling.

Trawsfynydd Magnox Plant

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if the additional cost incurred on the Central Electricity

Governing Board to generate replacement electricity for the output of Trawsfynydd Magnox plant has been accounted against nuclear or fossil fuel expenditure.

Mr. Michael Spicer: Output from nuclear plant is maximised at all times. Any shortfall in that output must be made up by an equivalent increase in fossil-fuelled generation. Nuclear and fossil-fuelled generation respectively are not separately accounted for within the bulk supply tariff.

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what information he has on the decision by the nuclear installations inspectorate to refuse permission to the Central Electricity Generating Board to restart the Trawsfynydd Magnox nuclear plant on 24 November; and on what basis further decisions were made by the nuclear installations inspectorate to allow it subsequently to start.

Mr. Michael Spicer: Consent to start up reactor 1 at Trawsfynydd was given by the nuclear installations inspectorate of the Health and Safety Executive on 2 December 1988. This followed the satisfactory resolution of issues identified at a meeting between the nuclear installations inspectorate and the Central Electricity Generating Board.

Hinkley Point C

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what communications have been received by his Department from the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament pursuant to the attendance at the Hinkley Point C public inquiry by Christopher Wilcock of his Department; and if he will set out the issues addressed in the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament letter and the departmental responses.

Mr. Michael Spicer: A letter from the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament was received on 24 November. A reply will be sent as soon as possible.

Plutonium

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what is the current status of the joint United States and United Kingdom fast reactor research programme announced by the United Kingdom Atomic Energy Authority in 1979; what is the total amount of plutonium to date transferred *(a)* from the United Kingdom to the United States of America and *(b)* from the United States of America to the United Kingdom under this programme; and in what form this plutonium has been transported.

Mr. Michael Spicer: The research work under the joint United Kingdom and United States fast reactor research programme announced by the UKAEA in 1979 was successfully completed in 1987. The studies of the results are now being finalised. There have been no net transfers of plutonium (other than in gram quantities) between the United Kingdom and the United States arising from the programme.

Electricity Bill

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he will initiate an investigation into the leaking of a draft of the Electricity supply industry privatisation Bill to the fortnightly publication *Power in Europe* which published details on 24 November.

Mr. Michael Spicer: No.

Natural Gas

Sir Trevor Skeet: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what percentage of total electricity in the European Community is produced from natural gas; and what is the percentage of each member country.

Mr. Michael Spicer: In 1986, the latest year for which data are available for all member states, 6·5 per cent. of electricity in the Community was produced from natural gas. Figures for individual member states are in the following table.

Member state	*Percentage of electricity produced from natural gas (1986)*
Belgium	1·5
Denmark	1·9
Federal Republic of Germany	6·2
France	0·8
Greece	0·2
Ireland	22·4
Italy	15·8
Luxembourg	0·1
Netherlands	61·9
Portugal	—
Spain	1·7
United Kingdom	0·6

Source: Energy Statistical Yearbook, 1986. (S.O.E.C December 1987).

DEFENCE

Atomic Weapons Research Establishment (Burghfield)

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence (1) what materials were being disposed of at the atomic weapons research establishment, Burghfield, on the morning of 2 December;

(2) what distance the area being used to dispose of explosive materials at the atomic weapons research establishment, Burghfield, on the morning of 2 December was from: *(a)* work places at the atomic weapons research establishment, Burghfield, *(b)* any surrounding buildings and *(c)* areas accessible to the public;

(3) what surface explosive material was being burnt at the atomic weapons research establishment, Burghfield, on the morning of 2 December;

(4) how the explosive materials being disposed of at the atomic weapons research establishment, Burghfield, on the morning of 2 December were ignited;

(5) if the site used for disposal of explosive materials at the atomic weapons research establishment, Burghfield, on the morning of 2 December has a water supply with sufficient stand pipes and hoses to allow access to all areas; and if he will specify any other means of extinguishing fires that were present at the disposal site;

(6) if the site used for disposal of explosive materials at the atomic weapons research establishment, Burghfield, on the morning of 2 December *(a)* was fenced to prevent inadvertant entry and *(b)* had a red flag displayed to indicate disposal taking place;

(7) how many entrances there are to the site for the disposal of explosive materials at the atomic weapons research establishment, Burghfield, on the morning of 2 December;

(8) what protective clothing and other safety equipment was issued for the use of burning site operators at the site used for the disposal of explosive materials at the atomic weapons research establishment, Burghfield, on the morning of 2 December;

(9) what type of log was kept of disposal operations at the atomic weapons research establishment, Burghfield, on the morning of 2 December; and what details it contains;

(10) why the disposal of explosive materials at the atomic weapons research establishment, Burghfield, on the morning of 2 December took place in the hours of darkness;

(11) if the explosives disposal site at the atomic weapons establishment, Burghfield, is licensed by any organisation outside his Department.

Mr. Sainsbury: I refer the hon. Member to my reply to the hon. Member for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks) on 8 December at column *252*.

Private Security Companies

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence which of the private security companies listed in his answer to the hon. Member for Leyton of 2 November, *Official Report*, column *645*, guard establishments in the *(a)* Bristol and *(b)* Oxford areas.

Mr. Sainsbury: None.

European Defence Contractors

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is his Department's policy towards cross-border alliances between European defence contractors.

Mr. Sainsbury: The Ministry monitors cross-border alliances between European defence contractors and assesses on a case-by-case basis their implications for our ability to secure value for money in procurement.

Retired Research Staff (Emigration)

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what restrictions exist on retired research staff from Aldermaston and Burghfield emigrating to the Soviet Union.

Mr. Sainsbury: I refer the hon. Member to the reply given by my right hon. Friend, the Prime Minister, to the hon. Member for Newport, West (Mr. Flynn) on 8 December at column *267*.

Property Sales

Mrs. Rosie Barnes: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether there are any plans to sell the Dreadnought seaman's hospital building and the nurses' home off King William walk in Greenwich.

Mr. Freeman: Greenwich hospital, of which my right hon. Friend is the trustee, is the freeholder of the Dreadnought seamen's hospital building and the Devonport nurses' home. There are no plans to sell the freehold of these buildings. Since the Dreadnought building is no longer required as a hospital, new uses for it and the associated buildings are now under consideration.

NATIONAL FINANCE

Her Majesty's Stationery Office

Mr. Nicholas Baker: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what progress has been made in developing Her Majesty's Stationery Office as an executive agency.

Mr. Lawson: I am pleased to announce that HMSO will today become an executive agency under the Next Steps initiative. HMSO is already a successful Government trading fund. Executive agency status will help it to develop its business on sound commercial lines, with significantly greater managerial freedom and a more flexible pay structure best suited to the achievement of its aims and objectives. HMSO will be expected, in return, to achieve progressively more demanding profit and performance targets. This is reflected in the framework document governing the operation of the agency and in a new Treasury minute which is being laid today under the Government Trading Fund Act 1973. Copies of the framework document are being placed in the Library of the House.

Family Incomes

Mr. Harry Barnes: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether he has produced any estimate of the expected impact on the living standards of an average sized family on average incomes of the combined effects of the poll tax and the privatisation of electricity and water.

Mr. Major: No specific estimate is available. However, to raise the same revenue from community charge as from domestic rates will need no change in the average household bill. The introduction of competition and the disciplines of the private sector into the electricity and water supply industries will put downward pressure on costs and prices.

Debt Repayment

Mr. Butterfill: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what will be the total debt repayment paid by Britain in the current year; if he will express the figures as a percentage of gross domestic product; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Major: The public sector debt repayment (PSDR) is expected to be about £10 billion in 1988-89, equivalent to 2 per cent. of gross domestic product. On the basis of this forecast, the PSDR in 1988-89 will be larger as a proportion of money GDP than in any year since the beginning of the 1950s, the earliest date for which figures on this basis are available.

VAT

Mr. Robin Cook: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will take steps to exempt apnoea respiratory monitors from value added tax.

Mr. Lilley: Apnoea respiratory monitors may be zero-rated when supplied to specified "eligible bodies", provided that they are purchased with funds provided by

a charity or from voluntary donations. "Eligible bodies" include health authorities, non-profit making hospitals and research institutions, charitable institutions providing care or medical or surgical treatment for handicapped people and charitable institutions providing rescue or first-aid services.

Dr. Godman: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer when the hon. Member for Greenock and Port Glasgow can expect to receive answers to his letters of 12 October and 16 November about value added tax on new buildings.

Mr. Lilley: I replied to the hon. Member's letter on 12 December.

Mr. Robin Cook: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer (1) on how many occasions value added tax has been waived on contracts awarded by the health authorities to outside companies;

(2) how many contracts awarded to tenders from companies outside the National Health Service have had value added tax applied to them.

Mr. Lilley *[holding answers 12 December 1988]:* Value added tax applies in the normal way to all such contracts. Health authorities can however claim refund of the tax where section 27(2A) of the Value Added Tax Act 1983 applies. Information on the number of contracts in question is not available.

Cancer Screening

Sir David Price: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer why the mobile breast screening unit provided by the Wessex Cancer Trust as a registered charity has now been made subject to value added tax.

Mr. Lilley *[holding answer 8 December 1988]:* Medical equipment donated to a health authority by a charity is entitled to zero-rating when it is to be used solely for medical research, diagnosis or treatment. The zero rate covers X-ray and other specialist medical equipment for a mobile breast screening service, but it does not, I regret, extend to equipment such as general purpose trailers or towing units. If the Wessex Cancer Trust can produce further evidence to show that the unit in question does constitute specialist medical equipment, Customs and Excise will of course be pleased to reconsider the case.

Coventry Four

Mr. Wilson: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what charges are still outstanding against Colonel Hendrik Botha, Stephanus de Jaser, William Metelerkamp and Jacobus la Grange.

Mr. Lilley *[holding answer 12 December 1988]:* The four would face charges that they conspired with each other and with others on diverse dates between 23 February 1982 and 1 April 1984 to evade prohibitions in force on the exportation of goods from the United Kingdom pursuant to the provisions of the Export of Goods Control Order 1981 whereby an offence or offences contrary to section 170(2) of the Customs and Excise Management Act 1979 would have been committed.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer on what date in 1984 passports were returned to those persons known as the Coventry four.

Mr. Lilley *[holding answer 12 December 1988]:* Passports were not returned to the persons known as the "Coventry Four".

Mr. Campbell-Savours: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether the bail money offered by Mr. Andre Pelser in the case of the persons known as the Coventry four has been returned to persons acting for or on behalf of the South African Government.

Mr. Lilley *[holding answer 12 December 1988]:* The £400,000 offered by Mr. Andre Pelser was estreated by the Coventry magistrates court. Estreated bail is paid into the Consolidated Fund.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many summaries of developments in the inquiries by Her Majesty's Customs and Excise into the case of those persons known as the Coventry four were written; and to whom they were despatched.

Mr. Lilley *[holding answer 12 December 1988]:* I regret that this information is not available.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether he will name the four persons remanded before magistrates at Coventry in March 1984 on charges of breaching arms embargo regulations.

Mr. Lilley *[holding answer 12 December 1988]:* The four persons were William Randolph Metelerkamp, Hendrik Jacobus Botha, Stephanus Johannes de Jager and Jacobus Francois La Grange.

Building Societies

Sir Michael McNair-Wilson: To ask the Chancellor of the Exhequer what is the ratio of investors in building societies to those who have mortgages from them.

Mr. Lilley *[holding answer 12 December 1988]:* Figures in the annual report of the Building Societies Commission for 1987-88 suggest that at the end of 1987 there were in total 45·6 million investing shareholders and depositors in building societies. Since some people have an account at more than one society and many people have joint accounts, the exact number of individual investors is not known. During the same period there were 7·2 million borrowers with mortgages. This figure treats as single borrowers almost all holders of joint mortgages.

SOCIAL SECURITY

Mr. Frank Ballard

Mr. Heddle: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will investigate the reasons why his Department's records division at Newcastle upon Tyne has not acknowledged or replied to the letters sent by Mr. Frank Ballard of 20 High street, Colton, Rugeley, Staffordshire, on 14 July and 23 October regarding a deficiency in credits for the year 1986-87.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: I regret that there is no record of receipt of Mr. Ballard's first letter in July. His letter of 23 October with which he enclosed a copy of his original letter was forwarded to the Department's local office at Lichfield to answer and a reply was sent on 14 November. I am writing to my hon. Friend.

Pensioners

Mr. Andrew Bowden: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many retirement pensioners are in receipt of an occupational pension; and what is the average weekly income from occupational pensions.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Approximately 3·4 million pensioner tax units[1] were in receipt of an occupational pension in 1986; the average weekly amount was £39·54.

Source: Family Expenditure Survey 1986.

[1] A pensioner tax unit is a single pensioner over state pension age or a couple where the man is over state pension age.

Mr. Andrew Bowden: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what proportion of (i) all pensioners, (ii) single male pensioners, (iii) single female pensioners, (iv) pensioner couples, (v) single women aged 75 years or over, (vi) single men aged 75 years or over and (vii) couples where at least one partner is aged 75 years or over, are in receipt of an occupational pension; and, for each group, what is the average amount received.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The information requested is as follows:

	Proportion of pensioner tax units[1] with occupational pensions percentage	*Average weekly amount received[2]* £
All pensioners	50	39·43
Single males	55	32·20
Single females	38	27·66
Pensioner couples	65	50·79
Single women aged 75 and over	31	27·60
Single men aged 75 and over	50	31·12
Couples where at least one partner is aged 75 and over	42	36·73

Source: Family Expenditure Survey 1986.

[1] A tax unit is a single person of pensionable age or a couple where the man is of pensionable age.

[2] Average amounts are based on the number of pensioners actually in receipt of occupational pensions.

Mr. Andrew Bowden: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what proportion of (i) all pensioners and (ii) newly retired pensioners have neither a state additional pension nor an occupational pension.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: I regret that the information requested is not available.

Mr. Andrew Bowden: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security (1) what is (i) the total number and (ii) the proportion of *(a)* single pensioners and *(b)* pensioner couples who are in receipt of income support;

(2) what is (i) the total number and (ii) the proportion of single pensioners aged *(a)* 75 years and over and *(b)* 80 years and over who are in receipt of income support;

(3) what is (i) the total number and (ii) the proportion of pensioner couples aged *(a)* 75 years and over and *(b)* 80 years and over who are in receipt of income support.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The information requested is as follows:

	Total numbers in 000's	*Proportion*
All pensioners		
Single	1,340	27
Couples	335	9
Pensioners 75 and over		
Single	735	31
Couples	100	13
Pensioners 80 and over		
Single	435	31
Couples	40	13

Notes:

1. For the purpose of this table pensioners are defined as those in receipt of a pensioner premium.
2. Proportions are those in receipt of Income Support as a percentage of total pensioner units within the group.

Mr. Andrew Bowden: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what is (i) the total number and (ii) the proportion of *(a)* single pensioners and *(b)* pensioner couples who are in receipt of housing benefit.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Special arrangements have been made with the Department of Employment's claimant adviser service for family credit claims made by families of people assisted into work by them to be dealt with through a streamlined procedure. The target is for 90 per cent. of these claims to be cleared within five working days. This target is being met and 95 per cent. are cleared within 10 working days. Other claimants resuming work after claiming income support are sent a specially marked family credit claim form so that, if necessary, their claims can be given priority. The target is to clear these claims, as other family credit claims, in an average of 18 working days. In November a clearance rate of just under 23 days was achieved.

Mr. Adley: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what representations he has received from pensioners' organisations about the effect on their pensions of recent changes in the financial climate.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Since the beginning of October we have received 18 such representations.

Mr. John Marshall To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what percentage of gross national product is devoted to payments to pensioners.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: I regret that the information is not available in the form requested. Social security expenditure on the elderly is approximately 5 per cent. of GDP.

Taxes and Benefits

Mr. Squire: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will update his answer on taxes and benefits on 25 March, *Official Report*, column *244* for 1989-90 assuming that tax allowances are indexed according to the statutory formula and taking account of the uprating of benefits.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Figures for 1989-90 are not available.

Mr. Squire: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if there is a specific target for clearing claims for family credit for people who have moved into paid work.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Special arrangements have been made with the Department of Employment's Claimant Adviser

Service for Family Credit claims made by families of people assisted into work by them to be dealt with through a streamlined procedure. The target is for 90 per cent. of these claims to be cleared within 5 working days. This target is being met and 95 per cent. are cleared within 10 working days. Other claimants resuming work after claiming Income Support are sent a specially marked Family Credit claim form so that, if necessary, their claims can be given priority. The target is to clear these claims, as other Family Credit claims, in a average of 18 working days. In November a clearance rate of just under 23 days was achieved.

Severe Disablement Allowance

Ms. Quin: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he plans any alteration in severe disablement allowance; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Scott: We do not have any plans for major changes to the structure of severe disablement allowance pending our consideration of the reports on the survey of disabled people undertaken by the Office of Population Censuses and Surveys.

Crisis Loans

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what is the average length of time between a claimant applying for a crisis loan and the person receiving the girocheque in payment of the loan.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The information requested is not available.

Crisis loan applications are decided as soon as all necessary information has been obtained. Inevitably it takes longer to proces some applications than others, but a majority are decided and paid on the date of application.

Transitional Payments

Mr. Heddle: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security when his Department's Glasgow office will determine the eligibility or otherwise of transitional payments for Mrs. P. D. Mills of 1 John Till Close, Rugeley, Staffordshire following the return of the completed questionnaire requesting information relating to housing benefit by the Cannock Chase district council on 10 October.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The notification about the outcome of the application for housing benefit transitional payments, in the case referred to, was sent out to the applicant on 3 November.

Durham Local Office

Mr. Steinberg: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security, for Durham Department of Social Security office since April in all cases, what was *(a)* the total budget and *(b)* the amount spent to date for (i) budgeting and crisis loans and (ii) community care grants expressing *(b)* as a proportion of *(a)* in each case; *(c)* what was the average (i) budgeting loan, (ii) crisis loan, (iii) community care grant, (iv) maternity payment and (v) funeral payment paid out; *(d)* how many people have been refused (i) a loan, (ii) a community care grant and (iii) both; *(e)* how many people were refused a loan more than once in a one month period; *(f)* how many applications were refused under the 26-week rule; and *(g)* how many people were refused extention loans on the grounds of their existing commitments.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Information on numbers of applications for social fund loans and grants processed and awarded, listed by local office, including information on budget allocations and expenditure, is available from the details held in the Library.

A statutory amount of £85 is available in respect of maternity payments. However, any capital held by the applicant in excess of £500 is taken into account on a pound-for-pound basis. In the period from April to November 1988 the average amounts paid out from the social fund in the Durham office in respect of funeral payments was £310·44.

In the period from April to November 1988 a total of 129 applicants were refused awards on the grounds that they had either not been in receipt of income support for 26 weeks or that they had previously applied for the same item or service in the preceding 26 weeks and their circumstances had remained unchanged.

Information on the number of applicants refused a loan more than once in the one month period or the number of applicants refused a second or subsequent loan on the grounds of existing commitments is not available.

Mr. Steinberg: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will give for *(a)* Durham local office area and *(b)* England (i) the number of claimants who have experienced, or will experience real reductions in income as a result of the changes made to diet and heating allowances in April and (ii) the amount saved by this means.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Estimates of the information required could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Mr. Steinberg: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will give the average benefit paid to disabled claimants at Durham local office for the periods *(a)* 4-10 April and *(b)* 11-17 April, excluding transitional protection.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: I regret that this information is not available and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Single Parents

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what support from within the community is available to lone parents under the age of 18 years who are unable to gain support from their own family or his Department.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Lone parents under age 18 are eligible for income support from this Department subject to the normal rules. Lone parents were not affected by the general withdrawal of entitlement to income support from 16 and 17-year-olds. Young lone parents can also claim other benefits such as family credit, housing benefit, child benefit and one parent benefit provided that they fulfil the conditions of entitlement. A lone parent under age 18 may also be able to obtain help of other kinds from local authorities and voluntary organisations.

Working Mothers

Ms. Richardson: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will publish a table showing estimates of the

numbers of women who are working, with children, who have marginal tax rates in excess of 50 per cent., broken down into bands of 10 per cent. and into married women and one-parent families.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: I regret that the information is not currently available.

Form FC1

Mr. Speller: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security when he will revise the family claim form FC1.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: We expect to bring a revised version into use in the spring.

National Insurance

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how much was raised through national insurance contributions in 1987; and on what it was expended.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: This information is not available for the calendar year 1987. Figures for the financial year ended 31 March 1987 are contained in the account of the national insurance fund for 1986-87 (House of Commons Paper 277). The account for 1987-88 will be published in the new year.

Occupational Pensions

Mr. Cran: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will report on the progress being made by the occupational pensions board in considering measures to safeguard the rights of occupational scheme members; and when he expects the board to complete its report.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: We asked the occupational pensions board to report by the end of the year. I understand that the board expects to meet this date.

Community Care Grants

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security (1) what steps he will take to publicise the availability of community care grants as a means of ensuring the community care grants budget is not underspent;

(2) if he will issue an instruction to his Department's local probation services and hospital social workers concerned with re-establishment of patients in the community, as a means of ensuring full take-up of the community care grant budget.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Information about the availability of community care grants is contained in a variety of leaflets, forms and posters, and guidance to social fund officers already emphasises the importance of liaison between local offices and statutory and other bodies.

We are currently considering a range of further measures to improve awareness of community care grants amongst the priority groups for whom they are intended and amongst organisations involved with potential applicants.

Local Offices (Rhondda)

Mr. Rogers: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security (1) what percentage of applications for social fund loans were successful in *(a)* the Porth Rhondda and *(b)* the Tonypandy Rhondda West offices in the period up to 30 August;

(2) how much of the social fund allocation had been spent up to 30 August in *(a)* the Porth Rhondda and *(b)* the Tonypandy Rhondda West offices;

(3) what percentage of applications for social fund grants were successful in *(a)* the Porth Rhondda and *(b)* the Tonypandy Rhondda West offices in the period to 30 August.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Information on numbers of applications for social fund loans and grants received, processed and awarded, listed by local office, including information on budget allocations and expenditure, is available from the details held in the Library.

Mr. Rogers: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security (1) how many claims for single payment have been allowed at *(a)* the Tonypandy Rhondda West and *(b)* Porth Rhondda offices since 1 April; and what amount of benefit these represent in each case;

(2) how many claims for single payment have been made at *(a)* the Tonypandy Rhondda West and *(b)* the Porth Rhondda offices since 1 April; and what are the main items asked for in each case.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Information is not available on the numbers of claims for single payments made and allowed since 1 April 1988 and the items asked for. The numbers of decisions made in respect of single payments during the period 11 April 1988 to 31 October 1988 were, at Rhondda West 1,188 and at Porth Rhondda 1,026. The total amount paid for single payments at each office during the same period was, at Rhondda West £67,982 and at Porth Rhondda £32,825.

Mr. Rogers: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security (1) how many new claims for housing benefit supplement were received at *(a)* the Tonypandy Rhondda West and *(b)* the Porth Rhondda offices from 1 November 1987 to 11 April 1988;

(2) what was the total amount of housing benefit supplement paid at *(a)* the Tonypandy Rhondda West and *(b)* the Porth Rhondda offices in the year prior to 31 October 1987.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: I regret that information is not available in the form requested.

Information obtained from the housing benefit subsidy claims submitted by the local authorities with which the Department's Rhondda (west) and Porth offices deal is shown in the tables.

Table 1

Number of housing benefit supplement claims on 31 March

Authority (Borough Council)	*1987*	*1988*[1]
Rhondda	386	438
Taff-Ely[2]	640	706

[1] Provisional.
[2] Includes claims from Pontypridd office.

Table 2

Total amount of housing benefit supplement paid

Authority (Borough Council)	*1986-87*	*1987-88*[1]
	£	£
Rhondda	86,215	100,236
Taff-Ely[2]	133,219	147,842

[1] Provisional.
[2] Includes claims from Pontypridd office.

Mr. Rogers: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many new claims for supplementary benefit were received at *(a)* the Tonypandy Rhondda West and *(b)* the Porth Rhondda offices from 1 November 1987 to 11 April 1988.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The number of claims, both new and repeat, for supplementary benefit received between 21 October 1987 and 8 April 1988 (the closest available dates) is as follows:

	Claims
(a) Rhondda West	2,902
(b) Porth	2,530

Source: Internal management information, which is provisional and subject to amendment.

Mr. Rogers: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what was the total amount of supplementary benefit paid at *(a)* the Tonypandy Rhondda west and *(b)* the Porth Rhondda offices in the year prior to 31 October 1987.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: I regret that this information is not available.

Young People

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many cases in each standard region are *(a)* aged 16 to 17 years but receiving income support whilst in relevant education, *(b)* aged 16 to 17 years who are entitled to income support under schedule 1 of the income support regulations, *(c)* aged 16 to 17 years who have been entitled to income support for short periods and *(d)* aged 16 to 17 years for whom he has used his discretionary power to grant income support to avoid severe hardship.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The information requested concerning 16 and 17-year-olds receiving income support whilst in relevant education is not available.

The estimated number of 16 and 17-year-olds entitled to income support without time restriction (schedule 1 of the Income Support (General) Regulations) at September 1988 is as follows:

	Number
England	15,000
Scotland	2,000
Wales	2,000
Great Britain	19,000

Notes:
(1) Based on a sample of 1 in 50 cases in receipt of Supplementary Allowance on a day in May 1987.
(2) Figures rounded to the nearest thousand.
(3) Information is not available according to "standard regions" and in view of the small number of sample cases involved any further breakdown would be subject to wide sampling error and would therefore be of doubtful validity.

The number of awards of income support made to 16 and 17-year-olds for limited periods (schedule 1A of the Income Support (General) Regulations) in September and October 1988 was:

Region	*Number of awards*
London (North)	27
London (South)	32
Midlands	42
North Eastern	55
North Western	60
Wales and South West	38
Scotland	34
Great Britain	288

Notes:
(1) Based on 100 per cent. count of awards made up to 31 October 1988.
(2) Information is not available according to "standard regions".
(3) Information relates to the number of awards rather than to the individual number of young people involved. Some may have had more than one award.

The number of directions given under the Secretary of State's discretionary power to avoid "severe hardship" to 16 and 17-year-olds during the 13 weeks ended 9 December 1988 is as follows:

Region	*Number of applications*	*Number successful*	*Number unsuccessful*
London (North)	174	124	50
London (South)	131	91	40
Midlands	222	167	55
North Eastern	366	243	123
North Western	293	193	100
Wales and South West	185	122	63
Scotland	518	329	189
Great Britain	1,889	1,269	620

Notes:
(1) Based on 100 per cent. count of applications received.
(2) Information is not available according to "standard regions".
(3) Information relates to the number of applications rather than to the number of individual young people involved. Some may have made more than one application.

Severe Disability Premium

Mr. Macdonald: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what is the current estimated percentage take-up of the severe disablity premium.

Mr. Scott: I regret that the information requested is not available.

Mr. Macdonald: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what is the total number of awards thus far of severe disability premium to *(a)* individuals, *(b)* couples at the lower rate and *(c)* couples at the higher rate.

Mr. Scott: I regret that information on the number of people receiving the severe disability premium is not yet available.

Residential Homes

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what assisance is available to residents of private aged persons' houes where the fees are raised above the maximum allowabe income support towards residential costs.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Income support limits for help towards fees are intended to meet all reasonable charges for accommodation, board and personal care. The actual fee charged by an ndependent residential care home is a matter solely betwen the home and the resident.

Contribution Records

Mr. Gareth Wardell: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what steps he has taken to ensure that his Department's contracted-out earnings group office at Newcastle can provide contribution records within a reasonable time period.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Normally it is not necessary for the contracted-out earnings group to provide earnings or contribution information as employers and pension schemes have their own records of this. However, an inquiry service for employers submitting details to the group on magnetic tape is provided, for which a charge is made. The information requested is normally sent within a week of the inquiry.

Medical Tribunals

Mr. Lewis: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security when a medical appeal tribunal will hear the case of Pamela Walsh, 4 South avenue, Leigh, whose appeal was lodged in January.

Mr. Scott: I understand from the office of the president of social security and medical appeal tribunals that Pamela Walsh's appeal will be heard on 18 January 1989.

Mr. Lewis: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security when a medical appeal tribunal will hear the case of Mr. R. T. Watson, 4 Fitchfield walk, Worsley, Manchester whose appeal was lodged on 16 March.

Mr. Scott: This is a matter for the president of social security and medical appeal tribunals, but I understand that Mr. Watson has not yet been allocated a date for a hearing of his appeal.

Relocation of Offices

Mr. David Young: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what consideration is being given to moving offices of his Department to Bolton.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: We shall shortly be making an announcement setting out our plans to move some local office work away from London. Detailed work is also progressing to identify headquarters functions which might be relocated. This work still has some way to go but we are considering all alternative locations which will help the Department to improve efficiency.

Housing Benefit

Mr. Winnick: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many were eligible for housing benefit transitional payments at the start of the scheme; and how many are estimated to be in the next financial year.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: When the transitional payments unit was set up it was announced that up to 300,000 people would be eligible to receive payments. Up to 9 December 396,000 applications had been received and 146,000 cases are receiving payments. In the majority of cases where assessments have not been made the unit is awaiting the return of inquiry forms from local authorities. The final date by which applications can be made is 31 March 1989 and until this date is reached it is not possible to predict how many people will eventually benefit from the scheme.

THE ARTS

British Library

Mr. Buchan: To ask the Minister for the Arts what were the total buildings costs of the Urquhart building at the British Library in Boston Spa; and what was the cost of fitting out this building.

Mr. Richard Luce *[holding answer 8 December 1988]:* I refer the hon. Member to the reply given to a question from the hon. Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell) on 19 October 1988 at column *880* in respect of the total costs of the building. The cost of fitting out was approximately £1·5 million.

HEALTH

Nurses (Grading)

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Health whether it is his policy that where a local manager wishes to change a nurse's grade he should not do so without having first consulted the regional health authority who in turn must consult his Department.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: No. It is for regional and district health authorities to determine what consultations, if any, should take place and in what circumstances this would be appropriate.

Mr. Grocott: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is his latest estimate for the Shropshire health authority of the number of patients who have been on the hospital waiting list for more than a year.

Mr. Mellor: The most recent validated in-patient waiting list figures are for 31 March 1988. At that date, there were 2,797 patients on the Shropshire list for more than a year.

Expenditure

Mr. Carttiss: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what was the level of expenditure for health services per 1,000 population for each of the health districts in the East Anglia region 1979-80 and for 1987-88.

Mr. Mellor: Figures based on the total populations of the district health authorities in the East Anglian region are shown in the table for the years 1982-83 (the first year following the establishment of those authorities) and 1987-88.

Total revenue expenditure on hospital and community health services (HCHS) per thousand population—East Anglian region

District health authorities	*1982-83 (cash)* £	*1982-83 (at 1987-88 prices)* £	*1987-88*[1] *(cash)* £	*Real-terms increase per cent.*
Cambridge	196,875	247,974	282,190	13·8
Peterborough	147,793	186,152	201,761	8·4
West Suffolk	122,989	154,911	177,316	14·5
East Suffolk	156,002	196,492	206,428	5·1
Norwich	163,649	206,124	218,825	6·2
Great Yarmouth and Waveney	127,619	160,742	184,129	14·6
West Norfolk and Wisbech	113,474	142,926	166,040	16·2
Huntingdon	86,731	109,243	189,427	73·4

[1] Provisional (ie as yet unaudited figures).

HCHS covers all services provided (including hospital and community health services and where appropriate ambulance and other services).

Sources:

(a) Annual accounts of the district health authorities.

(b) Mid-year estimates of resident population 1982 and 1987 (Office of Population Censuses and Surveys).

Notes to the table:

1. The 1982-83 figures have been expressed at 1987-88 prices by the use of the Gross Domestic Product deflator.

2. District capital expenditure and all revenue and capital expenditure incurred by the East Anglian regional health authority for the region as a whole is excluded.

3. Expenditure on family practitioner services is excluded: such expenditure is accounted for by family practitioner committee (FPCs) and cannot strictly be attributed to particular districts. However, prior to 1 April 1985 the Cambridge, East Suffolk and Norwich district health authorities each had an associated FPC and their total revenue expenditure for 1982-83 included small, not separately identifiable, elements relating to FPCs' administrative expenses.

4. Significant variations in per capita expenditure figures at district level arise principally because:

(i) people travel across district boundaries for treatment and sub-regional resource allocations reflect the pattern and changes in the pattern of service provision locally.

(ii) the population figures used make no allowance for people resident in one district who receive treatment in another or for the differences in morbidity and age/sex structure of particular populations.

Mr. Robert G. Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Health by what proportion spending on the health services has increased over and above inflation since 1979; and what is his estimate of how much further that figure is likely to increase when the additional resources he has announced for the coming year are taken into account.

Mr. Mellor: The real terms increase in NHS gross expenditure since 1978-79 is 37 per cent. and is expected to rise to 40 per cent. in 1989-90. If, however, account is also taken of the extra cash released in 1989-90 by the reduction in employers' superannuation contributions and from health authorities' income generation and cost improvement schemes the value of the resources available is equivalent to a real terms increase of 4·5 per cent. over 1988-89.

Drug RU 486

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) if there are any plans to introduce the RU 486 abortion pill for use in the United Kingdom; and if he will make a statement;

(2) what test have been carried out on the drug RU 486 in the United Kingdom; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Mellor: Any information of this kind received pursuant to the Medicines Act 1968 is confidential to the licensing authority. A company statement on RU 486 was issued by Roussel Laboratories Ltd. on 1 November 1988, a copy of which and any further information may be obtained from the company's office at Bradwater Park, Denham, Uxbridge, Middlesex UB9 5HP.

Speech Therapy

Mr. Steinberg: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what was the turnover rate amongst National Health Service speech therapists in each of the last five years.

Mr. Mellor: I regret that we do not collect this information centrally.

Mr. Steinberg: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will publish in the *Official Report* a table showing, by health authority *(a)* the establishment figure for speech therapists, *(b)* the actual number in place, *(c)* *(b)* as a proportion of *(a)*, and *(d)* the number of cases treated in the last 12 months.

Mr. Mellor: I regret that we do not collect information on establishment and number of cases treated centrally in this form. The figures for whole-time equivalent staff in post in each English region and the London postgraduate special health authorities is as follows.

NHS staff in post

Speech therapists—England by region at 30 September 1987

Region	*Whole-time equivalents*
1. Northern RHA	160
2. Yorkshire RHA	160
3. Trent RHA	260
4. East Anglia RHA	120
5. North West Thames RHA	210
6. North East Thames RHA	240
7. South East Thames RHA	220
8. South West Thames RHA	170
9. Wessex RHA	140
10. Oxford RHA	140
11. South Western RHA	180
12. West Midlands RHA	260
13. Mersey RHA	110
14. North Western RHA	230
20. London Postgraduate Special Health Authorities	30
England Total	2,630

Source: Department of Health (SR7) Annual Census of NHS Non-Medical Manpower.

Note: All figures are independently rounded to the nearest (10) ten whole-time equivalent.

Mr. Meale: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is his policy on health authorities insisting that patients or the guardians of patients in their area needing speech therapy should first sign an agreement or contract before such treatment can commence.

Mrs. Currie *[holding answer 13 December 1988]:* The terms on which speech therapy is provided to individual patients is a matter for agreement between the patient, or guardian of the patient, and the local health authority and speech therapy manager responsible for the provision. Many forms of speech therapy treatment need the parent or guardian of a speech-impaired child to work with the child outside the formal speech therapy sessions to reinforce the therapy. We are not aware that health authorities are generally requiring patients or guardians to sign written contracts.

AIDS

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will make a statement outlining the various methods by which HIV may be transmitted from one person to another; and what is the latest evidence available to him on whether HIV may be transmitted in saliva.

Mr. Mellor: HIV is recognised to be transmissible by three main routes:

unprotected penetrative sexual intercourse with an infected person (between men or between a man and a woman);

by inoculation of infected blood and blood products. In the United Kingdom this mainly results from drug misusers sharing contaminated injecting equipment; and

from an infected mother to her baby before or during birth, or after birth via breast feeding.

HIV has been found in low concentration in saliva but I am advised that there is no good evidence that HIV has ever been transmitted in saliva.

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what are the latest measures being taken to protect at-risk groups from contracting the HIV virus in *(a)* prisons, *(b)* Her Majesty's forces and *(c)* the business travelling community; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Mellor: Since April 1986 the Government have allocated £32·5 million for a sustained programme of public education about HIV and AIDS. In October 1987 the Health Education Authority was given responsibility for further development of the campaign. Campaigns mounted so far include mass media work aimed at those travelling at home and abroad on holiday or on business. In addition, new leaflets have been produced for issue to travellers overseas. These include up-to-date information about the risks of HIV infection abroad.

Educational initiatives aimed at prison inmates and members of HM armed forces are the responsibility of my right hon. Friends the Home Secretary and the Secretary of State for Defence. However, I am aware that an educational package for prison inmates, comprising a video, a guide to its use and a leaflet, is nearing completion. Members of the armed forces were included in the distribution of the household leaflet "Don't Die of Ignorance" in early 1987 and with it received an insert directed at service personnel. Units moving overseas are given instruction on relevant health hazards, including HIV and other communicable diseases, and precautions that individuals can take to protect themselves.

Food Poisoning

Mr. Alan W. Williams: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is the number of reported cases of people affected by food poisoning for each calendar year from 1980 to the present time.

Mr. Mellor: The numbers of formally notified and otherwise ascertained cases of food poisoning for the years 1980-87 are as follows:

Year	*Number*
1980	[1]10,318
1981	[1]9,936
1982	14,253
1983	17,735
1984	20,702
1985	19,242
1986	23,948
1987	29,331

[1] Formally notified only; otherwise ascertained not available.

Mr. Alan W. Williams: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is the Government's estimate of the ratio of unreported cases to each reported case of a person affected by food poisoning.

Mr. Mellor: While there is considerable under-reporting, we do not have available a precise estimate of the ratio.

Mr. Alan W. Williams: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will proceed with plans to leaflet every household to warn against the dangers of food poisoning.

Mr. Mellor: Following preliminary assessment, the Government are to launch early next year a nationwide campaign to advise the public on how to prevent food poisoning in the home. Initially, this will be based on a leaflet "The Recipe for Food Safety" to be distributed extensively through supermarkets, doctors' surgeries and other outlets. Other ways of promoting good food hygiene practice in the home will also be considered.

Mr. Ashley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many cases of salmonella poisoning there have been in the last year for which figures are available; and whether the incidence of this type of food poisoning is declining or increasing.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: In 1987, 20,532 isolates from humans in England and Wales were identified by the Department of enteric pathogen of the Public Health Laboratory Service. This is a 21 per cent. increase over the previous year and figures to date for this year indicate a further increase in salmonella isolates from humans.

Mr. Ashley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what proportion of cases of salmonella food poisoning are estimated to be due to salmonella in eggs; what is his estimate of the proportion of the 30 million eggs eaten annually that contain the salmonella bacteria; and what advice he has circulated to the public and to the catering industry on how to avoid salmonella food poisoning from eggs.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: In the first 10 months of this year there were 46 outbreaks associated with eggs involving over 1,000 cases of salmonella food poisoning. We do not have information to estimate the proportion of cases of food poisoning due to eggs as in the great majority of sporadic cases no particular food is identified as the cause of the illness. Although the risk of harm to any healthy individual from consuming a single raw or partially cooked egg is small, it is advisable for vulnerable people such as the elderly, the sick, babies and pregnant women to consumer only eggs that have been cooked until the white and yolk are solid. Advice has been given to the catering industry and the public about the handling, cooking and use of eggs.

Mr. Ashley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is the number of cases of food poisoning in the last year for which figures are available, what assessment he has made as to whether the incidence is declining or increasing; and what proportion arose from *(a)* home catering, *(b)* commercial catering and *(c)* catering in institutional establishments.

Mr. Mellor: In 1987 there were 29,331 cases of food poisoning, 20,363 of which were formally notified and 8,968 ascertained by other means. Figures to date for this year indicate that the incidence is increasing. No precise data are available on proportions of cases attributable to different catering locations.

Mr. Ashley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) if he will take steps to introduce a statutory requirement that all those commercially involved in handling food take a course in food hygiene;

(2) if he has any plans for strengthening food hygiene legislation;

(3) what information he has concerning courses that provide training in food hygiene; and whether his Department provides any input to these courses.

Mrs. Currie: A review of food legislation has been the subject of wide consultation over several years and the results were reported to Ministers. My hon. Friend the Parliamentary Secretary to the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food on 30 October 1987, announced that officials had been asked to review the proposals in the light of the response to consultation. The proposals under review include the suggestion that training in food hygiene should be mandatory for food handlers, along with other measures.

Such training is currently provided by the food industry itself, by local authorities and by professional bodies. Departmental officials keep in close contact with training bodies and advise where necessary.

Mr. Ashley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is his estimate of how many cases of food poisoning due to the bacteria listeria there have been in the last year for which figures are available; whether there has been an increase or decrease in the incidence of such cases; and what evidence there is that the cook-chill method of preparation encourages these bacteria to flourish.

Mr. Mellor: I am informed of one well-documented case of food-associated listeriosis in 1986. No such cases were reported in 1987. To date in 1988 there have been three cases. None of these was associated with the cook-chill system of catering. I am satisfied that provided the Department's guidelines on cook-chill catering are carefully followed, microbiologically sound food will be produced.

Mr. Ashley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many cases of food poisoning due to campylobacter there have been in the last year for which figures are available; what indications there are as to whether the figures are declining or increasing; and what evidence there is that refrigeration helps the bacteria to thrive in poultry and underdone meat.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: In most instances there is no evidence which specifically links individual reported cases of campylobacter infection with a particular food. In 1984 there were 20,861 laboratory reports of campylobacter enteritis. In 1987 this figure had increased to 25,900 and in a small proportion of these it was possible to identify a food vehicle. There is no evidence to show that the organism grows in food, refrigerated or otherwise.

Whitley Council

Mr. Cummings: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many appeals are currently being processed by the Whitley council procedures in *(a)* Sunderland health authority, *(b)* Hartlepool health authority and *(c)* Durham health authority.

Mr. Mellor: We do not hold this information centrally.

Midwifery Students

Mr. Robin Cook: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many entrants for future student midwifery courses have withdrawn their application since 1 October.

Mr. Mellor: We do not hold this information centrally.

Heart Transplant Programme

Mr. David Nicholson: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will make a statement on the United Kingdom's heart transplant programme.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: The number of heart and heart-lung transplants carried out in the United Kingdom has grown significantly this year. In the period 1 January to 25 November 1988, 348 heart and heart-lung transplants were performed compared with 288 over the same period last year.

Revenue funding for the heart transplant programme will rise from £6·8 million in 1988-89 to £9·1 million in 1989-90, a cash increase of over one third. This will provide for about 50 extra heart and heart-lung transplants above current levels and for the follow-up of over 350 patients successfully transplanted in earlier years. Nearly £1 million of capital will be spent in 1989-90 on essential developments at the transplant centres. I shall also be asking the supra-regional services advisory group to advise me on the location of a fifth heart transplant which will receive central funding from April 1990.

This expanding programme, which is at the forefront of medical technology, shows the Government's determination to modernise and improve the NHS.

Opticians

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he can give information as to who was available to present evidence to the ophthalmic service committee of the Manchester family practitioner committee investigation referred to in his reply to the hon. Member for Oldham West, on 5 July, *Official Report*, columns *516-17*.

Mr. Mellor: The ophthalmic service committee obtained written evidence from the patients and opticians involved and decided, in accordance with the National Health Service (Service Committees and Tribunal) Regulations 1974, that the investigation could be determined without a hearing.

Nursing Homes

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will consider the introduction of an arbitration officer to determine a fair level of fees for people in private residential and nursing homes.

Mrs. Currie: The level of fees charged in these homes is a matter between the proprietors and the residents, or whoever pays on the residents' behalf, and not one in which we would wish to intervene.

Prescription Charges

Mr. Gareth Wardell: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will publish in the *Official Report* the prescription charges for patients who do not qualify for exemptions for each medicament included in the limited list.

Mr. Mellor: NHS patients must pay a prescription charge of £2·60 for each item prescribed at NHS expense unless they qualify for exemption. If a patient is given a private prescription for a drug or other product which is

not available at NHS expense there is no prescription charge, but the patient must pay the pharmacist the full cost of the item supplied.

Artificial Hips

Mr. Ashley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many National Health Service artificial hip operations took place in the last year for which figures are available; and what is the approximate average cost of this operation.

Mrs. Currie: We estimate that the number of total hip replacement and other arthroplasty of hip operations performed in NHS hospitals in England in 1986 was 40,000. The average cost of such operations is about £2,400 (1988-89 prices).

Wheelchairs

Mr. Ashley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) what would be the approximate cost of providing powered outdoor wheelchairs for all boys suffering from muscular dystrophy;

(2) what representations he has received regarding the provision of powered outdoor wheelchairs for boys suffering from muscular dystrophy; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Mellor: Most boys with muscular dystrophy would probably need a wheelchair for certain periods of their life. On the best information available, and depending on the type of wheelchair provided, the approximate cost may be in the region of £¼ million—£1¼ million. We have received no representations on this issue.

Mr. Ashley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) what is the latest estimate of the additional cost of providing a powered wheelchair that could be used outside and inside instead of just inside;

(2) how many powered wheelchairs are currently on issue through the wheelchair service; and what is the estimated number of those using powered indoor wheelchairs who would benefit from having a powered wheelchair that could also be used outside;

(3) which aspects of wheelchair provision are now being handled by the regions and which remain the responsibility of the Disablement Services Authority.

Mr. Ashley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what has been the annual amount allocated to the Disablement Services Authority; and what proportion of this amount is available for the improvement of appliances, and in particular, for improved wheelchairs.

Mr. Mellor: These are matters for the Disablement Services Authority, to which the right hon. Member should address questions.

Mr. Ashley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what has been the annual expenditure in each of the last five years on wheelchair provision; what has been the percentage increase each year; and what has been the percentage annual increase in expenditure on all health provision.

Mr. Mellor: The annual expenditure in each of the last five financial years on wheelchairs provision plus the percentage increases is as follows:

Financial year	£	*Per cent.*
1983-84	22,210,329	—
1984-85	24,592,517	10·72
1985-86	25,863,573	5·16
1986-87	27,265,645	5·42
1987-88	29,413,356	7·87

National Health Service gross expenditure percentage annual increase on all health provision in England is as follows:

	Cash terms	*Real terms*
1983-84	5·9	1·2
1984-85	7·4	2·8
1985-86	5·8	−0·2
1986-87	7·6	4·0
1987-88	9·9	4·6

Mr. Ashley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what consultation there has been between his Department and the Disablement Services Authority regarding the provision of powered outdoor wheelchairs.

Mr. Mellor: Following a recommendation in the McColl report that powered occupant-controlled outdoor wheelchairs should be supplied by the wheelchair service, the DSA has decided to undertake a 12-month pilot study to gain information and experience in the supply of powered indoor/outdoor wheelchairs. Consultation between the Department and the DSA has not been appropriate since this is a matter for the authority.

Pacemakers

Mr. Ashley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many National Health Service operations to implant a pacemaker took place in the last year for which figures are available; and what is the approximate average cost of this operation.

Mrs. Currie: We estimate that in 1985 (the latest year for which we hold information centrally), there were 6,360 operations to insert pacemakers.

The average cost, based on a study by Trent regional health authority, is approximately £1,700 for the first implantation and £1,500 for a replacement, at 1986-87 prices.

Prescribing Responsibility

Mr. Boateng: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) if he will list for 1976 and each subsequent year the number of complaints received by his Department concerning non-compliance with the policy on prescribing responsibility set out in HN(76)69; and if he will make a statement;

(2) if he will list for years 1986 and 1987 the complaints received by his Department concerning non-compliance with the policy on prescribing responsibility set out in HN(76)69, indicating in each case the health authority involved, the nature of the complaint, and the action taken.

Mr. Mellor: We do not hold information in the form requested. In the years 1986 and 1987 about 70 items of correspondence referring to prescribing responsibility were received from health authorities, general practitioners and others. The Department has investigated all

complaints received regarding non-compliance with our advice on prescribing responsibility for outpatients in HN(76)69 and more recently in DA(87)10.

Cancer Screening

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will estimate how many women are likely to be screened for breast cancer in *(a)* 1989, *(b)* 1990 and *(c)* 1991.

Mrs. Currie: I regret that we do not have this information available centrally. The breast cancer screening programme is being implemented over the three years to 1990. We shall collect statistics centrally on the number of women screened once the service has been fully implemented. We hope that by 1993 all women aged between 50 and 64 will have been invited for screening.

Ambulancemen

Mr. Terry Lewis: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will publish the report from the Ambulance Council working party on "The Problems of Long Serving Ambulancemen", which concluded its report in September 1985.

Mr. Mellor: We intend giving the contents of the final report careful consideration including a decision about publication when it is submitted to Ministers.

Erythroprotein

Sir Michael McNair-Wilson: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) whether any financial assistance is to be provided to renal units to enable them to purchase stocks of erythroprotein;

(2) whether erythroprotein has passed its clinical trials; and how soon he expects it to be generally available to renal units.

Mr. Mellor *[holding answer 12 December 1988]:* Information about whether a product licence application under the Medicines Act 1968 has been made or the results of any associated trials is treated as confidential and it is not possible to say if or when this product will become generally available and on what terms.

Doctors' Pay

58. **Mr. Charles Wardle:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what has been the real terms increase in doctors' remuneration since 1979.

Mr. Mellor *[holding answer 13 December 1988]:* 25·5 per cent. between 1978-79 and 1987-88.

Orthotists

Mr. Alfred Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many orthotists there are in England; and how many orthotists there are in England per 100,000 people.

Mr. Mellor *[holding answer 13 December 1988]:* Most orthotists in England are employed by the private sector and we do not collect information on their numbers. Orthotists employed by the NHS in England are graded as medical physics technicians and are not identified separately on manpower returns.

South Western RHA

Mr. Steen: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will list the sources of funding for the South Western regional health authority's regional computer centre and regional design service, which enable them to be self-financing.

Mr. Mellor *[holding answer 13 December 1988]:* The regional computer centre and the design service charge fees for the services that they provide. Their customers are primarily health authorities within the South Western region and elsewhere.

Project 2000

Mr. Fatchett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what funding arrangements have been made for the implementation of nurse training under Project 2000; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Mellor *[holding answer 13 December 1988]:* In the Autumn Statement the Government announced additional funding for the NHS in 1989-90 which included £12 million for nurse education and training. This is additional to the provision already made for nurse education by health authorities from their existing allocations and is intended to provide extra funds for post-basic education and Project 2000.

Decisions on the allocation of the additional funds for Project 2000 will be taken when authorities submit costed implementation plans to the Department. They have been asked to submit these by the end of February 1989.

Health Authorities (Meetings)

Mr. Meale: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) if he will make it his policy that minutes of district and regional health authority sub-committee meetings be made available to community health councils, providing that patient, staff and commercial confidentiality is maintained;

(2) whether he has any plans to open to the public district health authority meetings or their sub-committee meetings;

(3) if he will make it his policy that minutes of district and regional health authority sub-committee meetings should be made available to the public, providing that patient, staff and commercial confidentiality is maintained.

Mr. Mellor *[holding answer 13 December 1988]:* Under the provisions of the Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960 health authority meetings are open to the public and their agendas and related papers available on request, except when confidential matters are under consideration. Most regional and district health authorities conduct their business in an open manner, as is reasonable. I do not believe that any useful purpose would be served by extending these provisions to sub-committees at the present time.

EMPLOYMENT

YTS

Mr. Janner: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what percentage of companies, employing 100 or more YTS trainees, hire no YTS trainees from *(a)* the Afro-Caribbean community, *(b)* the Asian community and *(c)* ethnic minorities, respectively, in (i) the United Kingdom, (ii) the east midlands and (iii) Leicestershire.

Mr. Cope: I regret that the information requested can be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Mr. Leighton: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many young people are without a YTS place after their entitlement to child benefit or bridging allowance ran out; and how many were temporarily in this position during 1988.

Mr. Cope: It is not possible to provide this information. Young people are not obliged to report what they are doing after bridging allowance ceases.

Mr. McLeish: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will provide figures on the number of young people no longer on bridging allowance who have not yet been allocated a YTS place.

Mr. Cope *[holding answer 13 December 1988]:* It is not possible to provide this information. Young people are not obliged to report what they are doing after bridging allowance ceases.

Mr. McLeish: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will give the total expenditure on YTS for 1986, 1987 and the estimated expenditure for 1988, 1989 and 1990.

Mr. Cope *[holding answer 13 December 1988]:* Figures for Great Britain for financial years are published in the 1988 Public Expenditure White Paper. Taking into account the changes made by the winter supplementary Estimates the figures are:

	£ millions
1986-87	874
1987-88	[1]1,006
1988-89	[2]1,145
1989-90	[2]1,189
1990-91	[2]1,156

[1] Estimated outturn.
[2] Plans.

Mr. McLeish: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will estimate the cost of publicity of the YTS programme.

Mr. Cope *[holding answer 13 December 1988]:* The planned YTS marketing budget for 1988-89 is £5·9 million.

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many unfilled places by region, there were on YTS at the most recently available date and at the same date one year previously.

Mr. Cope *[holding answer 12 December 1988]:* The number of unfilled YTS places as at 31 October 1987 and 1988 is given in the table.

Region	*31 October 1987*	*31 October 1988*
South East	20,109	15,698
London	16,030	10,064
South West	14,763	11,456
West Midlands	26,899	20,663
East Midlands and Eastern	18,300	13,973
Yorkshire and Humberside	15,050	9,245
North West	26,837	14,268
Northern	11,761	6,904
Wales	8,365	3,352
Scotland	19,571	12,835
Great Britain	177,685	118,458

Mr. Leighton: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many young people have experienced benefit penalties for leaving YTS early since it was designated an approved training scheme.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: I have been asked to reply.

The youth training scheme (YTS) was designated an approved training scheme on 10 March 1983. Between December 1983 and April 1988, the period for which information is available, a total of 24,204 people had their supplementary benefit reduced for leaving courses early.

Community Opportunity Posts

Mr. Graham: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what criteria were operated in deciding how many community opportunities posts were allocated to each training area; what is the decision making process operated by Training Agency area offices whereby host organisations are awarded community opportunities posts; and what value-for-money measurements are applied in this process.

Mr. Nicholls: In developing the arrangements for community opportunities, Training Agency area offices took into account the make-up of their area, the likely size of the client group, and the buoyancy of the local labour market.

In selecting host organisations area office staff considered the following criteria:

(i) proven experience in arranging voluntary activity for individuals;
(ii) ability to access a range of voluntary activity to meet the differing needs of clients;
(iii) ability to relate to, and well established links with, voluntary organisations in the community;
(iv) a local base in the area, together with the necessary facilities to accommodate a co-ordinator on their premises;
(v) operation of an equal opportunities policy.

Account was also taken of the effectiveness with which the host organisation could organise the opportunities for employment training leavers, and the performance of host organisations will be carefully monitored.

Training Places (Merseyside)

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many Employment training scheme places have been taken up on Merseyside service since the inception of the scheme.

Mr. Nicholls: At 2 December 1988, there were 3,446 people training on employment training on Merseyside.

Mr. Ronnie Campbell: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many employment training scheme places have been taken up in Blyth Valley.

Mr. Nicholls: At 2 December 1988, there were 1,682 people training on employment training in the north Tyne area, including Blyth Valley.

Disabled People

Mr. Ronnie Campbell: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what percentage of disabled people of working age are employed in Blyth Valley; and what action he is taking to increase job opportunities for disabled people in Blyth Valley.

Mr. Nicholls: The information requested in the first part of the question is not available.

My Department maintains a comprehensive network of services to help people with disabilities find and retain jobs through advice, assessment, rehabilitation and training; and in the case of people with severe disabilities, support in the form of sheltered employment. My officers are continuing to give all possible help to people with disabilities in Blyth Valley through the application of these services against a background of increasing employment opportunities.

Creche Facilities

Mr. David Young: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what inquiries his Department is making to establish the effect lack of creche facilities has on employment.

Mr. Nicholls: My Department is currently participating in the work of the ministerial group on women's issues on childcare in the context of women's employment. Among other aspects the group is considering the availability of childcare and the effects that the lack of it may have on women's employment.

Benefits (Adjudications)

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what is the current average waiting time for adjudications relating to reasons of dismissal in cases where claimants were waiting for unemployment benefit.

Mr. Nicholls: Information is not available in the precise form requested. However the speed with which adjudication officers make decisions—that is, the time taken between their receiving a referral and reaching a decision after making all the necessary inquiries—is monitored in a 5 per cent. sample of cases.

The sample shows that, for the three-month period ending 30 June 1988, the percentage of cases decided within four weeks of referral to an adjudication officer, on whether a claimant was dismissed due to misconduct, was 62·6 per cent.

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment (1) how many cases are currently being dealt with by unemployment benefit adjudication officers in the constituency of Stoke-on-Trent, North;

(2) how many unemployment benefit adjudication officers are available to serve the constituency of Stoke-on-Trent, North.

Mr. Nicholls: Figures are not available by constituency of the number of cases considered by adjudication officers, or the number of adjudication officers who serve that area.

However on 2 December 1988, the total number of cases currently in the process of adjudication arising on claims for unemployment benefit in the adjudication office area of Staffordshire, which includes the Stoke-on-Trent, North constituency, was 3,204.

The number of adjudication officers in post on 2 December 1988 in the Staffordshire adjudication office was nine.

NATIONAL FINANCE

Pensions

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer by how much the basic state pension and the state earnings-related pension have fallen as a percentage of annual earnings since May 1979.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: I have been asked to reply.

The full basic state pension, as a percentage of average earnings for male manual workers, was 22·5 per cent. in November[1] 1979 and in April 1988 the percentage was 20·5.

It is not possible to calculate corresponding precentages for the State Earnings-Related Pension Scheme because it is not a fixed rate pension.

[1]The information given is for the date of uprating.

ENVIRONMENT

Football Clubs (Membership Scheme)

18. **Mr. Menzies Campbell:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what representations he has received regarding the proposed national membership scheme for Football League clubs.

55. **Mr. Robert Hicks:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what representations he has received seeking greater flexibilty for his proposals for a national football card membership scheme; and if he will make a statement.

71. **Mr. John Carlisle:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what representations he has received on his proposals to promote a full membership scheme for Football League clubs.

Mr. Moynihan: I have received nearly 650 letters about the national membership scheme from right hon. and hon. Members, members of the public and from various organisations since the meeting between the Prime Minister and the football authorities on 6 July. In addition, I have received a large number of proposals to implement the scheme from computer companies and others.

91. **Mr. Illsley:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he will meet the directors of Barnsley football club to discuss proposed membership schemes.

Mr. Moynihan: My diary is already very full for the coming months but I am happy to meet directors of Barnsley football club if mutually convenient arrangements can be made.

25. **Mr. Canavan:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what recent talks he has had with the football authorities about the Government scheme for membership cards for football spectators.

46. **Mr. Waller:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what recent discussions he has held with the football authorities concerning the introduction of a compulsory membership scheme.

Mr. Moynihan: I had lengthy discussions about the proposed national membership scheme for football

supporters with the football authorities at meetings of the working party which I chaired, between July and October this year.

32. **Mr. Pendry:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he will meet the new president of the Football League to discuss identity cards for football supporters.

Mr. Moynihan: I hope to meet the new president of the Football League shortly.

Houses in Multiple Occupation

20. **Mr. Martlew:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement on the future of houses in multiple occupation following his Department's consultation document issued in July on houses in multiple occupation.

Mr. Trippier: We are considering what changes to existing legislation might be appropriate in the light of the 200 responses received to consultation.

Water Authorities (Land and Building Assets)

21. **Mr. Ingram:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list the land and building assets owned by the English and Welsh water authorities.

Mr. Howard: This information is not available centrally.

Rate Support Grant Settlement

22. **Mrs. Mahon:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what representations he has received about the proposed rate support grant settlement for 1989-90.

Mr. Gummer: I have received representations from about 110 local authorities and comments from the local authority associations.

Estate Action Programme

23. **Mr. Patnick:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what was the level of expenditure on the estate action programme in 1987-88; and what is planned for 1988-89.

Mr. Trippier: We increased the resources made available under the estate action programme from £75 million in 1987-88 to £140 million in 1988-89. A further 36 per cent. increase to £190 million is planned for next financial year.

Planning Inquiries (Public Representation)

24. **Mr. Andrew Smith:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will increase the opportunities for public representation at planning inquiries; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Chope: The rules of procedure at planning inquiries, in addition to conferring rights of appearance on certain parties, give inspectors wide discretion to allow members of the public to make representations. I believe that inspectors exercise that discretion reasonably; but in fairness to everyone involved, they do on occasions have a responsibility to control representations which are clearly irrelevant or repetitious.

Hazardous Waste

26. **Mr. Tony Lloyd:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what plans he has to introduce further controls on handling of hazardous waste.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: Following extensive consultation we announced our conclusions and intention to legislate on 29 June. A further consultation paper was issued on 23 November. A review of the special waste regulations is well advanced and we expect to consult on this early next year.

District Council Rates (Essex)

27. **Mr. Amess:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what has been the average rate increase for district councils in Essex for 1989-90.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: We estimate that if district authorities in Essex spend in line with the proposed 1989-90 rate support grant settlement, and make the same use of balances as this year, then average rate increase would be around 3 per cent.

Stonehenge

28. **Mr. Key:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what progress has been made with regard to the creation of a new visitors' centre at Stonehenge.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: Progress on this scheme is a matter for English Heritage.

Nirex

29. **Mr. Sillars:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he next expects to meet the chairman of United Kingdom Nirex; and what matters will be discussed.

69. **Mr. Salmond:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he next expects to meet the chairman of United Kingdom Nirex; and what matters will be discussed.

Mr. Andrew Welsh: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he next expects to meet the chairman of United Kingdom Nirex; and what matters will be discussed.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: I refer the hon. Members to the answer that I gave earlier today to the hon. Member for Moray (Mrs. Ewing).

Competitive Tendering (Lancashire)

30. **Mr. Hind:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he has any plans to meet the leader of Lancashire county council to discuss competitive tendering; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State has no plans to meet the leader of Lancashire county council to discuss competitive tendering. I recently had discussions with the authority on a range of local government issues.

Nurses (Property Taxes)

31. **Mr. Fishburn:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what information he has about what a

typical ward sister would pay in *(a)* rates, *(b)* community charge and *(c)* a system of capital value rates plus local income tax paid in the proportions of 80:20, respectively, if she lived in a typical one-bedroomed flat in the London borough of Kensington and Chelsea.

93. **Mr. Robert G. Hughes:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what information he has as to what a typical ward sister would pay in *(a)* rates, *(b)* community charge and *(c)* a system of capital value rates plus local income tax paid in the proportions of 80:20, respectively, if she lived in a typical one-bedroomed flat in the London borough of Lambeth.

54. **Mr. Janman:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what information he has as to what a typical ward sister would pay in *(a)* rates, *(b)* community charge and *(c)* a system of capital value rates plus local income tax paid in the proportions of 80:20, respectively, if she lived in a typical one-bedroomed flat in the London borough of Camden.

67. **Mr. Carrington:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what information he has as to what a typical ward sister would pay in *(a)* rates, *(b)* community charge and *(c)* a system of capital value rates plus local income tax paid in the proportions of 80:20, respectively, is she lived in a typical one-bedroomed flat in the London borough of Hammersmith and Fulham.

86. **Mr. Summerson:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what information he has as to what a typical ward sister would pay in *(a)* rates, *(b)* community charge and *(c)* a system of capital value rates plus local income tax paid in the proportions of 80:20, respectively, if she lived in a typical one-bedroom flat in the London borough of Greenwich.

Mr. Gummer: I refer my hon. Friends to the answer that I gave earlier today to my hon. Friend the Member for Hampstead and Highgate (Sir G. Finsberg).

Rating Reform

37. **Mr. Allen:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is his latest estimate of the poll tax which will be levied in Nottingham.

Mr. Gummer: The Government have no plans to introduce a poll tax. I wrote to the hon. Member on 6 December about the level of the community charge in Nottingham.

The Government have made no estimates of community charges. We published on 23 June illustrative figures showing what the community charge would have been in each area, had the new system been in force in 1988-89. Those illustrative figures assume existing levels of spending and existing local authority responsibilities. On that basis, the personal community charge in Nottingham would have been £251. Under the Government's safety net proposals this figure would have been reduced to £231 in the first year of the new system.

40. **Mr. McLoughlin:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what progress has been made by local authorities in preparing for the introduction of the community charge in England.

Mr. Gummer: Many local authorities are clearly making good progress in preparing for the introduction of the community charge. I intend to monitor progress carefully in the months ahead.

51. **Mr. Bowis:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what information he has on any campaign to refuse to pay the community charge.

Mr. Gummer: I am aware that a number of individuals have said that they do not intend to pay the community charge. Such action would, of course, be both unlawful and futile.

Mr. Nellist: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is his latest estimate of the average national community charge; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gummer: The Government have made no estimates of community charges. We published on 23 June illustrative figures showing what the community charge would have been in each area, had the new system been in force in 1988-89. Those illustrative figures assume existing levels of spending and existing local authority responsibilities. On that basis, the average personal community charge in England would have been £246.

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment by how much the standard rate of income tax would need to be raised if the expected amount of revenue generated by the poll tax were to be raised through income tax.

Mr. Gummer: On 23 June the Government published illustrative community charge figures, based on local authority spending in 1988-89; copies are in the Library. Those figures also showed the rate of local income tax that would be needed to raise the same revenue. The average increase in income tax rates across England would be 6·4p.

Mr. Couchman: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what plans he is making to ensure that the public are informed of the way in which the new community charge system will operate.

Mr. Gummer: The Department of the Environment published yesterday a new booklet giving up-to-date information on the new community charge system which will be introduced in April 1990. It is available free on request. The Department will also be publishing shortly seven supplementary leaflets, giving more detailed information on particular aspects of the system, for example, on exemptions and appeals. These, too, will be available free on request. Copies have been placed in the Library. The total cost of producing the booklet and leaflets is estimated at £80,000.

We shall also send a leaflet to all households in England next May to coincide with canvassing by local authorities to prepare the register of those liable to pay the community charge. The leaflet will help people to understand the purpose of the canvass and what they need to do. We estimate that the cost of producing and distributing it would be of the order of £980,000.

Since May this year we have issued, jointly with local authority associations, a series of practice notes to individual local authorities and interested organisations dealing with the practical and technical details of the new system. Nine practice notes have so far been published at

a cost of £9,000. Twelve more are in preparation. One of the practice notes contained a model canvass form with associated information notes. We are arranging to have the form and notes translated into five minority languages for use by local authorities where appropriate.

Mrs. Fyfe: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether, in the draft regulations at present being prepared on enforcement of poll tax payments, he will amend the relevant regulations that currently apply in Scotland.

Mr. Gummer *[holding answer 12 December 1988]:* No. My right hon. Friend's regulation-making powers in respect of enforcement in the Local Government Finance Act 1988 do not extend to the amendment of Scottish legislation on enforcement of the community charge.

Clay Pigeon Shooting

33. **Mr. Martyn Jones:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment why he did not consult the Clay Pigeon Shooting Association on the recent general development order relating to permitted days.

Mr. Chope: My Department is issuing a consultation paper this week about whether the order should be amended to revert to 28 days. The Clay Pigeon Shooting Association will be among those consulted.

80. **Sir Hector Monro:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he expects to have consultations with the Clay Pigeon Shooting Association about the General Development Order 1988 and the reduction of shooting days from 28 to 14.

Mr. Chope: My Department is issuing a consultation paper this week; a copy is being sent to the Clay Pigeon Shooting Association.

96. **Mr. Marland:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make it his policy to respond to the views of the Clay Pigeon Shooting Association, by reverting to the 28 days permitted use set by the General Development Order 1988.

Mr. Chope: My Department is issuing this week a consultation paper about whether the General Development Order 1988 should be amended to revert to a maximum 28 days permitted use rights for clay pigeon shooting. The Clay Pigeon Shooting Association and the Sports Council are among those we are consulting.

Homelessness

34. **Mr. Wareing:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what are the latest figures of homeless households in *(a)* London and *(b)* England and Wales.

Mr. Trippier: In the quarter ending September 1988 English local authorities accepted 30,220 households under the homelessness provisions of the 1985 Housing Act: of these 7,550 were accepted by London boroughs.

63. **Mr. Simon Hughes:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he has any plans to seek to amend the homeless persons legislation; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Trippier: I have nothing to add to the reply given to the hon. Member for Gateshead, East (Ms. Quin) on 6 December at column *198*.

Homelessness

38. **Mr. Eastham:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what are the causes of the increase in the numbers of families accepted as homeless by local authorities since 1983.

Mr. Trippier: Estimates of the number of households accepted by local authorities in England under the homelessness provisions of the Housing Act broken down by the immediate reasons for homelessness are as follows:

thousands

Immediate reason for homelessness	*1983*	*1987*
Parents, relatives or friends no longer able/willing to accommodate	32·2	47·3
Breakdown of relationship with partner	15·3	20·2
Mortgage arrears	4·8	10·5
Rent arrears—LA dwellings	1·8	2·0
Rent arrears—other dwelling	1·7	1·8
Other reasons for loss of non-LA dwelling	8·3	10·6
Loss of service tenancy/tied accommodation	4·4	4·8
Other	9·8	15·2
TOTAL	78·2	112·4

Rate Support Grant (Brent)

35. **Mr. Livingstone:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement on the level of rate support grant for the London borough of Brent.

Mrs. Bottomley: On our latest calculations, Brent will receive £74 million of block grant this year.

My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State will be laying the 1989-90 rate support grant settlement shortly. Under our consultation proposals Brent would receive £86 million, £19 million more than this year after allowing for the changed treatment of polytechnics. This is an increase of 28 per cent. over 1988-89.

Inspectorates (Staffing)

36. **Mr. Kirkwood:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he has any plans to review the staffing complement of the inspectorate in his Department dealing into air, water and waste.

89. **Mr. Murphy:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he has any plans to increase the numbers of hazardous and waste inspectors.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: On 7 December my noble Friend the Minister for Housing Environment and Countryside announced that 13 additional posts will be created to strengthen the professional capacity of Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution in the spheres of air, water quality and waste. Among other things this will help with implementing the large combustion plant directive, administering the EC directive on the disposal of sewage sludge to land, and developing a programme of inspection of waste disposal authorities and major waste disposal sites. We shall continue to keep the manpower and resource needs of the inspectorate under review in the light of current circumstances and priorities.

Water Industry (Expenditure)

39. **Mr. Brandon-Bravo:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is the change in the level of capital expenditure by the water industry between 1979-80 and 1988-89.

42. **Mr. Iain Mills:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what was the change in the level of capital expenditure by the water industry between *(a)* 1974-75 and 1979-80, and *(b)* 1980-81 and to date.

Mr. Moynihan: Capital expenditure on DOE services, in real terms, decreased by 33 per cent. between 1974-75 and 1979-80, and increased by 52 per cent. from 1979-80 to the present.

Ozone Layer (Conference)

41. **Mr. Baldry:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he will make a statement on the progress being made on the calling of the London conference on the ozone layer.

87. **Mr. Greg Knight:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a further statement on the international conference to be held on the subject of the ozone layer.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The London conference "Saving the Ozone Layer" will be held in the Queen Elizabeth II conference centre on 5-7 March 1989, Ministers from developed and developing countries are being invited to attend, as well as world industry and international organisations. Initial reactions have been very favourable. The executive director of the United Nations environment programme (UNEP) has offered his warm support for the conference, which is designed to support existing international efforts to protect the ozone layer. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State is considering the detailed programme for the conference in consultation with UNEP.

Water Bill

43. **Mr. Turner:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what representations he has received about the Water Bill.

Mr. Moynihan: My right hon. Friend continues to receive representations covering various measures proposed in the Water Bill.

Rate Support Grant

44. **Mr. Skinner:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is the latest available figure for the amount of rate support grant to local authorities throughout Great Britain; and what was the figure in 1979.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The latest estimate of rate support grant is £12,702 million for 1988-89. In 1979-80 it was £9,001 million.

Sheltered Housing

45. **Mr. Pike:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he proposes to make additional funds available to meet the increased demand for sheltered housing.

Mr. Trippier: Most elderly people wish to remain in their own homes for as long as possible and grants are available for improvements and adaptations. Local authorities must assess need in their areas and secure provision, with the private sector and other agencies, especially housing associations. The extra resources planned for housing in the PES period include an 80 per cent. increase in the Housing Corporation programme.

Football-related Incidents

47. **Mr. David Evans:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many arrests there have been in football-related incidents inside and outside grounds in the 1986-87 and 1987-88 seasons.

Mr. Moynihan: The total number of arrests made at league matches in seasons 1986-87 and 1987-88 is as follows:

	Arrests
1986-87	5,531
1987-88	6,147

The Association of Chief Police Officers does not hold information on the number of arrests for football-related incidents away from the grounds.

Rivers (Quality)

48. **Mr. David Nicholson:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what proportion of rivers in England are of good or fair quality.

Mr. Moynihan: Water authority data shows that 89 per cent. of the river length in England was assessed as being of good or fair quality in 1987.

Regional Water Authorities

49. **Mr. Oppenheim:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he last met the chairmen of the regional water authorities; and what was discussed.

Mr. Moynihan: My right hon. Friend last met the water authority chairmen on 5 December when a wide range of issues affecting the water industry were discussed.

Departmental Relocation

50. **Mr. Rathbone:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what discussion he has had about relocating his Department's establishments and personnel from the south to the north of Britain.

Mr. Ridley: About 56 per cent. of the Property Services Agency's non-industrial staff are already located outside the agency's London and south-east regions. The PSA is to be reorganised into three separate businesses between now and April 1990. I shall be considering relocation in the context of the future shape of the agency.

For the Department of the Environment, over one fifth of the staff are already outside London and the south-east. My aim is to relocate as many more of these as makes financial and operational sense. To that end, all areas of the Department's work were considered in the summer and some prima facie candidates for relocation identified. Detailed studies of costs and benefits are needed before firm decisions can be taken. These are in progress.

Land Transfers

52. **Mr. Favell:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what has been the average total of land transferred from farmland to urban uses each decade since 1958; what steps he proposes to take to increase the availability of land for building; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Chope: The Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food's records show that in the periods 1958-68, 1968-78 and 1978-85 the average estimated net area of farmland transferred to urban and industrial development (including mineral workings) each year in England was 14,000, 13,400 and 5,100 hectares respectively. More recent data in this series are not yet available. The planning policy guidance note "Local Plans" (PPG12) issued on 30 November emphasises that it is the responsibility of local planning authorities to make realistic provision for the foreseeable development needs of their area, in general conformity with the structure plan. In the last two years about 46 per cent. of new housing in England has been on derelict or vacant land in urban areas; the Government are committed to policies of restraint in green belts and other environmentally important areas.

Water Quality

53. **Mr. Michael:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he intends to increase the number of staff involved in the monitoring of water quality.

Mr. Moynihan: The monitoring of drinking water quality will continue to be carried out by local authorities. However my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State will also appoint technical assessors to ensure that water undertakers comply with the standards.

Water Authorities (Assets)

56. **Mr. Livsey:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how he intends to value the assets of water authorities prior to privatisation; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Moynihan: The Department is discussing with representatives of the water authorities what new valuation work should be undertaken in connection with the preparation of prospectuses. No decision has yet been taken.

Leasehold (North-West)

57. **Mr. Butler:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what representations he has received about the operation of the leasehold system in the north-west of England; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Trippier: We have received a number of representations recently from hon. Members and others, most of which relate to the activities of Salt Properties Ltd.

I deplore the activities of landlords and their agents who seek to exploit their tenants. Leaseholders who receive unexpected demands should check the terms of their leases and seek advice if necessary.

Under the Leasehold Reform Act 1967 most long leaseholders of houses can insist on buying their freehold if they want to, but they should not feel obliged to buy simply because the landlord offers to sell.

Planning Regulations

58. **Mr. Ian Bruce:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what proposals his Department has for changing planning regulations for building homes close to unstable cliff faces on the sea shore.

Mr. Chope: Existing planning regulations are adequate to deal with development close to unstable cliff faces but advice on how to apply those regulations is needed by planning authorities and developers. My Department has recently carried out a public consultation on draft advice on development on unstable land. The responses are now being considered and the advice will be issued in 1989.

Ozone Layer

59. **Mrs. Ray Michie:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what further measures he intends to introduce to help protect the ozone layer.

92. **Mr. Wallace:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what further action he intends to take to lessen the dangers posed to the atmosphere by the use of chlorofluorocarbons.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: In the light of the advice of the United Kingdom stratospheric ozone review group in their second report published in October 1988 about depletion of the ozone layer and the role of chlorofluorocarbons (CFCs) we are calling for worldwide emissions of CFCs to be reduced by at least 85 per cent. by the turn of the century and for the Montreal protocol to be strengthened accordingly.

At the Environment Council on 24 November most member states supported the United Kingdom's proposal that the Community should adopt this position in the review of the protocol. In order to underline the worldwide commitment needed to reduce CFC emissions and to demonstrate how these can be achieved my right hon. Friends the Prime Minister and the Secretary of State are calling a major international conference next March to which Ministers and world industry are being invited. We have also offered to host the second meeting of the parties to the protocol in April 1990, at which we hope that the further cuts we are demanding will be agreed.

General Development Order 1988

60. **Mr. Colvin:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what consultations were held with interested parties before he tabled the General Development Order 1988.

Mr. Chope: We issued a consultation paper, including a draft of the proposed order, in February this year. There were 290 original consultees, and a further 156 copies of the paper were sent to those who requested them. A list of those consultees who responded to the paper will shortly be placed in the House of Commons Library.

New Town Houses

61. **Mr. Grocott:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he has any plans to meet the chairman of the Telford development corporation to discuss the future of the new town houses.

Mr. Trippier: I meet the chairmen of development corporations from time to time to discuss a wide range of issues of mutual interest.

Vehicle Exhaust Emissions

62. **Mr. McCrindle:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he has any plans to introduce exhaust emission standards for British vehicles similar to those applying in the United States of America.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: Yes. The exhaust emission standards for large cars, which the United Kingdom Government will be implementing as part of the Luxembourg agreement, will be equivalent to United States standards. For medium and small cars the recently agreed completion of the Luxembourg agreement will also lead to major reductions in emissions for these vehicles.

Vacant Land

64. **Mr. Nicholas Baker:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what action he is taking to speed up the development in inner cities of vacant land owned by public bodies.

Mr. Trippier: My right hon. Friend has put into action several programmes which can speed up the development of vacant land in inner cities owned by public bodies.

The land registers highlight unused and underused land owned by public bodies, and 13,000 acres of such land in inner cities have been removed from the registers since 1984 because it has been sold or brought into use by the owners. We are consulting public bodies about a new code of practice on the publication of information by those bodies themselves about unused and underused land they own. My right hon. Friend is also using his power to direct the disposal of inner city sites owned by public bodies. He is prepared to consider using these powers more widely when asked to do so in respect of specific sites.

Additionally, nine urban development corporations have been set up in England to stimulate the development of vacant and derelict land in their areas. The urban programme supports projects for improving land and buildings in inner cities so that they can be brought back into economic use. Payments from the derelict land grant programme meet the cost of reclaiming damaged land for development, and there has been a steady annual increase since 1984 in the amount paid to inner city local authorities.

South-East (Population Statistics)

65. **Mr. Callaghan:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what estimate he has of the proportion of the population in the south-east region with incomes insufficient to become home owners.

Mr. Trippier: Over 72 per cent. of households in the south-east (excluding London) already own their own homes. We believe that this proportion could increase even further not least through the continuation of the successful right-to-buy programmes.

Low-Cost Housing (East Anglia)

66. **Mr. Yeo:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what recent representations he has received regarding the need for low-cost housing in East Anglia.

Mr. Trippier: Ministers and officials mantain close contact with housing matters in East Anglia. The Government believe that the new Housing Act will greatly increase scope for the private sector, supported by local authorities to meet the needs of the housing market and increase the supply of low cost housing.

Rented Office Space (London)

68. **Mr. Cran:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what plans he has to reduce the rented office space in central London which has been pre-let for the Government by the Property Services Agency.

Mr. Chope: The Property Services Agency negotiates pre-let agreements where there is a firm forward requirement for Government use. It is for Departments to determine and justify their accommodation needs and its chosen location, having regard to operational and financial considerations and taking account of the Government's relocation policy. There is expected to be a net reduction of 120,000 sq ft in the overall size of the Government's London estate in the current financial year.

"The Green Gauntlet"

70. **Mr. Malcolm Bruce:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he intends to make a response to the document entitled "The Green Gauntlet," a copy of which has been sent to him.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: "The Green Gauntlet" is a welcome contribution to the continuing debate on environmental matters. We shall consider it, alongside the views of other interests, as we take forward our policies for safeguarding the environment.

Rates

72. **Mr. Clelland:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is his latest estimate of the level of rate rises from April 1989.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: We estimate that if all authorities in England spend in line with the proposed 1989-90 rate support grant settlement, the average rate increase for next year will be substantially less than inflation.

Denis-Wild Houses

73. **Mr. Madden:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what action he is taking to persuade building societies to offer mortgage advances on Denis-Wild type houses.

Mr. Trippier: The Building Research Establishment has published technical advice on the structural condition of Denis-Wild houses, and on their inspection and assessment. My Department liaises regularly with the Building Societies Association on the dissemination of such information, and will bring to its attention any particular problems concerning mortgageability.

Sewage (Sea Disposal)

74. **Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what steps are being taken to control the discharge of sewage into the sea; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Moynihan: Discharges of sewage by water authorities are regulated by consents granted on behalf of the Secretary of State by Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution.

The consent procedure will be used so as to ensure that discharges which at present have deemed consents will be determined positively. These consents, together with consents for new discharges, will be set so as to respect the EC bathing water directive, where it applies, and generally to reduce pollution by sewage.

Council House Sales

75. **Mr. Knox:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many council houses have been sold to sitting tenants in England since May 1979.

Mr. Trippier: From April 1979 to September 1988, about 960,000 tenants bought their homes from English local authorities and new towns.

Housing Investment Programme

76. **Mr. Bradley:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he proposes to announce details of individual local authority housing investment programme allocations.

Mr. Trippier: I refer the hon. Member to the answer that I gave on 8 December in reply to a question from my hon. Friend the Member for Sheffield, Hallam (Mr. Patnick) at column *274*.

Estate Action

77. **Dr. Twinn:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is the planned level of expenditure on the estate action programme in *(a)* 1988-89 and *(b)* 1989-90.

Mr. Trippier: The provision for additional allocations under the estate action programme in 1988-89 is £140 million. We expect that local authorities will make full use of these resources in expenditure in the current year.

For 1989-90 the estate action budget has been increased by 36 per cent. to £190 million. The initial distribution between the regions will be as follows:

	Total £ million
London	33·643
North West	51·606
Merseyside	18·423
Yorkshire and Humberside	22·175
Northern	13·545
East Midlands	10·719
West Midlands	25·736
South East	1·040
Eastern	1·115
South West	2·025
	180·027

A total of £10 million will be held as a central reserve to provide flexibility in managing the programme and to support good new schemes which might come forward later in the year.

The distribution of resources between the regions is based upon the volume and quality of bids received from local authorities for individual schemes.

I am delighted that the Government's desire to improve living conditions on neglected and run-down council housing estates will receive this very considerable boost.

Chlorofluorocarbons

78. **Mr. Shersby:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is his policy for containing the emission of chlorofluorocarbons arising from dry cleaning establishments; what consultation has taken place with the dry cleaning business on this matter; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: Officials of the Department of the Environment and of the Department of Trade and Industry hold regular meetings with representatives of the users of chlorofluorocarbons (CFCs), including the dry-cleaning sector, on the steps that they are taking to reduce use of CFCs to the maximum possible extent. The major dry cleaning solvent used in the United Kingdom is perchlorethylene rather than CFC113.

I am advised that all dry cleaning machines are sealed to be gas-tight, that solvent purification takes place within machines and that they are fitted with refrigeration units to condense solvent vapours and minimise potential emissions. Any solvent remaining in residues is recovered before exposure to the atmosphere. The industry is nevertheless looking at ways of developing even greater economy of use and has produced guidelines on machine operation, which includes proper use of solvents.

Planning Appeals

79. **Mr. Dykes:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he is contemplating new guidelines and instructions for inspectors hearing appeals against the refusal of planning permission in the future.

Mr. Chope: A new planning policy guidance note on local plans was published on 30 November. The note stresses the importance of formally adopted and up-to-date local plans which are consistent with national and regional policies and with the relevant provisions of the structure plan. The note indicates that where there is such a plan, together with properly substantiated reasons for the local authority's decisions, my right hon. Friend and his inspectors will be guided by it in dealing with planning appeals.

Inspectors will take this new advice into account, along with other material considerations, in hearing appeals.

Mr. Porter: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he proposes to use the powers granted to him in the Housing and Planning Act 1986 to enable appellants who prosecute planning appeals by means of written representations or local hearings to be awarded costs against an unreasonable local authority.

Mr. Chope: My right hon. Friend has no present plans to bring these powers into operation, but the matter is being kept under review.

Mortgage Repossessions

81. **Mrs. Clwyd:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will give the latest figures for mortgage repossessions *(a)* for owner-occupiers as a whole and *(b)* for former council tenants who have exercised the right to buy.

Mr. Trippier: Building societies took 9,770 properties into possession in the first six months of 1988, a fall of 13 per cent. compared with the previous six-month period. Statistics available do not distinguish between houses bought under the right to buy and others.

Planning Inquiries

82. **Mr. Sims:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what guidance is given to planning inspectors as to the weight they should give to local opinion in reaching their decisions.

Mr. Chope: My right hon. Friend and his planning inspectors are subject to the requirement in section 29 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1971 that those who decide planning applications must have regard to the provisions of the development plan, so far as is material to the application, and to any other material considerations. Accordingly, inspectors give weight to local opinion in so far as it relates to material land-use planning considerations.

First-time House Buyers

83. **Mr. Tony Banks:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what information he has as to the price/incomes ratio for first-time buyers in *(a)* London and *(b)* other regions of England and Wales.

Mr. Trippier: Information for those with building society mortgages is published in table 10.11 in "Housing and Construction Statistics 1977-87", a copy of which is available in the Library.

Water Pollution

85. **Mr. Riddick:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what steps are being taken to penalise water authorities which supply contaminated water to consumers.

Mr. Moynihan: The Water Bill will provide a new and strengthened legal basis for drinking water quality standards. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State will be able to enforce compliance with the EC standards and will also introduce a new provision making it an offence for a water undertaker to supply water unfit for human consumption.

98. **Mr. Speller:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what steps he will take to reduce pollution from sewage discharges into the Bristol channel.

Mr. Moynihan: I refer my hon. Friend to the answer I gave today to the hon. Member for Ynys Môn (Mr. Jones). The measures apply generally, and no special rules are needed for the Bristol channel.

Housing Costs

88. **Ms. Ruddock:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what assumptions his Department uses of the maximum percentage of disposable income which can be allocated to housing costs.

Mr. Trippier: Although income levels are considered in determining rates of subsidy no view is taken of the maximum percentage of disposable income that can be allocated to housing costs.

Outer London Boroughs (Redevelopment)

90. **Mr. John L. Marshall:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what representations he has received recently about the state and scale of redevelopment in outer London boroughs.

Mr. Chope: We have received several representations from hon. Members, councillors, and members of the public about pressures for intensive redevelopment of sites in established residential areas. Advice on the inclusion in local plans of policies on residential densities was included in planning policy guidance note No. 12, published on 30 November.

Water Authorities (Land and Buildings)

94. **Mr. Win Griffiths:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will publish the results of any consultants' work commissioned by him into the extent and value of water authority land and buildings.

Mr. Moynihan: No decision has yet been taken on the commissioning of new work on valuation of water authority land. Relevant information on the land of the successor companies will be contained in the companies' prospectuses.

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is the value of land and buildings owned by the water authorities.

Mr. Moynihan: The net asset value of the water authorities' land and buildings is shown in their published annual accounts.

House Prices

95. **Mr. Lofthouse:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what assessment he has made of the link between house prices and job vacancies in the south-east.

Mr. Trippier: My Department keeps under review the evidence about the effect that house prices have on migration between regions. But I do not consider that house prices are the main influence on the number of job vacancies in the south-east as a whole.

Green Belt

97. **Mr. Gerald Howarth:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement regarding enforcement of green belt restrictions.

Mr. Chope: There is a general presumption against inappropriate development in green belts. The policy is set out in planning policy guidance note No. 2 (PPG2) published in January 1988. My right hon. Friend, and planning inspectors, apply this policy in determining appeals and call-ins. We expect local planning authorities to have similar regard to green belt policy in the exercise of their planning functions.

Empty Properties

99. **Mr. Sumberg:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what information he has as to the number of council house properties currently standing empty in the Bury area; and how many have remained unoccupied for more than three months.

Mr. Trippier: The latest available information was provided by Bury MBC in their 1988 housing investment programme return (HIP1), a copy of which is in the Library. The return shows the number of council houses which had been empty for more than six months at 1 April, but it does not give any further breakdown of those empty for six months or less.

Red List (Dangerous Substances)

Mr. Redmond: to ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how he intends to halve the number of dangerous substances that are listed in the United Kingdom red list; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Moynihan: The ministerial declaration following the second international conference on the protection of the North sea called for substantial reductions (of the order of 50 per cent.) by 1995 in the total quantity of substances which are toxic, persistent and liable to bioaccumulate entering the North sea via rivers and estuaries.

The United Kingdom reduction programme will focus in particular on a "red list" of the most dangerous substances, proposals for the selection of which were set out in a consultation paper published in July. That paper also included proposals for a new approach towards controlling inputs of the most dangerous substances, involving the application of strict environmental quality standards, the use of best available technology (not entailing excessive cost) for the main point source discharges, and measures to minimise inputs from diffuse sources. These proposals are in line with the range of measures recommended in the North sea conference declaration for the purpose of reducing inputs of the most dangerous substances.

In the meantime, the Department has asked the water authorities in England and Wales to produce action plans setting out their proposals for achieving early reductions in inputs of dangerous substances. Similar plans are being drawn up for Scotland and Northern Ireland. There is certainly no proposal to halve the number of dangerous substances that are being considered for inclusion in the United Kingdom "red list" as the hon. Member's question suggests.

Football Matches (Arrests)

Mr. John Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment from what disaggregated sources the totals for the number of arrests at division III and IV Football League matches given in his answer of 5 December are compiled.

Mr. Moynihan: The figures given in my answer to the hon. Member on 5 December were provided by the Association of Chief Police Officers which collates statistics on arrests and ejections from football liaison officers at police forces throughout the country. The form in which the figures are sent to ACPO show only totals of arrests and ejections at each club; they are not broken down into individual matches. Information on individual matches would require direct contact with every liaison officer and extensive searches of police records.

Power Station (Malta)

Mr. Harry Barnes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will monitor the building of a new power station in Malta and its likely effect on the environment, as a means of drawing environmental lessons for the United Kingdom.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: No. I am not aware of information that could be obtained from experiences in Malta that would add to the understanding of conditions in Britain. Full environmental impact assessments are required before power stations can be built in the United Kingdom. All specifically local factors have to be taken into account, as well as the need to conform to emission standards and requirements.

Radioactive Waste

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will set out the policy and technical considerations underpinning the policy choice of early disposal instead of long-term monitorable and retrievable storage of low and intermediate level radioactive wastes.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The Government believe that decisions on the disposal of low and intermediate-level radioactive wastes should not be left to future generations, and that the costs of disposal should be met by the "polluter". It is satisfied that early disposal in general carries a lower risk to workers in the nuclear industry and to the public, and also avoids the provision of costly and extensive storage capacity.

Greenhouse Effect

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he has made any representations to the Japanese Government and the Japanese Environment Bureau to persuade them to accept limitations on CFC113, as part of Her Majesty's Government's policy to protect the ozone layer.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: No. I understand that Japan has ratified the Montreal protocol which limits production and consumption of five chlorofluorocarbons (CFCs) including CFC113. The protocol will enter into force on 1 January 1989.

Bracken (Sprays)

Dr. Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if his Department or any relevant agencies have given any guidance to local authorities, landowners and farmers in respect of the environmental and public health implications of using sprays to control the spread of brackens in national parks or other areas of countryside.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The Nature Conservancy Council has published guidance on the use of herbicides in nature reserves as "Focus on Nature Conservation" No. 14. This includes a chapter on asulam, which is the chemical normally used to control bracken.

Sea Water (Southend)

Mr. Teddy Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what progress has been made in improving the sea water quality at coastal towns in the United Kingdom; and if he is satisfied with the progress made on sea water quality at Southend-on-Sea.

Mr. Howard: Some 60 per cent. of our bathing waters now meet the mandatory standards of the EC bathing

water directive. At Southend-on-Sea, although the recently extended outfall has brought about substantial improvements to water quality, further measures are being considered to deal with the problem of storm overflows.

Housing Corporation

Mr. Knowles: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he can give details of the Housing Corporation's approved development programme for 1989-90 and forward plans for 1990-91 and 1991-92; and what grant rates will apply next year to the Housing Corporation's programme of mixed privately and publicly funded schemes.

Mr. Trippier: My right hon. Friend announced on 1 November that gross provision for the Housing Corporation in 1989-90 would be £815 million, rising to £1,036 million in 1990-91 and £1,328 million in 1991-92. By 1991-92 gross expenditure by the Housing Corporation is planned to be 80 per cent. above original provision for 1988-89, demonstrating the Government's confidence in the housing association movement to play a central role in the provision of subsidised housing for those in the greatest housing need.

The programme we have now approved for 1989-90 and the provisional plans for the following two years should enable the Housing Corporation to approve schemes in 1989-90 providing about 17,600 homes for rent rising to 24,400 new approvals in 1991-92, over 50 per cent. more than the expected number of approvals in the current financial year. This will be possible not only because of the greatly increased level of public resources being made available, but because of the wider opportunities for private finance opened up by the Housing Act 1988. It is planned that by 1991-92 schemes providing about 80 per cent. of new homes for rent will be approved on a mixed funded basis, combining grant from the corporation with private loan.

Substantial public subsidy will remain available in all cases to ensure that rents are within the reach of those on low incomes. Mixed funded grant rates will vary in different parts of the country because of the significant regional differences in development costs, but the average grant rate in England in 1989-90 will be 75 per cent. The Housing Corporation will publish in due course details of the rates applying to different regions and in respect of different scheme types.

Provision of housing for sale under the corporation's low-cost home ownership programme will also be significantly expanded. The whole of the programme is planned to operate on a mixed funded basis from 1989-90 which should allow the corporation to approve over one-third more new homes than in the current year. By 1991-92 the number of approvals given for housing for sale should be nearly double this year's expected outturn.

In allocating resources regionally for new rented projects, greater emphasis will be placed in 1989-90 and subsequent years on the Housing Corporation's index of housing needs, which will be reviewed to ensure that it reflects housing needs as accurately as possible. A total of £381 million of public and private money will be invested in London and the south-east, where housing pressures are most acute, nearly 40 per cent. more than in the current financial year. But owing to the overall increase in resources available, investment in all other regions will also go up by between 12 per cent. in the north-east and 53 per cent. in the east midlands.

At my request, the Housing Corporation will encourage associations to examine their lettings policies to ensure that priority is given to those in the greatest housing need, especially the homeless. I am convinced that the needs of the homeless are best catered for by focusing sufficient resources in the right places. The greatly expanded overall programme for the Housing Corporation and the improved targeting of resources to areas of greatest need should help provide much needed homes for the homeless.

I have also asked the Housing Corporation to ensure that the needs of those in rural communities are adequately catered for. The corporation will bring forward to 1989-90 its target of giving 600 approvals for new homes in the special rural programme for villages with a population of less than 1,000. A further announcement will be made in due course on targets for later years and the corporation's investment programme in rural areas generally.

I have confidence in the Housing Corporation to make the very best use of the greatly increased level of resources being made available to it within the approved development programme for 1989-90 and provisional plans for the following two years, and to justify the enhanced responsibility it now bears for the provision of subsidised housing for those in housing need.

The breakdown of the approved development programme for 1989-90 and forward plans for the following two years is as follows:

	1989-90 ADP £ million	*1990-91 plans £ million*	*1991-92 plans £ million*
Net allocation (cash limit)	701	921	1,211
Receipts	114	115	117
Gross allocation	815	1,036	1,328
Housing for rent			
Schemes approved under the Housing Act 1985:			
100 per cent. public funding	501	158	36
Mixed funding	28	22	—
Schemes approved under the Housing Act 1988:			
100 per cent. public funding	74	422	575
Mixed funding	40	318	587
Major repairs	52	54	62
Mini HAG	4	5	5
Housing for rent—total	699	979	1,265
Housing for sale			
Improvement for sale, leasehold scheme for the elderly and shared ownership:			
Schemes approved under the Housing Act 1985	65	15	1
Schemes approved under the Housing Act 1988	7	21	30
Home ownership for tenants of charitable associations etc.	39	16	27
Housing for sale—total	111	52	58
Other expenditure	5	5	5

Notes:

1. Included within housing for rent: Housing Act 1988 100 per cent. publicly funded schemes is expenditure to be incurred on schemes to be approved before 1 April 1989 which do not reach tender approval until after 30 September 1989 and are therefore to be be resubmitted under the Housing Act 1988 framework.
2. Other expenditure includes right to buy mortgages and a provision of £1 million to support certain self-build schemes.
3. £8·5 million has been included in the programmes of housing for rent and for sale in 1989-90 to cover the costs of certain projects in Merseyside. Further sums will be made available in subsequent years.

Housing Associations (Tenants)

Mr. David Martin: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what assistance is available to tenants of housing associations who wish to buy homes of their own on the open market.

Mr. Trippier: The Housing Corporation's approved development programme for 1989-90 allocates £39 million for the home ownership scheme for tenants of charitable housing associations, under which portable discounts are paid to people who do not have the right to buy their present homes. There are currently some 3,250 tenants who have applied but are having to wait. They will all be able to proceed by 31 March 1990.

The scheme has helped nearly 6,000 households into home ownership, and released their old homes for reletting, but demand has outpaced the resources available. The rules of the scheme, under the payments are related to right-to-buy discount, are not apt to help as many tenants as possible to buy homes of their own. The scheme is therefore to be superseded by one which will enable resources to be used more efficiently, and no further applications will be accepted after today under the present scheme in England or Wales.

The Housing Corporation is today publishing a consultation document seeking views on proposals for a new scheme to be introduced in 1990-91. Housing for Wales will shortly be publishing a separate consultation document in Wales. The proposals are modelled on the powers in section 129 of the Housing Act 1988 for local authorities to offer financial assistance to tenants to obtain new homes. The forward programme provides substantial funds for the new scheme. It will not be specifically aimed at tenants who do not have the right to buy, but the Housing Corporation envisages that in allocating resources some preference would initially be given to charitable housing associations whose tenants would have qualified for assistance under the present scheme.

Polychlorinated Biphenyls

Mr. Wallace: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what information he has about the level of polychlorinated biphenyls in the North sea.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley *[holding answer 12 December 1988]:* Information about inputs of PCBs, concentrations in marine species and ecological effects in the North sea is contained in the quality status report (scientific and technical working group) prepared for the second North sea conference in November last year, a copy of which is in the Library.

As the report shows, levels of PCBs in European coastal waters have been declining. Levels in United Kingdom waters are considerably lower than in the eastern North sea. Monitoring by the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food and water authorities continues, but generally levels are so low that it is difficult to make reliable estimates for rivers and coastal waters.

SCOTLAND

Competitive Tendering

Mr. Galbraith: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what, to date, are the total savings for each health board resulting from competitive tendering.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Contracts awarded to date have identified annual recurrent savings as set out in the table:

Health board	*Annual recurrent saving £000s*
Argyll and Clyde	147
Ayrshire and Arran	115
Borders	63
Dumfries and Galloway	230
Fife	103
Forth Valley	397
Grampian	598
Greater Glasgow	1,688
Highland	102
Lanarkshire	386
Lothian	1,124
Tayside	148
TOTAL	5,101

Mr. Galbraith: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland on how many of the recent tenders in the National Health Service awarded to private contractors as the result of competitive tendering value added tax was paid.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: This information is not held centrally.

Mr. Galbraith: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will give the total value to date of all contracts placed with the private sector following competitive tendering in the National Health Service.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The value of all contracts awarded to date is £29·5 million, of which £8·2 million was placed with the private sector.

Health Councils (Review)

Mr. Galbraith: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when he expects to receive the report of the review of local health councils; and when it will be published.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The report is due to be submitted by the end of December. I shall consider the question of publication when I have studied the report.

"The Scottish Health Service"

Mr. Malcolm Bruce: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many copies of the publication "The Scottish Health Service" were printed; how many have been distributed; and to whom.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: There were 62,000 copies printed, of which 55,000 were distributed in bulk to health boards

to be made available to health board members, staff in hospitals and in the community, the family practitioner service and the public. In addition, about 3,000 copies have been issued to all hon. Members for Scottish constituencies, local health councils and the media and in response to requests from, for example, teachers and the public. The booklet is having a wider impact and greater range of applications than we anticipated and has been very well received.

Cigarettes (Illegal Sales)

Mr. Home Robertson: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many prosecutions were brought against retailers for illegal sales of cigarettes to children in the last year for which figures are available; of these how many led to convictions; where these cases were heard; what penalties were imposed; and if he will make a statement.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The information requested is not available.

Training Agency

Mr. Graham: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how much money the Training Agency expended on the voluntary projects programme in Scotland for the financial year 1987-88.

Mr. Lang: Voluntary projects programme expenditure in Scotland in 1987-88 was £940,000.

Mr. Graham: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will provide a breakdown of each training agency area in Scotland together with details of the host organisations that have been awarded posts and the number of posts allocated to those host organisations.

Mr. Lang: The number of organisations and posts awarded under community opportunities by each training agency area office in Scotland are:

	Full-time posts	*Part-time posts*
Glasgow City		
Community Central Halls	1	—
Glasgow Old People's Welfare	1	—
Volunteer Centre	1	—
Scottish Conservation Project	1	—
Ayrshire, Dumfries and Galloway		
Ayr Volunteer Exchange	2	—
Wigtown council for Voluntary Services	1	—
Coodham Unemployed Project	1	—
Central and Fife		
Scottish Conservation	1	—
Falkirk Voluntary and Action Resource Centre	1	—
Fife Inter Church Action	1	—
Gangforth	1	—
Impasse Community Industry (Glenrothes)	1	—
Highlands and Islands		
Ross and Cromarty Council of Voluntary Services	1	—
Lewis Council of Social Services (Western Isles)	1	—
Voluntary Services (Orkney)	—	1
Inverness Voluntary Organisation Group	1	—
Highland Regional Council	1	1
Shetland		
Not contracted as yet	—	1
Grampian and Tayside		
Adult Community Training (Dundee)	1	—
Perth and Kinross Association for Voluntary Service	—	2
Unallocated	1	2
Lothian and Borders		
Organisations yet to be publicly announced	3	1
Lanarkshire		
YMCA	2	—
East Kilbride District Council	1	—
Clyde Calders Projects (Motherwell)	1	—
Renfrew, Dunbarton and Argyll		
Volunteer Centre (Centre for Employment and Training)	3	—
Training Services Inverclyde Ltd.	1	—
Strathkelvin Enterprise Trust	1	—
	—	—
	31	8

Community Opportunities

Mr. Graham: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how much money will be allocated to community opportunities in *(a)* Scotland and *(b)* Glasgow in the current financial year and for the financial year 1989-90.

Mr. Lang: A total of £560,000 has been budgeted for community opportunities in Scotland in the current financial year of which £64,000 has been allocated to Glasgow. Comparable figures are not yet available for 1989-90.

Mr. Graham: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many people recruited into community opportunities in the Glasgow area will receive training or further education opportunities.

Mr. Lang: The nature of community opportunities activities cannot yet be determined, nor can the number of individuals who may choose to participate. These matters will depend on the types of opportunities identified and whether or not individuals take them up.

Voluntary Projects Programme

Mr. Graham: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how much money the Training Agency expects to expend on the voluntary projects programme in *(a)* Scotland and *(b)* Glasgow for the financial year 1988-89.

Mr. Lang: Voluntary projects programme expenditure in Scotland in 1988-89 is estimated at £925,000 of which £160,000 has been allocated to Glasgow.

Mr. Graham: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many people in the Glasgow area were recruited into voluntary work in 1987-88 by schemes funded through the voluntary projects programme; and if he will provide a breakdown of this, project by project.

Mr. Lang: A cumulative total of 798 volunteers were recruited into voluntary work in 1987-88 through the voluntary projects programme. From April 1987 to March 1988 the following voluntary projects programmes operated in Glasgow:

(a) The Volunteer Centre—402 volunteers;
(b) The Govan Aid Project/Pearce Institute—38 volunteers;
(c) Maryhill Community Central Halls—156 volunteers;
(d) Community Care/Gairbraid Community Association—112 volunteers;
(e) Community Service Volunteers—90 volunteers.

Mr. Graham: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many people recruited into voluntary projects programme schemes in the Glasgow area, received training or further education opportunities.

Mr. Lang: Glasgow voluntary projects programme sponsors provided training or further education opportunities to all their volunteer helpers. This took the form of on or off the job training and further education, according to individual requirements.

Education (Professional Bodies)

Mr. Hood: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list all professional bodies within the Scottish education system that have made representations to him requesting or demanding the right to opt out of the state system; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The right to apply to withdraw schools from education authority control will be offered to parents. It will be for parents at a local level to decide whether to exercise this right.

A paper describing our proposals was issued last week and I look forward to receiving constructive comments from all involved in Scottish education including appropriate professional bodies.

Farming (Interest Rates)

Mr. Andrew Welsh: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will estimate the cost effect of interest rate increases since May on the average arable farm in the east of Scotland; and if he will express these figures by acre.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Overall borrowings by Scottish farmers are somewhat lower than last year, but the position will vary from one type of farm to another.

Mr. Andrew Welsh: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what assessment he has made of the effect on the incomes of arable farmers in the east of Scotland of payments of bank and other interest on loans for purchase of inputs up to May 1989.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: I have no information about the extent to which farmers' loans are used for the purchase of inputs.

Mr. Andrew Welsh: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what representations he has received from the Scottish farming industry about interest rates rises; and what indications he has of their effect on Scottish farmers.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: My right hon. and learned Friend is naturally very much aware of the concerns of Scottish farmers about the possible implications of increases in interest rates. Higher interest rates are expected to add £3 million to interest payments this year, but, because of a lower level of overall borrowings than a year ago, interest payments in 1988 are likely to be only marginally higher at £97 million than the 1987 level of £96 million.

Correspondence

Mr. Canavan: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many items of correspondence he has received from hon. and right hon. Members about the work of the Department of Registers for Scotland since 1 July.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Sixteen.

Mr. Canavan: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many items of correspondence he has received from hon. and right hon. Members about the work of the Historic Buildings and Monuments Directorate since 1 July.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Since 1 July my right hon. and learned Friend and I have received 33 items of correspondence from and right hon. Members relating to the directorate's work.

Legal System

Mr. Menzies Campbell: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what is the established number of procurators fiscal and procurators fiscal depute in each sheriffdom in Scotland; and how many such positions are currently vacant.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The established numbers of procurators fiscal and procurators fiscal deputes in each sheriffdom in Scotland with current vacancies are as follows:

Sheriffdom	*Complement*		*Vacancies*	
	PF	*PFD*	*PF*	*PFD*
Glasgow and Strathkelvin	1	65	Nil	7
Lothian and Borders	6	28	Nil	Nil
North Strathclyde	6	27·5	Nil	3
South Strathclyde	6	31	Nil	Nil
Grampian	14	16	Nil	2
Tayside	10	26	Nil	Nil
	43	193·5	Nil	12

Mr. Menzies Campbell: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what is the average time between first appearance in *(a)* summary cases and *(b)* solemn cases and final disposal in each sheriffdom in Scotland.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The average period between pleading and trial diet in summary criminal business in the sheriff courts for the year ending 31 March 1988 was 17 weeks. The actual delay period in each sheriff court as at 30 September is as shown in the table below. Information about the average time between first appearance and final disposal in solemn cases is not readily available and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Summary Criminal Business Quarter ended 30 September 1988—Delay Period between Pleading and Trial Diet (in weeks).

	30 September 1988
Aberdeen	17
Airdrie	15
Alloa	10
Arbroath	15
Ayr	18
Banff	9

	30 September 1988
Campbeltown	13
Cupar	19
Dingwall	8
Dornoch	10
Dumbarton	23
Dumfries	16
Dundee	7
Dunfermline	10
Dunoon	9
Duns	3
Edinburgh	19
Elgin	7
Falkirk	7
Forfar	7
Fort William	18
Glasgow	17
Greenock	11
Haddington	31
Hamilton	22
Inverness	9
Jedburgh	5
Kilmarnock	16
Kirkcaldy	7
Kirkcudbright	16
Kirkwall	7
Lanark	9
Lerwick	8
Linlithgow	10
Lochmaddy	8
Oban	10
Paisley	20
Peebles	10
Perth	9
Peterhead	13
Portree	8
Rothesay	5
Selkirk	6
Stirling	12
Stonehaven	8
Stornoway	14
Stranraer	12
Tain	6
Wick	8

Cancer Screening

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will estimate how many women are likely to be screened for breast cancer in *(a)* 1989 and *(b)* 1990.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: This information is not currently available. A detailed programme is being worked out with health boards for implementing a national breast cancer screening programme in Scotland by 1991. Once the service is fully operational, about 111,000 women will be screened each year.

Cash Limits

Mr. Bill Walker: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he proposes to make any further changes to the cash limits within his responsibility for 1988-89.

Mr. Rifkind: Yes. I intend to make a change to one of the cash limits within my responsibility. The 1988-89 cash limit for Class XVI, Vote 19 (General Register Office for Scotland) will be reduced by £25,000 from £4,951,000 to £4,926,000 as a penalty following a cash limit breach in 1987-88.

Local Government (Staffing)

Mrs. Margaret Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when it is intended to issue the finalised circular on the review of staffing standards in local government.

Mr. Michael Forsyth *[holding answer 12 December 1988]:* I assume that the hon. Member's question refers to staffing standards in local authority schools. I am considering the responses to a draft circular on teaching staff in schools. I have also arranged for the outcome of the review of staffing needs to be reflected in the Government's provision for education within the revenue support grant for 1989-90.

Language Teachers

Mrs. Margaret Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what is the number of secondary school language teachers which the Government project is needed for 1989-90, 1990-91, 1991-92 and 1992-93.

Mr. Michael Forsyth *[holding answer 12 December 1988]:* The current projections are:

	Number
1989-90	1,910
1990-91	1,880
1991-92	1,880
1992-93	1,890

These projections fall to be revised in detail in the light of the Government's intentions for the teaching of modern languages in secondary schools. By 1992-93 I expect the number of modern languages teachers to rise to about 2,300.

Mrs. Margaret Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what is the Government's proposed intake for teacher training for modern language specialists for 1989-90, 1990-91 and 1991-92.

Mr. Michael Forsyth *[holding answer 12 December 1988]:* My right hon. and learned Friend prescribes each year the total number of postgraduate students to be accepted by colleges of education for secondary teacher training; intakes are not set for specific disciplines. The Government will ensure that colleges are made aware of their projections of the number of foreign languages teachers required in forward years. It is then for each college to consult its local education authorities about their detailed requirements, taking full account of the pool of trained teachers already available, and to determine its intake of language graduates accordingly.

Salmonella

Sir Nicholas Fairbairn: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many cases of illness in Scotland can be reliably related to eggs in the last year for which figures are available; what form the illness took in each case; how many cases of illness in Scotland resulted from eating other items; how many deaths have resulted from eating eggs; and what reduction in the sales of eggs has occurred since 2 December.

Mr. Michael Forsyth *[holding answer 12 December 1988]:* As at 2 December, 2,847 cases of food poisoning in

Scotland have been reported in 1988 by general practitioners. It is not always possible to identify the precise cause, but in some 641 cases 99 were attributable to salmonella in egg or egg-based products and 542 to other food, including poultry. Typical symptons of food poisoning include diarrhoea and dehydration. No deaths from the consumption of eggs have been recorded during this period. Information on the sale of eggs is not held centrally.

SOCIAL SECURITY

Family Credit

Mr. Squire: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if there is a specific target for clearing claims for family credit for people who have moved into paid work.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Special arrangements have been made with the Department of Employment's claimant adviser service for family credit claims made by families of people assisted into work by them to be dealt with through a streamlined procedure. The target is for 90 per cent. of these claims to be cleared within five working days. This target is being met and 95 per cent. are cleared within 10 working days. Other claimants resuming work after claiming income support are sent a specially marked family credit claim form so that, if necessary, their claims can be given priority. The target is to clear these claims, as other family credit claims, in an average of 18 working days. In November a clearance rate of just under 23 days was achieved.

Written Answers to Questions

Thursday 15 December 1988

NATIONAL FINANCE

Expenditure (EC)

Mr. Redwood: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the total budget expenditure for the EEC, European Coal and Steel Community and Euratom for 1988; and what was the total budget in its first full year of operation.

Mr. Brooke: In the ECSC's first year of activity (1952) its budget was 4·6 mecu. In 1968 that part of its budget covering non-operating (that is, largely administrative) expenditure was merged with the EC/Euratom budget, leaving the balance of its budget, covering operating expenditure (mainly aid and restructuring), to stand as a separate budget. In 1968 the ECSC budget, as redefined, amounted to 21·2 mecu; in 1988 it amounted to 562 mecu (£390·4 million[1]).

The budget for the EEC and Euratom in their first year of activity (1958) amounted to 11 mecu. In 1968 the EC and Euratom budget was merged with the non-operating part of the ECSC budget to form the so-called general budget. In that year the general budget amounted to 1,561·3 mecu; in 1988 it amounted to 43,820·4 mecu (£30,431·1 million[1]).

[1] Converted at the Commission's current budget exchange rate of £1 = 1·439421 ecu.

Developing Countries

Sir John Stanley: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer to which recent International Monetary Fund study he was referring in his speech of 6 December in the Grand Committee Room which showed that, among developing countries, liberalising changes in trade outnumbered restrictive changes by nearly two to one in 1987.

Mr. Lawson *[holding answer 14 December 1988]:* I was referring to table 1 of the 1988 IMF annual report on exchange arrangements and exchange restrictions, a copy of which is in the Library.

Sir John Stanley: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer to which World Bank figures he was referring in his speech of 6 December in the Grand Committee Room which suggest that protection by industrialised countries costs the developing countries more than twice the amount of official aid that they receive.

Mr. Lawson *[holding answer 14 December 1988]:* The reference was to estimates contained in a paper by World Bank staff "Industrial policies of Industrial Countries: Impact on Developing Countries" which was discussed at the annual meetings of the IMF and the World Bank in September. The World Bank intend to publish the paper in due course.

Building Societies

Mr. Watts: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer when he will lay a statutory instrument before the House under section 119 of the Building Societies Act 1986 defining deferred shares and the terms on which they are issued.

Mr. Lilley *[holding answer 12 December 1988]:* I expect to lay an order under Section 119(1) of the Building Societies Act 1986, together with a consequential order under section 45(5), early in the new year.

Tax Allowances

Sir Ian Gilmour: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer by what percentage the rate of single person's and married man's income tax allowances has increased between April 1979 and April 1988.

Mr. Lawson *[holding answer 9 December 1988]:* Between 1979-80 and 1988-89, the single person's income tax allowance has increased by 22 per cent. in real terms and the married man's allowance has increased by 23 per cent. in real terms.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

PLO (Meeting)

Mr. Adley: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the recent meeting between the Minister of State, the hon. Member for Bristol, West (Mr. Waldegrave) and the representatives of the Palestine Liberation Organisation.

Mr. Eggar: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply which my hon. Friend the Member for Bristol, West (Mr. Waldegrave) gave to the hon. Member for Wanstead and Woodford (Mr. Arbuthnot) on 12 December at column *398*.

Berlin Security Service

Mr. Mullin: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs to what extent the British authorities in Berlin are responsible for the actions of the Berlin security service, Berliner Verfassungsschutz.

Mrs. Chalker: Under the declaration of Berlin of 5 May 1955, the Allied Kommandatura has
"the right to take . . . such measures as may be required to . . . maintain the status and security of Berlin".
However, the Berlin authorities have responsibility for the day-to-day running of the city, including the operation of the security services.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

In-plant Training

Mr. Bright: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will make a statement on the future of the in-plant training scheme.

Mr. Newton: The in-plant training scheme, which operates under section 7 of the Industrial Development Act 1982 but is co-funded by the European Social Fund

and administered under ESF criteria, is to be closed to new applications with immediate effect. The scheme was designed to help companies meet training costs associated with new investment projects in the assisted areas which met the requirements for regional selective assistance. Because of substantial changes which the ESF has made to its criteria, the scheme is in practice no longer achieving this objective.

Under the revised rules, trainees must be aged under 25 at the start of the training programme, be trained in the use of new technology and receive a minimum of 200 hours actual training. These requirements have proved difficult for applicants to satisfy and the three operating Departments have made no offers of assistance since the revised criteria were introduced in January 1986. As a result, the Government have decided that there is nothing to be gained by continuing with the scheme.

Closure of the scheme will have no effect on the aount of assistance available to projects which meet the criteria for RSA.

Japan and Taiwan

Mr. Steen: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster (1) if he will list in the *Official Report* the financial value of United Kingdom exports to Japan and Japanese imports to the United Kingdom in each of the last three years;

(2) if he will list in the *Official Report* the financial value of United Kingdom exports to Taiwan and Taiwanese imports to the United Kingdom in each of the last three years.

Mr. Alan Clark: The information is given in the following table:

United Kingdom exports and imports for Japan and Taiwan 1985-87
Value in £ millions

	Exports	*Imports*
Japan		
1985	1,012·3	4,115·5
1986	1,193·7	4,936·9
1987	1,495·1	5,463·1
Taiwan		
1985	164·8	582·6
1986	192·5	705·6
1987	292·3	1,006·9

Source: Overseas Trade Statistics
Note:
(1) Figures for 1987 are provisional.
(2) Exports valued fob, imports cif.

Estate Agents

Dr. Glyn: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what steps he is taking to ensure that estate agents disclose major defects in properties before placing them on the market.

Mr. Forth: I have no immediate plans to do so. It is for the purchaser of a property to ensure that he or she has adequate information on the condition of the property before entering into a commitment to purchase.

RENAVAL Programme

Ms. Quin: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will make a statement on his Department's plans for the implementation of the European Economic Community's RENAVAL programme in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Atkins: The RENAVAL programme, financed by the European regional development fund, is for areas adversely affected by the restructuring of the shipbuilding and ship repair industries.

I am consulting my right hon. Friends about applications which may be submitted to the European Commission for RENAVAL programmes for British areas.

Most shipbuilding areas already receive a full range of benefits from the fund.

Food Poisoning

Mr. Ashley: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what responsibility his Department has for ensuring that foodstuffs are safe for human consumption and carry no risk of food poisoning; in what way this responsibility is carried out; how many and what type of staff are required; what is the annual cost to his Department; and what has been the change in the number of staff and the annual cost to his Department in each of the last five years.

Mr. Forth: The Department of Trade and Industry has no direct responsibility for food safety for human consumption, although the laboratory of the Government chemist plays an important role in conducting analysis and advising the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food and the Ministry of Defence on contamination by micro-organisms, heavy metals, pesticides and veterinary residues; the cost of that work rests with those Departments.

The DTI and MAFF have launched a collaborative link research programme (£7 million from Government; £7 million from industry) to improve control of food processing, which will lead to improvements in food quality and safety.

Multi-Fibre Arrangement

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will place in the Library the details of the bilateral textile agreement between the Economic Community and the Republic of China as it relates to knitted outerwear under the framework of the multi-fibre arrangement.

Mr. Alan Clark *[holding answer 14 December 1988]:* Details of the new textiles agreement between the European Community and the People's Republic of China will be placed in the Library when they are made public.

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster when he expects to be able to publish the details of the bilateral agreement on textiles between the European Community and the Republic of China under the framework of the multi-fibre arrangement.

Mr. Alan Clark *[holding answer 14 December 1988]:* The details of the new bilateral textiles agreement between the European Community and the People's Republic of China are still being finalised. They will be made public as soon as possible.

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will publish in the *Official Report* the new

inner limits of knitted outwear agreed between the European Community and the Republic of China to the multi-fibre arrangement bilateral agreement expressed as a percentage of the inner limits contained in the previous agreement.

Mr. Alan Clark *[holding answer 14 December 1988]:* I am writing to the hon. Member.

Small Businesses

Mr. Harry Barnes: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster how many small businesses have started up and how many have closed over the past five years in Derbyshire; and how many jobs have been gained and lost in connection with these.

Mr. John Cope: I have been asked to reply.

Over the five years to the end of 1986, the latest year for which the data is available, there have been an estimated 12,237 registrations for VAT in Derbyshire, and an estimated 10,682 deregistrations. The overwhelming majority of these related to small firms. It is not possible to say how many jobs have been gained and lost as a result.

EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

City Technology College, Nottingham

Mr. Graham Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will make a statement on his visit to the Nottingham city technology college.

Mrs. Rumbold: My right hon. Friend visited the Djanogly city technology college in Nottingham on Monday 5 December to lay the foundation stone of the building. The development of the college is proceeding well. The principal, deputy principal and four faculty heads have been appointed, the building programme is on schedule and offer letters have been sent to the pupils for the first year's intake next September.

CERN

Mr. Madel: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will make a statement about future United Kingdom membership of CERN.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: I have now considered the action taken by the CERN council in implementing the reforms recommended by the CERN review committee under the chairmanship of Professor Abragam and concluded that sufficient progress has been made for the United Kingdom to indicate that it will remain a member of the organisation.

There are, however, a number of outstanding matters stemming from the review committee report which the United Kingdom will be expecting to see pursued over the next year. Accordingly, at the CERN council meeting today, the United Kingdom delegate made a statement emphasising the United Kingdom's wish to see CERN's scientific excellence continued and indicating the areas where progress on reducing the cost burden on member states has still to be made. I have arranged for copies of the statement to be placed in the Library.

The Government's decision will be reflected in the forthcoming allocation of the science budget, which I shall make when I have considered the advice of the ABRC.

F E Colleges (Opting-out)

Mr. Franks: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what plans he has to allow colleges of further education to opt out of local education authority control; and if he is considering legislation to extend the relevant provisions of the Education Act 1988 to include colleges of further education.

Mr. Jackson: Sections 139 to 155 of the Education Reform Act 1988 provide for the reform of governing bodies of LEA-maintained further education colleges and for substantial delegation to these bodies of responsibility for finance, staff and the pattern of courses. LEAs are free to go beyond this and grant their colleges corporate status, and my right hon. Friend would welcome such a development. To go further and enable colleges of further education to become fully independent of LEA control would require new legislation. My right hon. Friend has no plans for this.

Research and Development

Mr. Gordon Brown: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will publish a table updating for the years 1987-88 to 1990-91 that section of table 1.2 in the "Cabinet Office Annual Review of Government Research and Development Expenditure" that relates to the University Grants Committee and the research councils in the light of announcements made subsequent to publication of the 1988 review.

Mr. Jackson: My right hon. Friend, the Secretary of State announced on 1 November increases of £306 million for the science budget over the next three years and of the over £100 million for teaching and research at the universities for the same period.

Most, but not necessarily all, of the additional money for research will be for research as defined in the annual review. Neither research councils nor the UGC will be in a position to provide the necessary figures for updating table 1.2 until well into the new year.

Mr. Gordon Brown: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science how much of the additional money awarded to the research councils for the years 1989-90 and 1990-91 over and above that given in the table 1.2 of the "Cabinet Office Annual Review of Government Research and Development" has been earmarked for *(a)* AIDS research and *(b)* the Antarctic Survey.

Mr. Jackson: I refer the hon. Member to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State's replies to my hon. Friend the Member for Thurrock (Mr. Janman) on 10 November at columns *253* and *254*, and to my hon. Friend the Member for Derbyshire, West (Mr. McLoughlin) on 8 November at columns *134* and *135*.

My right hon. Friend will be considering shortly the case for an increase in the Medical Research Council's strategic programme for AIDS research on the basis of advice from the Advisory Board for the Research Councils.

Highbury Quadrant School

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what steps he is taking to seek to improve the performance of redeployed teachers from Highbury Quadrant; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Rumbold: It is not the responsibility of my right hon. Friend to take direct action to improve the performance of individual teachers. That is the responsibility of the employer, in this case the Inner London Education Authority.

Business and Technician Education Council

Mr. Fearn: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science how many learning establishments in England teach Business and Technician Education Council courses; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Jackson: Information from the Business and Technician Education Council is that at 13 December 1988, 601 public and private sector institutions are running courses leading to BTEC qualifications. They are in England, Wales and Northern Ireland. A separate figure for England is not readily available. However, the numbers in Wales and Northern Ireland will be relatively small.

Universities (Funding)

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science (1) what is his policy on making new financial arrangements between his Department and the Universities Funding Council; and what requirements he intends to include in new financial arrangements concerning the monitoring by the Universities Funding Council of individual universities and the transmission of any such monitoring information to his Department;

(2) what representations he has received concerning draft terms of the new financial arrangements between *(a)* his Department and the Universities Funding Council and *(b)* the Universities Funding Council and individual universities; and if he will make a statement;

(3) what is his policy on making arrangements for annual block grants to be made by his Department to the new Universities Funding Council; and what account will be taken of information made available by the Universities Funding Council concerning the monitoring by the Universities Funding Council of individual universities.

Mr. Jackson: The Department is preparing a memorandum which will govern its financial relations with the Universities Funding Council under the Education Reform Act 1988. Discussions are being held with the council and with the Committee of Vice-Chancellors and Principals on its proposed provisions. Some of those provisions will need to be reflected in the memoranda which the council will draw up with individual institutions. As in the Act, there is a balance to be struck in these matters between institutional autonomy and proper accountability to Parliament for substantial public funds. The council's general responsibilities mean that it needs to have a complete picture of the institutions it funds. While it consequently needs power to require information about the total funding of universities, the Act is clear that such information should not be used to affect funding decisions adversely. In the same way, the Government have made it clear that decisions on funding levels, reached in the light of the council's advice, will not penalise institutions' success in raising private income.

City Technology Colleges

Mr. Rooker: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will make a statement on the operation of the consultation process leading to the formation of city technology colleges.

Mrs. Rumbold: We shall consider carefully any plans put to us by sponsors which meet the broad objectives of the CTC programme. While there is no general statutory requirement, sponsors will be expected and encouraged to consult the local community, local employers and the local education authority about these plans.

Where local education authorities are considering the possibility of closing an existing maintained school to allow for the establishment of a CTC they will need to publish proposals under section 12 of the Education Act, 1980. We have made clear the importance we attach to appropriate consultations taking place on such proposals with all interested parties. Detailed guidance is given in the Department's Circular 3/87. We set out our policy on deciding section 12 proposals which had as an objective the establishment of a CTC in my right hon. Friend's statement of 28 July at column 402.

Nursery Education

Mr. Pike: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what is the percentage difference between the local education authority providing nursery education for the highest proportion of children and that providing the lowest.

Mrs. Rumbold: In January 1988 the percentage point difference between the local education authority where the least proportion of children under five were attending maintained nursery schools and nursery classes in primary schools and the local education authority where the highest proportion were attending such schools and classes was 68.

Marine Research

Mrs. Ray Michie: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will make a statement on his Department's plans for the future funding of marine research.

Mr. Jackson: On the funding of marine research carried out by the Natural Environment Research Council, my right hon. Friend is considering the advice of the Advisory Board for the Research Councils and hopes to announce his allocations for 1989-90 shortly. As to the wider context, the co-ordinating committee on marine science and technology will report in due course on a national strategic framework for Government-funded marine science.

Agricultural and Food Research

Mr. Brandon-Bravo: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what is the Government's response to the interim report on agricultural and food research from the House of Lords Select Committee on Science and Technology; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: I have written to the Chairman of the House of Lords Select Committee on Science and Technology, Sub-Committee I; the following is the text of my letter:

Lord Butterworth CBE
Chairman
Sub-Committee I
House of Lords Select Committee on Science and Technology
The House of Lords

Dear Lord Butterworth,

House of Lords Select Committee on Science and Technology Sub-Committee I (Agricultural and Food Research)

1. I am writing to you as Chairman of Sub-Committee I to give the Government's observations on the Sub-Committee's Interim Report which was published on 27 October last.

2. The Government appreciates the thorough and far-reaching enquiry which the Sub-Committee is making into this important subject; and the reasons that led you to make an interim report. The Government welcomes this report as timely further evidence of the remarkable and exciting developments in the biological sciences; of the growing realisation of their pervasive and complex nature; of their enormous potential for good; and of the way these changes rightly bring under review established perspectives and practices.

3. The Government has noted carefully the Sub-Committee's opinion; and in particular their recommendations concerning the remit of SERC, the merger of AFRC and NERC, and the related recommendation on the future development of the Biotechnology Advisory Group. It will be giving these and related matters careful consideration over the coming months. As the Sub-Committee knows, the Advisory Board for the Research Councils (ABRC) is currently reviewing the Research Council's responsibilities for biological sciences. The Government believes that the Sub-Commitee's interim report should be helpful to the Board conducting this exercise. The Government would wish to have the results of that review and the Board's advice on it before reaching final conclusions on whether changes are needed in the structure and responsibilities of the Research Councils and, if so, what changes would be appropriate. I hope to have that advice during the early months of next year.

4. In these circumstances, the Government does not intend to respond further at this time to the Sub-Committee's interim report. We look forward with interest to your final report, to which we will respond in the normal way.

5. In accordance with past practice I shall be making this letter available to both Houses, and publishing it.

Yours sincerely,

Kenneth Baker.

Education Support Grants

Mr. Pawsey: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will make a statement on expenditure to be supported by education support grants in 1989-90.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: The Department has written to all local education authorities in England to inform them of the level of expenditure which I have approved for the purpose of education support grants in 1989-90.

Expenditure under the programme in 1989-90 will total £125·5m. Some £49·5m of this will be for the continuing support of projects begun in earlier years, and £76m is for new and extended activities. The table sets out the programme and shows the number of LEAs receiving allocations for support of new expenditure.

I am pleased that all local education authorities will be participating in the 1989-90 ESG programme, which is the largest to date. I made clear during the passage of the Education Reform Act that I would use my grant programmes to help with the implementation of the reforms. The approvals I have just announced represent substantial assistance for LEAs with the introduction of local management of schools and colleges and the national curriculum. I am also particularly glad that we have been able to provide support for centres to help adults with literacy and numeracy problems, and that ESGs will be used to allow almost 200 young people to train as youth workers in their own communities.

I have approved £35m of new expenditure in the programme for activities relating to local management, including £25m specifically for its introduction into schools and £5m for governor training. £29m of new expenditure will go towards helping authorities with the various aspects of the introduction of the national curriculum, including £5m for English, £9·5m for the core subjects and technology, and a further £9·5m for the purchase of equipment for information technology in schools. Taking new and committed expenditure together there will be support for over £90m of spending in 1989-90 on activities relevant to the ERA reforms.

The ESG Programme in England in 1989-90

Activities with New Starts in 1989-90

	New Expenditure in 1989-90 (cash) £ million	*Number of LEAs with new starts*	*Total of new starts committed[2] £ million*
NEW ACTIVITIES			
Local Management			
1. Local Management of Schools[1]	25·0	97	25·0
2. Planning and Delegation Schemes for FE[1]	1·2	96	1·2
3. Training for School Governors[1]	4·9	97	4·9
4. Training for FE College Governors[1]	0·2	11	0·2
National Curriculum Related			
5. LEA Inspection[1]	1·9	96	1·9
6. National Curriculum[1]	9·5	97	9·5
7. English in the Curriculum[1]	5·1	97	5·1
Social Responsibility and Inner Cities			
8. Youth Leaders for the Inner Cities	2·4	21	2·4
9. Establishment of Adult Literacy Centres	3·0	54	3·0
10. Improvement and expansion of Educational Guidance for Adults	1·5	36	1·5
EXTENSIONS			
Financial Delegation-Related			
11. Management Information Systems in FE[1]	3·5	28	6·9
National Curriculum-Related			
12. IT in Schools—expansion of hardware scheme[1]	9·5	97	20·7

	New Expenditure in 1989-90 (cash) £ million	Number of LEAs with new starts	Total of new starts committed[2] £ million
13. Science and Technology in Primary Schools[1]	2·8	41	9·7
Social Responsibility and Inner Cities			
14. Open Learning	1·4	48	2·7
15. Action to Combat Misuse of Drugs	2·1	94	2·3
Other			
16. Computer Aided Engineering	2·0	21	2·0
Activities Continuing without New Starts			
17. Maths in Schools[1]	—	—	8·4
18. Improving the Quality of Education in Rural Primary Schools	—	—	1·5
19. Improving the Quality of Education in Urban Primary Schools	—	—	0·4
20. Education for a Multi-Ethnic Society	—	—	2·7
21. PICKUP	—	—	0·2
22. IT in Non-Advanced FE	—	—	4·9
23. Education for the Unemployed	—	—	0·3
24. Support for Parents of Children Under 5 with Severe Learning Difficulties	—	—	1·9
25. Pilot projects to develop the use of the spoken word	—	—	0·3
26. Promotion of social responsibility in young people	—	—	1·4
27. Pilot project to develop Records of Achievement	—	—	1·3
28. Diversification of First Foreign Language in Schools	—	—	0·5
29. Learning by Achievement for 14-21 year olds	—	—	2·2
30. School teacher and lecturer appraisal	—	—	0·5
Totals	76·0	97	125·5

[1] Activities of relevance to the implementation of the ERA reforms.
[2] Grant will be paid at 50 per cent. on the second tranche of expenditure and at 70 per cent. on commitments arising from 1988-89.

Freedom of Speech

Mr. Anthony Coombs: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science how the Government propose to review section 43 of the Education (No. 2) Act 1986 in the light of its first year of operation; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Jackson: I have written to the chairmen of the Committee of Vice-Chancellors and Principals and of the Committee of Directors of Polytechnics and to the hon. secretary of the Standing Conference of Principals to suggest that as a first step their organisations should examine the working of the section by reference to their members' codes of practice and the way in which they have been applied and should recommend to the Government any desirable changes.

The text of my letter to the chairman of the CVCP is as follows.

Professor Sir Mark Richmond FRS
Chairman
Committee of Vice-Chancellors
and Principals
29 Tavistock Square
LONDON WC1H 9EZ

Dear Mark 14 December 1988

FREEDOM OF SPEECH

It is just over a year since Section 43 of the Education (No. 2) Act 1986 came into force. During that period there seems to have been a welcome decrease in the disruption which gave rise to the original legislation. But there have still been some bad incidents, which raise questions about the effectiveness of present arrangements. I am sure therefore that you will agree that we ought now to review the working of Section 43.

2. The Government has indicated its intention to undertake such a review. However, we lack systematic information on the arrangements made by institutions. In particular, we have only seen copies of a few institutions' Codes of Practice.

3. I should therefore like to suggest that as a first step the Committee of Vice-Chancellors and Principals (and the Committee of Directors of Polytechnics and the Standing Conference of Principals, to whom I am writing in similar terms) might agree:

(i) to examine the working of Section 43 by reference, among other things, to your members' Codes of Practice and the way in which they have been applied;

(ii) to obtain from your members any additional information needed to illuminate a number of key issues described below, and

(iii) to recommend to the Government any desirable changes.

4. The key issues in (ii) are those which seem to us, as a result of our monitoring of events during the last year, pose particular problems for institutions. They do not necessarily reflect on the legislation but may raise questions as to how institutions have sought to put it into effect. They are:—

(a) the practice of directly limiting the number of meetings which may be held, or requiring organisers to meet security costs which may be disproportionate to their resources. (One suggestion to consider is that the student body, represented by the Student Union, should bear the scrutiny costs as a means of engaging them in the maintenance of free speech and good order);

(b) requirements for excessive notice of meetings. Notice is needed to make security arrangements but should not be such as to prevent topical meetings being arranged to a relatively short timescale. (Long periods of notice also enable those determined to cause disruption to marshall their forces);

(c) the need to ensure that speakers are not intimidated by the number of actions of protestors. This may require institutions to take greater responsibility for the conduct of meetings and the selection of venues;

(d) the responsibility of institutions to avoid appearing to acquiesce in "no platform" policies. We are aware of one institution which refused to consider, and referred back to its Student Union, a complaint from a student group that it had been denied rights by the Union;

(e) the need to take firm disciplinary measures against students who breach Codes of Practice and to have in place effective arrangements for identifying offenders.

5. If the task outlined above could be completed by the end of April 1989, the Government would then review its own position and discuss with the CVCP, CDP and SCOP changes for adoption, if possible, from the beginning of the 1989/90 academic year.

6. If you wish to discuss the contents of the letter with me or with officials, we are available to do so. But work needs to be put in hand quickly. I hope therefore that you can signify by Friday 6 January 1989 your agreement to proceed.

ROBERT JACKSON

Salmonella

Mr. Alan W. Williams: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will reconsider the decision to terminate an annual grant of £113,000 to Dr. Geoff Mead at the Institute of Food Research in Bristol to fund work on the control of salmonella.

Mr. Ryder: I have been asked to reply.

The decision to terminate the work on the manipulation of microbial flora of the gut of young chickens was taken following an extensive review of Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food commissioned research in microbiology. It was decided that the work was ready for industry to develop.

A small number of companies have participated in collaborative trials with the institute of food research, Bristol and it is to be hoped that they will be interested in taking this work further. This will not constitute a reduction in Government support on microbiological research, such as in salmonella. The funding is to be diverted to other important parts of our extensive programme of research into microbiological food safety. A working party is currently considering what further research is needed on salmonella and I will consider this advice carefully.

PRIME MINISTER

European Council (Terrorism)

Q40. **Mr. Teddy Taylor:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will make a statement on the procedures adopted by the European Council to implement its agreement on co-operation between member states to combat terrorism.

The Prime Minister: Her Majesty's Government have for many years attached particular importance to international co-operation in this field. I therefore welcome particularly this, and any other, agreement with our partners, which will give fresh impetus to practical and effective co-operation in defeating the menace of terrorism.

Ministers (Exchange of Letters)

Q89. **Mr. Dalyell:** To ask the Prime Minister if, pursuant to her answer of 29 November, *Official Report*, column *178*, she will list those occasions since 1979 on which the text of letters to departing Cabinet Ministers *(a)* have and *(b)* have not been published.

The Prime Minister: I have nothing to add to the reply I gave to the hon. Member on 15 November 1988 at column *543*.

Engagements

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 15 December.

Mr. McGrady: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 15 December.

Mr. Jack: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 15 December.

Mr. Sumberg: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 15 December.

Mr. Barry Field: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 15 December.

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 15 December.

Mr. Stern: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 15 December.

Mr. Riddick: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 15 December.

Mr. Andrew Smith: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 15 December.

The Prime Minister: This morning I presided at a meeting of the Cabinet and had meetings with ministerial colleagues and others. In addition to my duties in the House, I shall be having further meetings later today.

Member's Correspondence

Mr. Livingstone: To ask the Prime Minister if she will publish in the *Official Report* the text of her letter to the hon. Member for Brent, East on 29 September about Airey Neave and related matters.

The Prime Minister: No. It is not my usual practice to publish exchanges of this kind.

Bed and Breakfast Hostels

Mr. Winnick: To ask the Prime Minister if she has any plans to visit families who are currently in bed and breakfast hostel accommodation; and if she will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: I have no such plans at present.

Junior Ministers

Mr. Winnick: To ask the Prime Minister, if junior Ministers in Her Majesty's Government require authorisation from the senior Minister in the Departments concerned before making public announcements outside the House on policies; and if she will publish the recommended procedures involved.

The Prime Minister: Ministers speak on Government policy as appropriate.

Train Travel

Mr. Wilson: To ask the Prime Minister (1) when she last travelled by train on official business in the United Kingdom;

(2) if she will list the occasions on which she has travelled by train on official business since June 1987.

The Prime Minister: In February 1987.

OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT AGENCY

Grande Carajas Programme

Mr. Tom Clarke: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will reconsider the United Kingdom's contribution to the Grande Carajas programme in the Brazilian Amazonian forest.

Mr. Chris Patten: Her Majesty's Government have not contributed directly to any project in the Greater Carajas programme area of Brazil. In 1982, the World bank and the European Coal and Steel Community approved loans to finance part of the costs of the Carajas iron ore project. Disbursement against these loans is complete. The World bank is also financing an energy options study, which is in progress, in the light of proposed pig-iron smelter production in the region.

TRANSPORT

M66/A664 Interchange

Mr. Tom Arnold: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he expects to publish the draft order, Connecting Slip Roads, M66/A664 (Manchester) Interchange.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Next spring.

Channel Tunnel

Mr. David Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when the intergovernmental commission expects to receive from Eurotunnel its proposals for safety arrangements, including operating rules and emergency procedures, for the Channel tunnel; and what arrangements are being made for these proposals to receive public scrutiny.

Mr. Portillo: Eurotunnel has already submitted to the intergovernmental commission a certain number of its design proposals for the Channel tunnel, mostly in preliminary form, and intends to complete submission of them in final form by the end of next year, but it has yet to suggest a date for the submission of its operating rules and emergency procedures. The intergovernmental commission, in considering Eurotunnel's proposals, has the assistance of the Channel tunnel safety authority, and the commission and the authority can look for assistance to other bodies, but the concession does not provide and arrangements have not been made for the proposals to receive public scrutiny.

M1

Mr. Greg Knight: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will consider remarking the lanes on the northbound carriageway of the M1 motorway north of the junction with the M25 so that the offside lane hard shoulder currently not in use can be utilised as an additional lane but in such a way as to create an additional crawler lane on the nearside similar to the way the lanes have been remarked on the southbound carriageway of the M1 north of junction 4.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Crawler lanes are justified and effective only where there is a significant uphill gradient to the brow of a hill. These conditions do not apply to the northbound carriageway of the M1 north of the junction with the M25.

Any use of the off-side hard shoulder at this location as a running lane would involve many vehicles in repeated changes of lane in a short distance. The adverse effects on safety and the free flow of traffic, particularly at junction 8, would outweigh any benefit from the availability of a short stretch of additional carriageway.

Mr. Greg Knight: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport why the road surface markings and signs relating thereto have recently been altered on the southbound carriageway of the M1 north of junction 4 on the stretch of four-lane motorway.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Signs and markings were altered to signal the use of the nearside lane for slow-moving vehicles.

Mr. Greg Knight: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what was the total cost of procuring and erecting the new road signs informing motorists of the short stretch of four lanes on the southbound carriageway of the M1 motorway north of junction 4.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: £4,250.

Mr. Greg Knight: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what was the total cost of the road surface remarking recently carried out on the southbound carriageway of the M1 north of junction 4 on the stretch of four-lane motorway.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: £10,500.

Brixham Coastguard

Mr. Steen: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a statement about the future of the Brixham coastguard.

Mr. Portillo: There are no plans to alter the present status of Brixham coastguard maritime rescue sub-centre.

Research Expenditure

Mr. Gordon Brown: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what was the annual expenditure on research into *(a)* public transport and planning and *(b)* prevention and control of marine pollution in 1978-79, 1987-88, with forecasts and plans for 1988-89, 1989-90 and 1990-91.

Mr. Portillo: Expenditure by the Department on research into public transport and transport planning (excluding technology and investment analysis) has been as follows:

Year	*£ million*
1978-79	1·4
1987-88	1·8

Forecast expenditure for 1988-89 is £1·8 million. Planned expenditure for 1989-90 is £1·1 million. Specific plans for this sector have not yet been made for subsequent years but continuation of expenditure at about the 1989-90 level is likely.

For research into the prevention and control of marine pollution, no figures are readily available for 1978-79. For the other years my Department's forecast or planned expenditure is:

Year	*£ million*
1987-88	0·892
1988-89	1·052
1989-90	0·989
1990-91	0·970

Other Departments also finance research in this area, including the Departments of the Environment, of Education and Science (NERC), and of Energy; the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food; and the Department of Agriculture and Fisheries for Scotland.

Buses (Deregulation)

Mr. Gordon Brown: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport whether, as a result of research commissioned or conducted by his Department on bus deregulation, he can provide details of *(a)* the average annual percentage increase in fares since deregulation and *(b)* the number of routes which have ceased to be served by buses.

Mr. Portillo: Between 1985-86 (the last full year prior to bus deregulation) and 1987-88, local bus fares in Great Britain rose at an annual rate of just under 8 per cent., as fares in metropolitan areas rose from previous very low levels. Data on route mileage are not compiled, but bus mileage had increased sharply, the bulk of it being operated commercially. Local authorities have the power to purchase additional non-commercial services in case of social need.

Railway Accident (Clapham Junction)

Mr. Bowis: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will announce the name of the inspector to carry out the investigation into the serious railway accident near Clapham Junction on Monday 12 December.

Mr. Channon: I am glad to tell the House that Mr. Anthony Hidden QC has accepted my invitation to hold an inquiry into this accident. I shall be discussing with Mr. Hidden what expert assessors should be appointed to assist him. He expects to hold an initial hearing as early as possible in January.

The investigation will be carried out under section 7 of the Regulation of Railways Act 1871. That will enable the investigation to inquire into the cause of the accident and all other relevant matters, and to make recommendations, so that appropriate lessons can be learned for the future.

Driver Testing

Mrs. Gorman: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if the annual report and accounts of the Driver Testing and Training Organisation for the last financial year are yet available; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Copies of the Driver Testing and Training Organisation's annual report for 1987-88 have today been placed in the Libraries of both Houses.

We welcome the progress noted in the report towards tight management control of unit costs and reduced waiting times for L-tests. The organisation has been set targets to achieve further improvements during the current year and to provide a better all-round service for its 2 million customers.

To help shorten waiting times, Saturday morning tests were introduced in September for a trial period at selected centres. Seven of the 11 regional driver test booking centres are now fully computerised. Once the new systems have settled down, this should mean a better service for customers, particularly when it comes to telephone inquiries.

As from 24 October, the eight-test day recommended in the 1985 review of occupational stress among driving examiners has come into effect. This major improvement in working conditions was made possible by co-operation between management and staff representatives to identify time-saving compensating changes in working arrangements.

Too many candidates take the test too soon. One in two fail. Driving should be learned not just to pass the test, but as an essential skill for life.

Good training and an effective driver testing system are key elements in helping to equip new drivers on Britain's busy roads to cope with the conditions they will find there. It continues to be the overriding objective of the Driver Testing and Training Organisation to contribute cost-effectively to their reduction in road casualties.

Railway Accidents

Mr. Bowis: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will set out the key statistics for railway accidents over the last 10 years.

Mr. Channon: The statistics asked for are available in the chief inspecting officer of railways' annual reports, available in the Library, but for convenience are set out below. The casualties from the Clapham accident have not been included because the final figures are not yet available.

Railway Accident Statistics

	1988[1]	*1987*	*1986*	*1985*	*1984*	*1983*	*1982*	*1981*	**2*	*1980*	*1979*
Collisions											
Involving Passenger Trains	18	20	19	17	17	17	15	18		13	18
Involving Other Trains	21	27	20	16	31	35	37	10	*	6	8
Between Trains & Buffers	38	33	36	35	35	36	28	39		32	34
Derailments											
Passenger Trains	28	20	34	30	33	25	23	35	*	28	30
Freight Trains	77	172	158	199	187	195	150	113	*	110	153
Passenger Casualties											
Train Accidents											
Killed	0	3	8	0	18	2	0	4		0	8

	1988[1]	1987	1986	1985	1984	1983	1982	1981	*[2]	1980	1979
Major Injuries	3	13	44	31	28	9	3	12	*	27	18
Movement Accidents											
Killed	34	36	23	31	21	25	18	31		25	42
Major Injuries	79	80	70	42	52	46	42	54	*	67	79
Non-movement Accidents											
Killed	0	29	1	2	0	2	2	4		1	2
Major Injuries	105	84	55	51	35	31	48	41	*	72	60

[1] The 1988 statistics do not include the Clapham Junction accident and must be regarded as provisional.
[2] The Accident Reporting Order was changed at the beginning of 1981 and the figures on either side of the asterisk are not strictly comparable.

Notes:
Passenger Casualties
Train Accident— Injuries to passengers caused by a collision or derailment of a passenger train.
Movement Accident— Injuries to passengers not caused by a train accident but arising out of the movement of a train, ie falling, boarding or alighting from a moving train, or being struck by a train or door.
Non-movement Accident— Injuries to passengers not associated with train working. Most are slips, falls or trips on the same level or on stairs or escalators at stations. The casualties of the fire at Kings Cross are included in this category.

Four-wheel Drive Vehicles

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if the Transport and Road Research Laboratory has completed tests on 4×4 multi-purpose vehicles; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The tests have now been completed. We shall be making the full results available tomorrow. We shall have detailed discussions with manufacturers and other interested parties, including the Consumers Association and motorists' organisations.

The TRRL tests are part of our continuing examination of this complex issue. The results will be placed in the Library shortly. We are continuing our investigation of other aspects, notably analysis of accident data both in the United Kingdom and abroad, and sharing our experience with that of other countries.

We have embarked on international discussions with a view to developing appropriate international vehicle safety standards.

Multi-purpose Vehicles

Mr. Roger King: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many cars and related multi-purpose passenger vehicles were involved in 1987 in injury accidents in which a vehicle rolled over.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: In 1987, 8,338 cars, including multi-purpose passenger vehicles, were involved in injury accidents which included roll-over.

British Transport Police

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what is the practice of the British Transport police in prosecuting *(a)* children, *(b)* young persons, *(c)* adults and *(d)* hunts who trespass on or cause damage to British Rail property.

Mr. Portillo *[holding answer, 14 December 1988]:* The hon. Member should aproach the British Transport police for this information.

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will introduce legislation requiring the British Transport police to take legal action against members and officials of hunts who may endanger lives by trespassing on railway lines.

Mr. Portillo *[holding answer, 14 December 1988]:* Decisions on prosecutions are matters for the police and the prosecuting authorities.

Ardlough

Mr. Fearn: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport whether there was a public health risk or any ecological damage caused by the sinking of the vessel Ardlough; and whether hazardous substances, including low-level radioactive materials, which were unaccounted for have since been recovered.

Mr. Portillo: The public health risk was small and no ecological damage has been caused by the sinking of the 'Ardlough'. None of the hazardous materials unaccounted for has since been recovered. I am advised that the cargo which has not been recovered including the radioactive material, does not pose a threat of pollution sufficient to justify further action.

ATTORNEY-GENERAL

Infant Life Preservation Act 1929

105. **Mrs. Peacock:** To ask the Attorney-General when was the last prosecution order under the Infant Life Preservation Act 1929.

The Attorney-General: The last prosecution conducted by the Director of Public Prosecutions under the Infant Life Preservation Act 1929 was in 1980.

Abortion

106. **Mr. Alton:** To ask the Attorney-General when a prosecution was last taken against a doctor for aborting a child under section 1(1)(b) of the Abortion Act 1967.

The Attorney-General: Section 1 of the Abortion Act 1967 does not create any offence and accordingly no prosecution can be taken under its terms. The last prosecution conducted by the Director of Public Prosecutions for an offence under the law relating to abortion was in 1972. It resulted in a conviction.

Magistracy and Judiciary (Ethnic Community)

107. **Mr. Morgan:** To ask the Attorney-General what percentage of the ethnic community are members of the magistracy and judiciary.

The Attorney-General: No records are kept of the ethnic origin of members of the judiciary or of magistrates. However, a survey conducted of the magistracy at the end

of 1986 showed that the percentage of justices from ethnic minorities in relation to the total number of justices appointed in the Lord Chancellor's area was 1·92 per cent. In 1985 4·07 per cent. of new justices appointed were from ethnic minorities, and the corresponding figure for 1986 was 4·57 per cent. Informal indications are that the percentage will be slightly higher for 1987 and 1988.

Property Sales

Dr. Glyn: To ask the Attorney-General what steps he is taking to seek to bring the law of sale of property in England in line with Scots law to avoid gazumping.

The Attorney-General: None. Such legislation is unnecessary because the differences between England and Scotland in the way in which property is usually sold are differences of practice, not of law; and the procedural delays which permit gazumping in England are best dealt with by changes in practice.

Land Registry

Mr. Madden: To ask the Attorney-General how many items of correspondence the Lord Chancellor has received from hon. Members about the work of the Land Registry since 1 July.

The Attorney-General: 73.

Mr. Tony Brooks

Mr. Heddle: To ask the Attorney-General if he is yet in a position to make a statement on Mr. Tony Brooks in relation to alleged illegal acts referred to on 14 November, *Official Report*, column *739*.

The Attorney-General: The Solicitor-General wrote to the hon. Member for Workington on 18 November in the following terms:

"Pursuant to my answer to your oral question on 14 November, I have caused inquiries to be made into your intimation of possible allegations in the Panorama programme broadcast on 13 October, or in David Leigh's book on the Wilson plot that Mr. Tony Brooks was involved in a plot to destabilise the Government of Lord Wilson, or committed illegal acts.

There is in neither the programme, nor the book, any evidence, or indeed any allegation of any criminal activity by Mr. Brooks. I note particularly that Mr. Leigh in his book (at page 245) claims that, when Mr. Wright approached Mr. Brooks with the proposition for taking action relating to Lord Wilson, then the Prime Minister, Mr. Brooks responded that the proposition was improper. I would remind you of the Prime Minister's statement on 6 May 1987 in which she told the House that an investigation carried out by the Director General of the Security Service had found no evidence of any plot against Lord Wilson or his Government. There will be no criminal proceedings."

Justices of the Peace

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Attorney-General if he will set out *(a)* the connections with (i) Leyton and (ii) Waltham Forest, *(b)* race, colour or ethnic origin, *(c)* business or public service background and *(d)* qualifications of each member of (1) the North East London area advisory committee and (2) the Waltham Forest division sub-committee on the appointment of justices of the peace.

The Attorney-General: The Lord Chancellor and the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster have decided that the names of members of advisory committees on the appointment of justices of the peace are to be disclosed and that this is to apply to all advisory committees no later than 1992. The north-east London advisory committee has already disclosed its names and these have been given to the hon. Member. It would not be appropriate for the Lord Chancellor to disclose other information about individual members. In any event, the committee is in the process of reconstitution.

WALES

Nursing Homes

Mrs. Clwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what was the number of places in *(a)* private and *(b)* voluntary nursing homes in each district health authority in Wales in each year since 1979.

Mr. Grist: Comparable information is available only for the years 1982 to 1987. It is not possible to identify separately voluntary and private nursing homes.

Number of Beds (As at 31 December)

District Health Authority	*1982*	*1983*	*1984*	*1985*	*1986*	*1987*
Clwyd	491	584	677	758	840	1,170
East Dyfed	—	—	—	—	146	195
Gwent	71	71	71	292	421	719
Gwynedd	149	149	158	202	326	405
Mid Glamorgan	—	—	—	—	—	48
Pembrokeshire	—	—	—	8	8	8
Powys	—	28	42	87	195	247
South Glamorgan	129	140	161	203	304	381
West Glamorgan	144	196	224	351	547	832

Elderly People Health Care

Mrs. Clwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales, if he will list by district health authorities *(a)* the number of people between 65 and 75 years of age who have been identified as needing or having (i) hip replacements, (ii) cataracts, (iii) chest complaints, (iv) heart disease, (v) strokes, (vi) Parkinson's disease, (vii) Alzheimer's disease and (viii) osteo-rheumatoid arthritis and *(b)* the number of people over 75 years of age who have been identified as needing or having the above.

Mr. Grist: Information in the form requested is not available centrally. The number of discharges (including deaths) from NHS hospitals in Wales in 1987 by district health authority (DHA) of residence and by each diagnosis is as follows:—

Number of discharges (including deaths) from National Health Service Hospitals in Wales in 1987 by district health authority area of residence and age (years)

Diagnosis	Clwyd	East Dyfed	Pembroke-shire	Gwent	Gwynedd	Mid Glamorgan	Powys	South Glamorgan	West Glamorgan	Other/ Unknown	Wales Total
(a) Age 65-74 years											
A.	252	128	32	165	131	420	22	150	166	10	1,476
B.	598	277	114	617	378	811	94	419	380	147	3,835
C.	414	278	108	385	314	748	84	373	404	71	3,179
D.	40	22	4	29	58	33	9	40	33	4	272
E.	71	65	9	37	25	135	8	70	75	4	499
F.	8	—	—	8	1	1	2	1	—	4	25
G.	335	165	103	317	247	569	84	283	393	58	2,464
H.	195	89	63	202	150	440	59	206	171	35	1,610
I.i.	20	27	13	10	7	12	10	4	19	3	125
I.ii.	50	53	37	41	26	82	12	59	39	5	404
I.iii.	69	49	34	58	41	147	31	94	69	17	609
I.iv.	110	47	15	183	90	260	23	185	152	13	1,078
I.v.	408	197	73	246	245	756	78	275	226	43	2,547
J.	127	97	36	89	77	108	17	120	68	13	752
(b) Age 75 years and over											
A.	536	219	47	234	272	530	45	196	265	18	2,362
B.	576	253	101	464	476	642	102	487	370	77	3,548
C.	668	359	90	527	458	825	159	667	586	69	4,408
D.	135	42	4	54	109	92	18	94	85	9	642
E.	37	23	4	28	34	58	19	31	44	2	280
F.	5	—	—	21	11	1	—	8	2	5	53
G.	665	330	195	494	547	691	166	525	527	75	4,215
H.	420	191	103	341	373	561	113	420	290	47	2,859
I.i.	86	60	25	12	10	8	8	7	24	8	248
I.ii.	21	8	13	14	7	25	1	17	9	2	117
I.iii.	303	171	77	175	114	350	91	305	246	16	1,848
I.iv.	108	52	15	114	114	150	48	116	111	14	842
I.v.	588	240	88	346	436	772	123	477	318	35	3,423
J.	144	99	33	93	84	114	18	103	96	17	801

Diagnosis (International Classification of Diseases 9th Revision) (Code)

A. Cataracts (366).
B. Ischaemic heart disease (410-414).
C. Other heart disease (393-398, 401-405, 415, 416, 420-429).
D. Parkinson's Disease (332).
E. Rheumatoid Arthritis (7140).
F. Alzheimers Disease (3310).
G. Cerebrovascular disease (430-438).
H. of which cerebrovascular accident 4369).

Chest Complaints:

I.i. acute respiratory infection (460-466).
I.ii. other diseases of upper respiratory tract 470-478).
I.iii. pneumonia and influenza (480-487).
I.v. bronchitis and emphysema (490-493).
I.v. other diseases of respiratory system (494-519).
J. Hip replacement (OPCS operation code 810, 811).

Sewerage

Mrs. Clwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list the Welsh Water Authority sewage treatment works that failed to meet their discharge contents in 1987; and on what count they failed.

Mr. Grist: The information for 108 works is given in the following table. The remainder of the authority's 810 sewage treatment works met their consent conditions.

Name of works	Determined failing			
	Suspended solids	Bio-chemical oxygen demand	Ammonia	Other metals
Abbeydore	—	•	—	—
Acton Green	•	•	—	—
Betws yn Rhos	•	—	—	—
Boncath	•	•	—	—
Bonvilston West	•	•	—	—
Brithdir	•	•	—	—
Broadstone Catbrook (Llandogo)	—	—	•	—
Bronwydd	•	—	—	—
Bryncrug	—	•	—	—
Burry Port	—	•	—	—
Burton	•	•	—	—
Caernarvon	•	•	—	—
Carew	—	•	—	—

Name of works	Determined failing			
	Suspended solids	Bio-chemical oxygen demand	Ammonia	Other metals
Carway	•	•	—	—
Chester	—	•	—	—
Chirk	—	•	—	—
Chirk Bank	—	—	•	—
Christchurch	•	—	—	—
Cilycwm	•	•	—	—
Cradoc	•	•	—	—
Cross Inn & Nebo	•	—	—	—
Cwmffrwd	•	—	—	—
Darowen	•	—	—	—
Denbigh	—	•	—	—
Devils Bridge	•	•	—	—
Dihewyd	•	—	—	—
Dolgellau	•	•	—	—
Draethen	—	•	—	—
Drope (Westbury Homes)	•	—	•	—
Drury	•	•	—	—
Eardisley	—	•	—	—
Five Fords	•	•	•	—
Flint	•	•	—	—
Froncysyllte	—	•	—	—
Garway Fairview	—	•	•	—
Glynceiriog	—	•	•	—
Gorsgoch	•	•	—	—
Gresford	—	•	—	—
Henllan	•	—	•	—
Hereford Rotherwas	—	•	—	•
Hope	—	—	•	—
Kenderchurch	•	—	—	—
Kidwelly	•	•	—	—
Kilgetty East	—	—	•	—
Lampeter	•	—	—	—
Little Dewchurch	•	—	—	—
Llanbedr	•	—	—	—
Llanbedr Dyffryn Clwyd	—	—	—	•
Llanbister	—	•	•	—
Llandecwyn	•	•	—	—
Llandewi Rhydderch	—	•	—	—
Llanelli	•	—	—	—
Llanfaes	•	—	—	—
Llanfair Clydogau	•	•	•	—
Llanfrothen	•	—	—	—
Llangarron-Herbert Hill	•	•	—	—
Llangefni	•	•	—	•
Llangndeyrn	•	•	—	—
Llaniestyn	•	—	—	—
Llantilio Crosenny	•	•	—	—
Llanwarne-Monkton Place	—	•	•	—
Llanybyther	•	—	—	—
Maes-y-Groes	•	•	—	—
Maesteg	—	•	—	—
Marlas	•	—	—	—
Miskin	•	•	—	—
Mold Filter Works	•	•	—	—
Mold activated sludge works	•	•	—	—
Nantglyn	•	•	—	—
Narberth East	•	—	—	—
Newbridge-on-Wye	•	—	—	—
Newchapel	•	•	—	—
Newland	•	—	—	—
Northop	•	—	—	—
Norton	•	•	—	—
Pandy	•	•	—	—
Pencombe	•	—	—	—
Penley	—	•	—	—
Permorfa	•	—	—	—
Pennard	•	•	—	—
Penybont	•	•	•	—
Ponthir	—	—	—	•
Pontrilas	•	•	—	—
Presteigne	•	—	—	—
Queensferry	•	•	—	—
Raglan	—	•	—	—
Rhandirmwyn	•	—	—	—
Rhydpandy	•	•	—	—
Rockfield	•	•	—	—

Name of works	Determined failing			
	Suspended solids	Bio-chemical oxygen demand	Ammonia	Other metals
Rosemarket	•	•	—	—
Ross New (Lower Cleeve)	•	—	—	—
Sarnau	•	•	—	—
Sesswick	—	—	•	—
Shobden	•	—	—	—
St. Briavels	•	—	—	—
St. Owens Cross	•	•	—	—
St. Weonards	—	—	•	—
Stanford Bishop	•	—	—	—
Staunton-on-Wye	—	—	•	—
Stoke Edith	•	—	—	—
Talgarreg	—	•	—	—
Talley	•	•	—	—
Talybont (Price Bros)	•	•	•	—
Tyddyn Hywel	•	•	—	—
Walford (Coughton Place)	•	—	—	—
Weston-U-Penyard	•	•	—	—
Weycock Cross	•	—	•	—
Wilton	•	—	—	—

Forestry

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will provide details of any projections for the employment potential of forestry in rural areas in Wales.

Mr. Peter Walker: By the turn of the century, forestry and the wood-processing industries could be providing directly some 9,000 jobs in Wales, most of them in rural areas.

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Members' Offices

Mr. Thurnham: To ask the Lord President of the Council how many hon. Members are sharing offices with other hon. Members; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Wakeham: I refer my hon. Friend to the answer I gave to the hon. Member for Angus, East (Mr. Walsh) on 14 December at column 578.

Visitors' Guide

Mr. Summerson: To ask the Lord President of the Council when the visitors' guide to the Galleries will be published in Italian and Dutch.

Mr. Wakeham: There are no plans to do so at present. However, the Accommodation and Administration Sub-Committee, which has initial responsibility for deciding in which languages the visitors' guide to the Galleries is produced, would be willing to consider any requests for additions to the range of languages available.

EMPLOYMENT

YTS

Mr. Janner: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment whether he will make a statement on his Department's programme to promote racial equality in its YTS.

Mr. Cope: The Training Agency within my Department keeps under review the series of measures it has adopted to ensure that young people from ethnic minorities enjoy full equality of opportunity as regards YTS. I attach particular importance to the agency's attempts to ensure that any obstacles to ethnic minorities joining schemes in the employer-led sector are identified and overcome with the assistance of all parties involved. The Commission for Racial Equality has endorsed the equal opportunities code of practice for YTS.

Trainees (Injuries)

Ms. Short: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will give for each year the number of trainees on MSC/Training Commission/Training Agency programmes who have received payments under the analogous industrial injuries scheme which his Department oversees; and what is the average payment made to each trainee.

Mr. Nicholls: The number of adult and youth trainees eligible to receive benefits from the Training Agency's analogous industrial injuries scheme and the annual amounts paid since April 1983 is shown in the table. Comprehensive information is not available before 1983. It is not possible to provide an accurate estimate of the average payment made because part of the annual amounts shown relate to trainees injured in an earlier year.

Period	Number of trainees who received benefits	Total amount paid
April 1983—March 1984	945	£263,799
April 1984—March 1985	779	£363,497
April 1985—March 1986	782	£480,434
April 1986—March 1987	850	£601,339
April 1987—March 1988	1,057	£607,837

Business Registrations

Mr. Gordon Brown: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will publish for 1987 business registrations and deregistrations by region as laid in table 12.7 of "Regional Trends 1988".

Mr. Cope: I regret that the information requested is not yet available.

Training

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what effect he estimates his recent proposals for training, contained in "Employment for the 1990's" (Cm. 540) will have on voluntary and conservation groups; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Nicholls: The arrangements in the White Paper "Employment for the 1990's" (Cm. 540) will help to improve the delivery and focus of training at local level. Voluntary and conservation groups will be welcome to continue their support and commitment through training to helping unemployed people back into jobs.

Trade union Ballots

Mr. Oppenheim: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he has published orders containing the qualifications of independent scrutineers of certain trade union ballots and elections and consequential changes to the trade union ballot funding scheme.

Mr. Cope: The Trade Union Ballots and Elections (Independent Scrutineer Qualifications) Order 1988 has been published today. It specifies the conditions that a person must meet to be eligible for appointment as a scrutineer of certain ballots and elections which, under section 15 of the Employment Act 1988, will be subject to independent scrutiny from 1 February 1989. The order also specifies the following three bodies as being eligible for appointment as scrutineers:

The Electorial Reform Society of Great Britain and Ireland Ltd.
The Industrial Society
Unity Security Balloting Services Ltd.

The Funds for Trade Union Ballots (Amendment No. 2) Regulations 1988 have also been published today. These regulations amend the scheme under which trade unions may reclaim certain costs associated with secret postal ballots to reflect the new statutory requirement for independent scrutiny of certain ballots and elections which comes into force on 1 February 1989.

Youth Training Board

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what proposals he has to announce the creation of a successor body to the Youth Training Board.

Mr. Cope *[holding answer 12 December 1988]:* The Youth Training Board was dissolved when my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State took back the powers of the Training Commission into the Department of Employment. I cannot at the moment announce the creation of a successor body.

SCOTLAND

Health Board Chairmen

Mr. Home Robertson: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what criteria he uses in appointing health board chairmen.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: My right hon. and learned Friend appoints the person who in his view is best fitted for the job of leading the health board. This requires commitment of time and energy and qualities of leadership, drive and sound judgment.

Residential Homes

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will publish the figures for the last five years of the number of people who have applied for licences to run residential homes, broken down by health board area in which the homes are situated.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The responsibility for registration of residential care homes lies with local authorities. Information about the number of applications for registration is not available centrally.

Forestry Commission

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what arrangements are made for the good management of land sold by the Forestry Commission.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Responsibility for the good management of land sold by the Forestry Commission rests with the purchasers.

Forestry

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will provide details of any projections for the employment potential of forestry in rural areas of Scotland.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: By the turn of the century, forestry and the wood-processing industries could be providing directly some 17,000 jobs in Scotland, most of them in rural areas.

Sand Eels

Dr. Godman: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland whether he has any plans to reduce the catch of 'O' and 'I' group fish in the Shetland sand eel fishery; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Shetland fishermen have already taken voluntary measures to reduce catches of the youngest sand eels. We are currently considering whether additional management measures are required to protect the stocks.

Dr. Godman: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what is his estimate of the maximum sustainable annual yield for the Shetland sand eel fishery; whether he intends to set a total allowable catch for this fishery; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The sand eel is a short-lived species, and recruitment to the stocks varies widely from year to year. In the circumstances, our scientists consider that it is difficult to estimate the maximum sustainable yield or to advise on an appropriate total allowable catch for the Shetland sand eel stock. Other conservation measures may be a more appropriate way of managing the fishery.

Dr. Godman: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland whether he intends to introduce a close season for sand eel fishing in Scottish waters to cover the period July to October; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: There are no plans to introduce a general close season for sand eel fishing in Scottish

waters. If further management measures appear to be needed around Shetland, a close season is one of the options which will be considered.

Knitwear and Textiles

Mr. Tom Clarke: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will publish a table in the *Official Report* showing for each year since 1979, in index form with 1979 = 100 the value in real terms of knitwear and textiles output in Scotland.

Mr. Ian Lang: The information requested is in the table. The hosiery and knitted goods industry is part of the wider textiles industry.

	Textiles	*Hosiery and knitted goods*
1979	100	100
1980	91	103
1981	86	106
1982	78	97
1983	78	93
1984	85	108
1985	93	122
1986	87	116
1987	90	120

Source: Index of Industrial Production and Construction for Scotland.

Health Spending

Mrs. Margaret Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what guidance his Department has issued to health boards on the need for increased spending on services for the elderly, mentally ill and mentally handicapped in line with the Scottish Office publication "Health Spending in Scotland", and the Sharpen report.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The Government have endorsed the high priority accorded by the Sharpen report to the provision of community care services for the mentally ill and the mentally handicapped. Decisions on spending on local services for particular groups are for individual health boards from the substantially increased resources made available to the National Health Service in Scotland.

Community Care

Mrs. Margaret Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what guidelines his Department has issued to health boards with regard to remedying the problems of community care, in cases where the transition from institutions to the community is costing more than anticipated.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: None. I do not accept that any deficiencies in the provision of community care arise from inadequate funding of the relevant authorities. Gross expenditure on the National Health Service in Scotland is expected to reach £2,754 million in 1989-90. After allowing for inflation, this amounts to an increase in real terms of 34 per cent. since 1979-80. The Government's planning figure for current expenditure on social work services in 1989-90 is £445·4 million, an increase of 38 per cent. in real terms since 1979-80. We have made it clear to the relevant authorities that within these substantially increased resources a high priority should be given to the provision of community care services for vulnerable groups.

NHS Buildings (Sale)

Mrs. Margaret Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement on the methods of monitoring the use of the proceeds from the sales of National Health Service buildings used for the mentally handicapped and mentally ill, and how his Department ensures that these proceeds are put back into those services rather than the regional budget.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The proceeds of sales of surplus Health Service property are now used for further investment in the Health Service by the health board in whose area the property lies. The use which is to be made of the proceeds of sales of a particular category of property is not generally specified but health boards know that they should give a high priority to the care of mentally handicapped and mentally ill patients. Capital expenditure on these categories of patient has been almost £20 million per annum in recent years. That sum far exceeds the proceeds of sales of surplus mental hospitals and associated land.

Loch Sunart

Mr. Home Robertson: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement on pollution of Loch Sunart caused by the burial of diseased farmed fish close to the shore of the loch; and if he intends to take any action against any person responsible for such pollution.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The Highland river purification board, as the authority responsible for the control of water pollution, is investigating a pollution incident at Loch Sunart. I am advised that the board's initial findings are that no serious pollution of the waters has taken place. The river purification board will determine what further action to take in the light of its inquiries.

Agriculture Set-aside Scheme

Mr. Home Robertson: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will give an estimate of the number of farmworkers whose employment will be affected by participation by their employers or others in the set-aside scheme; and if he will take any action either to compensate those workers or to provide additional employment in the areas concerned.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The possible effect of set-aside on farm and rural employment is one of the aspects of the scheme we shall be evaluating in its first years. Initial indications, on the basis of the average area of land proposed for set-aside by those who have applied this year (36 hectares) in comparison with the average holding size involved (140 hectares), are that the number of workers affected should be very small. There is no provision for special compensation. The Government already provide substantial assistance, through various programmes and agencies, aimed at improving employment opportunities in rural areas.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Food Standards

Mr. Michael Brown: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what information he has on the work of the United Kingdom Register of Organic Food Standards since its launch in July 1987.

Mr. Ryder: My right hon. Friend the Minister has recently received from the chairman of Food From Britain, Mr. Walter Goldsmith, the "Review of the Activities of the Board of United Kingdom Register of Organic Food Standards for the period October 1987 to October 1988", a copy of which I am placing in the Library of the House.

Agriculture Council

Mr. McLoughlin: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what was the outcome of the Agriculture Council in Brussels which commenced on 12 December; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. MacGregor: I attended the Agriculture Council which commenced on Monday, 12 December. Decisions were reached on a number of issues. The most important was a decision, subject to consulting the European Parliament, on the long running and difficult negotiations to define the production and minimum strength rules for spirit drinks. The outcome was particularly satisfactory for the United Kingdom, in that it fully safeguarded our major interest in Scotch whisky, gin and vodka.

Although the meeting continued late on Monday and Tuesday, and overnight on Wednesday, it was not possible to reach agreement on a large number of other issues on the agenda. The Council was consequently adjourned to Monday 19 December when a further attempt will be made to reach conclusions on all the outstanding issues.

Radioactivity

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many representatives of the National Farmers' Union and the Farmers' Union of Wales attended the briefing meeting in London on Friday 9 December to discuss the continuing effects of Chernobyl.

Mr. Donald Thompson: Three.

Edenbridge House, Carlisle (Meeting)

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many farmers and landowners attended the meeting at Edenbridge house, Carlisle on 23 November to discuss the aerial survey of post-Chernobyl radioactivity; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Donald Thompson: Six.

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will place a transcript in the Library of the meeting between his officials and the National Farmers' Union held at Edenbridge house, Carlisle, on 23 November.

Mr. Ryder: No transcript of proceedings was made. However, a letter summarising the data discussed at the meeting was sent to all farmers in the Cumbrian restricted area on 12 December and a copy has been placed in the Library of the House.

Animals (Tuberculosis)

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (1) if will give details of research projects he is undertaking or funding into the spread and control of tuberculosis in farmed and wild animals; and if he will make a statement;

(2) whether he intends to increase research into the spread and control of tuberculosis in farmed and wild animals; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Donald Thompson: My Department is presently funding at a cost of approximately £0·5 million per annum a programme of research and development at the central veterinary laboratory, Weybridge designed to improve the diagnosis and control of tuberculosis in cattle and wildlife including badgers and deer. Appropriate research work will continue to be funded by my Department in recognition of the statutory and public health importance of this disease.

Radioactivity

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food whether the final report of the aerial survey of post-Chernobyl radioactivity in Cumbria will contain a contour map of radioactive cæsium deposition when published; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Ryder: Yes, the report will contain such a map.

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if, in view of the levels of radioactivity discovered in the post-Chernobyl aerial survey of Cumbria, he will extend the survey to cover all of the United Kingdom.

Mr. Ryder: At present there are no plans to extend the aerial survey outside the Chernobyl restricted areas.

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what steps he is taking to extend the terrestrial radioactive monitoring programme throughout England and Wales; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Ryder: The terrestrial radioactivity monitoring programme is a routine monitoring programme for food and environmental materials in the vicinity of each of the major nuclear sites. The feasibility of extending TRAMP beyond its present coverage is currently under consideration.

Deer (Tuberculosis)

Dr. David Clarke: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (1) whether he will make tuberculosis in deer a notifiable disease; and if he will make a statement;

(2) whether he intends to introduce tuberculosis testing and compulsory slaughter arrangements for farmed deer; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Donald Thompson: When I met the British Deer Farmers Association recently I discussed with it the current problems with TB in farmed deer. I explained that the Government will introduce legislation to make TB in deer a notifiable disease and to make the keeping of movement records and the permanent identification of farmed deer compulsory. My officials are preparing the

necessary legislation and will shortly be consulting other interested organisations. Meanwhile, infected or suspected animals known to the Ministry, will continue to be subject to movement restrictions applied under article 15 of the tuberculosis (England and Wales) and (Scotland) Orders 1984.

I have further agreed that my officials should explore with the industry the introduction of a voluntary tuberculosis attestation scheme for deer herds. Proposals for a scheme are at an advanced stage and letters have been sent to interested organisations inviting them to nominate representatives to form an advisory group to consider the proposals and their application.

I believe that, taken together, these are useful measures to combat the problem of tuberculosis in deer. In response to suggestions from the industry that compulsory slaughter might be appropriate I have suggested that they should consider the possibility of an industry funded programme. We are awaiting an industry response on all these matters.

Departmental Responsibilities

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what are the duties and responsibilites of the atomic energy (unit C) section of his Ministry; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Ryder: The atomic energy unit of the food science division of the Ministry is now known as the food safety (radiation) unit. Its duties and responsibilities broadly cover all aspects of radioactivity in the terrestrial foodchain. This includes a responsibility, held jointly with Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution, for advising Ministers from nuclear sites, and inspection of those sites to ensure compliance. The unit is responsible for assessing, and advising on, the radiological consequences of all planned and accidental releases of radioactivity, in relation to agricultural and horticultural produce. It specifies the environmental surveillance programme to be carried out by nuclear operators and carries out its own programme of monitoring radioactivity in the terrestrial environment. The unit also provides technical advice on all aspects of food irradiation. It sponsors and directs scientific research programmes on relevant topics. Members of the unit represent the Ministry on many national and international advisory committees.

Farmworkers (Set-aside Scheme)

Mr. Home Robertson: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will given an estimate of the number of farmworkers whose employment will be affected by participation by their employers or others in the set-aside scheme; and if he will take any action either to compensate those workers or to provide additional employment in the areas concerned.

Mr. Ryder: I am not yet in a position to estimate the employment effects of set-aside, which has only recently come into operation, but it offers a wide range of alternative land uses which should create new employment opportunities in the countryside, as will other recent Government initiatives such as the farm woodlands scheme and the farm diversification grant scheme. I do not therefore accept that there will be a net reduction in employment.

Eggs

Mr. Hardy: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (1) how many eggs which were infected by salmonella enteriditis have been found in the constituency of south Derbyshire during the last 12 months;

(2) how many eggs have been found to be infected with salmonella enteriditis *(a)* in the Yorkshire and Humberside region and *(b)* nationally during the last 12 months; and what is the estimated number of eggs produced in the region annually.

Mr. Ryder: I regret that it is not possible to make a precise estimate of the number of infected eggs in any region. But I would agree with what my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Health told the House on 5 December at column *19*, that the risk to any individual is small and the risk to the healthy adult small indeed.

Forestry

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will provide details of any projections for the employment potential of forestry in rural areas in England.

Mr. Ryder: Employment provided by forestry and the wood-processing industries in the rural areas of England is likely to stabilise at about the present level.

Woodlands (Set-aside scheme)

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food whether felling licences for woodlands planted under the set-aside scheme will be granted without a replanting condition; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Ryder: The control of tree felling rests with the Forestry Commissioners under powers contained in the Forestry Act 1967.

When clear felling is proposed, it is at present the commissioners' normal policy to require replanting of the felled area. As we have already announced, for woodlands planted under the farm woodland scheme there will, subject to whatever legislation may be current at the time, be a presumption in favour of granting licences without such a replanting condition provided that in each case this has the support of the relevant agriculture department and there are no overriding environmental objections. Similar arrangements will apply to any planting done under the set-aside scheme.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Ministerial Visits

Mr. John D. Taylor: To ask the Secretary for State of Northern Ireland how many nights each of the Ministers at his Department stayed in Northern Ireland during the months of June, July, August, September and October.

Mr. Tom King: The information is as follows:

	June 1988	July 1988	August 1988	September 1988	October 1988
Secretary of State	9	5	6	7	7
Mr. Stanley	3	5	—	—	—
Mr. Stewart	—	—	1	9	11
Lord Lyell	9	8	9	10	11
Mr. Needham	11	9	17	5	9
Dr. Mawhinney	4	8	1	8	6
Mr. Viggers	5	5	3	11	7

Mr. Stanley left the Northern Ireland Office and Mr. Stewart joined in July 1988.

Plastic Bullets

Ms. Short: To ask the Secretary for State of Northern Ireland what are the rules laid down for the use of plastic bullets in Northern Ireland.

Mr. Ian Stewart: It is not the Government's practice to disclose detailed operational instructions under which the security forces operate in Northern Ireland. However, the general rules governing the use of plastic baton rounds state that riot guns will be used only when judged to be the reasonable amount of force necessary in the protection of life and property, the preservation of the peace, and the prevention and detection of crime. The instructions are designed to minimise the possibility of injury to those at whom the baton rounds are aimed.

Weapons (Theft)

Mr. Livingstone: To ask the Secretary for State of Northern Ireland if he will list with dates any occasions when weapons have been stolen or have gone unaccounted for from police stations in Northern Ireland from 1970 to the present date.

Mr. Ian Stewart: Detailed information in the form requested is not readily available from existing central records and could only be obtained at disproportionate cost.

Milk Processing Plants

Mr. John D. Taylor: To ask the Secretary for State of Northern Ireland if the Industrial Development Board has concerned itself in the future development and ownership of Northern Ireland milk processing plants following the recent takeover bids by subsidiary firms of which the controlling interests are foreign based; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Viggers: The Industrial Development Board has been closely monitoring the progress of recent takeover bids in the milk processing sector in Northern Ireland but it is not part of its role to become involved in what are essentially commercial transactions.

ENERGY

Nuclear Power Plants

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what information he has received from the United States of America about the reasons for the shutdown of the nuclear power plants *(a)* Hanford, Washington, *(b)* Rocky Flats, Colorado, *(c)* Savannah River, South Carolina and *(d)* Fernald, Ohio; whether any pollution resulted from accidents or discharges at these plants; whether any of this information is relevant to nuclear power plants in the United Kingdom; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Spicer: The plants to which the hon. Member refers are military plants and are of designs which have no close parallels in the United Kingdom.

Natural Gas

Sir Trevor Skeet: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what is the status of Council directive 13/2/1975404 EEC relating to the use of natural gas in power stations; and whether he proposes to seek its modification.

Mr. Peter Morrison: Section 14 of the Energy Act 1976 gives effect to Council directive 75/404/EEC. I understand that, in part as the result of United Kingdom prompting, the European Commission is carrying out a review of the directive.

Atomic Energy Division

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if there are any restrictions on civil servants in his Department's atomic energy division travelling in COMECON countries for their holidays.

Mr. Michael Spicer: There are no specific restrictions against holiday travel in COMECON countries placed on members of this Department solely as a consequence of their being employed in our atomic energy division.

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what restrictions exist on retired officials, who have worked in his atomic energy division, wishing to emigrate to the Soviet Union.

Mr. Michael Spicer: There are no specific restrictions on the choice of country of residence on retirement placed on members of this Department solely as a consequence of their having been employed in our atomic energy division.

Uranium

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what steps he will take to ensure that weapons-grade uranium will not be sold into the wrong hands after privatisation of the electricity supply industry.

Mr. Michael Spicer: I refer the hon. Member to my reply to the hon. Member for Newport, West (Mr. Flynn) on 8 December 1988 at columns *328-29*.

Solar Housing Project

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy how many copies of the Linford/Pennylands solar housing

project book have been published; to whom copies have been distributed; and what has been the total cost of this publication.

Mr. Michael Spicer: The Linford/Pennylands housing project book has not yet been published and we are currently reviewing the most effective way to promote the results of this work and other studies. Total cost of the work on the book so far has been £9,336. The three technical reports on the Linford and Pennyland houses on which the contents of the book are drawn are available from the British Lending Library on request. These reports are:

Lindford low energy houses, report number S1025.
A review of design and performance of Calor Solar Houses at Milton Keynes (this report relates to three houses at Linford), report number S1138.
The Pennyland project, report number S1046.

Copies of reports S1025 and S1046 are available from the Open university, price £10 (or £3·50 for a summary). No information is available on the number of copies distributed of the technical reports.

Nuclear Reactors

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he has received any indication from British Nuclear Fuels plc as to the likely cost and timetable for *(a)* the closure and decommissioning of the Calder Hall and Chapelcross nuclear production reactors, *(b)* the redundant reprocessing buildings at Sellafield and *(c)* the capping of trenches and repackaging of radioactive wastes at Drigg.

Mr. Michael Spicer: I understand that BNFL hope to operate the Calder Hall and Chapelcross reactors until 1998. During the first three years after closure the reactors would be defuelled; subsequently the external plant items would be removed. The remainder of the reactor would be decommissioned within 100 years of closure. The discounted cost, excluding the cost of reprocessing any fuel remaining in the core but excluding a substantial contingency, is estimated at £224 million.

Decommissioning of redundant reprocessing facilities at Sellafield has already commenced where this is possible. Currently redundant facilities are expected to be decommissioned by 2000, except for three facilities due to be decommissioned by 2016. The estimated cost of £250 million will be incurred throughout the period.

The filled trenches at Drigg are being capped now. This work is expected to be completed in mid 1989. The remaining trench and future vaults will be capped as they become full. The estimated total cost is £5 million.

All wastes currently stored at Drigg are to be transported to Sellafield at a cost of around £5 million. Any necessary repackaging will be carried out as part of this exercise.

Electricity Generation

Sir Trevor Skeet: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what electricity generating capacity is likely to be commissioned before the year 2000; and if he will estimate when.

Mr. Michael Spicer: This will be a matter for the privatised electricity industry to decide. The Central Electricity Generating Board has said in evidence to the Hinkley Point public inquiry that it estimates there will be a shortfall in generating capacity of 15·5 GW by the year 2000.

Sir Trevor Skeet: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what are his estimates of coal and nuclear generating costs at rates of return of 5, 8 and 10 per cent.

Mr. Michael Spicer: The Central Electricity Generating Board has, in evidence to the Hinkley Point public inquiry, estimated the generation costs from coal and nuclear power stations in their "base case" as follows:

p/KWh

	Per cent.	*Per cent.*	*Per cent.*
Discount Rate	5	8	10
PWR	2·24	3·09	3·80
Coal			
Coastal station	2·50	2·97	3·35
Inland station	2·62	3·03	3·36

Heating Costs

Mr. Gordon Brown: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what was the annual cost of heating a small semi-detatched standardised house in England, Scotland, and Wales in 1979 by *(a)* gas, *(b)* electricity, *(c)* coal and *(d)* oil, expressed in cash.

Mr. Peter Morrison: Table 1 gives the costs of heating a standardised two bedroom house in five regions of Great Britain. The costs have been adjusted to 1979 money values using indices of current fuel prices as published in "Energy Trends". Costs vary between regions according to differences in temperature and fuel prices.

Table 1
Calculated costs of Heating a Standardised Two Bedroom House by region and type of fuel in 1979 money values

	Gas £	*Electricity* £	*Coal* £	*Oil* £
West Country	70-121 (118-169)	68-124 (106-163)	57-106 (126-175)	42-73 (70-101)
South East	73-127 (121-175)	73-132 (111-170)	64-118 (138-192)	44-75 (73-103)
North East	85-145 (157-193)	83-153 (122-192)	59-108 (118-168)	51-86 (79-114)
Scotland	85-148 (157-196)	85-155 (124-194)	67-123 (133-190)	51-86 (79-114)
Wales	70-121 (115-169)	69-127 (106-163)	61-113 (130-182)	42-73 (69-99)

Notes:
(1) Costs are calculated on the same basis as last published (Feb. 1986) Monergy Guides with fuel prices adjusted to 1979 *money* values.
(2) Figures given first are for space heating only. The range represents the well insulated and poorly insulated cases. Bracketed figures include water heating.
(3) No standing charges or maintenance costs are included.
(4) The calculations are based on standard wet central heating system for gas, coal and oil. For electric heating storage heaters run on off peak heating are assumed.

Electricity Supplies

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he will make a statement on agreements made at the meeting of the Council of Energy Ministers in Brussels on 8 November; and what are the implications for future construction of power plants in the United Kingdom

following from the decision to begin to establish a free market in electricity imports and exports in the European Economic Community.

Mr. Michael Spicer: I refer the hon. Member to my right hon. Friend's statement to the House of 14 November 1988 at column 426 on the outcome of the Energy Council of 8 November 1988.

Trade in electricity is subject to the Treaty of Rome and therefore to the provisions in it precluding barriers to imports and exports between member states. The organisation of the industry in many member states however in practice may inhibit trade and on 8 November the Council endorsed the Commission intention to prepare a report on these practical problems. Importers of electricity into the United Kingdom already have common carrier rights and the right to sell to the utilities at a fair price established by the Energy Act 1983.

Nuclear Power Stations

Sir Trevor Skeet: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he will give in a table the position of nuclear power stations in England and Scotland, the planned capacity for each, the percentage available and the date of retirement of the stations.

Mr. Michael Spicer: This is an operational matter for the relevant electricity boards. I have asked the chairman of the Central Electricity Generating Board to write to my hon. Friend in respect of nuclear power stations in England. My right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland will ask the chairman of the South of Scotland electricity board to write in respect of nuclear power stations in Scotland.

Fossil-fuel Power Stations

Sir Trevor Skeet: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he will list the fossil-fuel power stations in the United Kingdom due to be retired before 2000, the capacity lost and the current plans for replacement.

Mr. Michael Spicer: This is an operational matter for the relevant electricity boards. I have asked the chairman of the Central Electricity Generating Board to write to my hon. Friend in respect of fossil-fuel power stations in England and Wales. My right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland and my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland will ask the chairmen of the Scottish and Northern Ireland electricity boards to write in respect of their power stations.

Uranium

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what is, for each year since 1973, the total amount of uranium mined in Namibia which has been imported into Britain.

Mr. Michael Spicer *[holding answer 30 November 1988]:* There were no imports of uranium ore concentrate from Namibia for the United Kingdom's civil nuclear power programme until 1977. Between 1977 and 1984, some 8,600 short tons of U308 (some 6,600 metric tonnes of contained uranium) were imported. There have been no such imports since 1984.

All uranium imported into the United Kingdom for civil purposes is subject to Euratom safeguards and to the terms of the United Kingdom-Euratom-IAEA safeguards agreement.

Power Failure (Windsor)

Dr. Glyn: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy when he expects to complete his consideration of the power failure in Windsor referred to on 12 December, *Official Report*, column 641-2.

Mr. Michael Spicer: As required by the Electricity Supply Regulations 1988, the Southern electricity board notified my Department of the power failure which occurred at Windsor on 2 December. The cause was a fire in a substation, which led to a loss of supply to just over 12,000 consumers. Supply was restored to around 8,500 of these within five hours, but some remained without supply for a further 26 hours. The board is carrying out a full investigation, and I expect to have a report shortly. I will write to my hon. Friend when I have considered the report.

Oil Rigs

Mr. Favell: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy, further to his reply of 12 December, upon whom the cost of abandonment of North sea oil rigs will fall; whether he has plans to introduce regulations to require future installations to be constructed in a way which makes their abandonment easier and less expensive; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Morrison: Responsibility for the costs of abandonment of North sea offshore installations lies with the parties to the joint operating agreement relating to the installation, and any other persons given notice by the Secretary of State under section 1 of the Petroleum Act 1987. Tax and royalty relief will be available under the normal rules. The cost of abandonment is a factor which my Department is already able to take into account when considering field development proposals.

Energy Use Labelling

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he will set out the policy considerations that underpin the departmental view that it is neither desirable nor appropriate that the Government interfere in the market to enforce energy use labelling for domestic or commercial property for sale or rental.

Mr. Peter Morrison: It would not be justifiable to compel a householder or property owner to spend a sizeable sum of his own money in this way. However, the Energy Efficiency Office supports the development of voluntary energy labels, and I consider this to be the best way forward. Furthermore, enforcement of the use of energy labels would require sanctions for non-compliance; workable sanctions would be difficult to devise and implement.

Kingsnorth and West Burton

Sir Trevor Skeet: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what is the status of Kingsnorth and West Burton following the announced deferment of the coal-fired power station project.

Mr. Michael Spicer: As I said to the hon. Member for Sedgefield (Mr. Blair) on 9 December 1988, at column 379, my right hon. Friend is currently considering the CEGB's application for consent to construct a coal-fired power station at West Burton. He has received no application from the CEGB for consent to construct a coal-fired power station at Kingsnorth. It is for the CEGB to decide whether and when to apply for consent to construct any new power station.

DEFENCE

Arms Exports

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many jobs were directly and indirectly supported by arms exports in *(a)* 1986 and *(b)* 1987.

Mr. Sainsbury: As stated in the statement on the defence estimates, (Cm 344-II Volume 2, 1988 Table 6·8) the total number of jobs directly and indirectly supported by defence exports amounted to 110,000 for the year 1985-86. This is the latest year for which Government figures are yet available.

Aircraft (Chaff)

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will take steps to prevent the ejection of chaff from aircraft over areas grazed by livestock; what representations he has received from farmers on this matter; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Freeman: No. In war, the deployment of chaff would help our aircraft to avoid detection by enemy radar and thus enhance the survival prospects of the aircraft and aircrew. Practice in deploying chaff effectively is, therefore, essential. Most chaff is dropped over the sea, but a small amount has to be dispersed over land, almost all in the area of training ranges. Such use is very strictly controlled. Following complaints by a small number of farmers in the vicinity of the electronic warfare training range at RAF Spadeadam in Cumbria, the Ministry of Defence commissioned an independent study into the properties of chaff. The Ministry of Defence is discussing with the National Farmers Union our intention to conduct a follow-on study of the effects of chaff upon livestock within the Spadeadam area for a period of two years commencing in the near future.

Chemical Weapons

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence why it is not the policy of Her Majesty's Government to comment on information relating to chemical weapons capability.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The information on which the assessment of chemical weapons capabilities set out in the "Statement on the Defence Estimates 1988" (Cm. 344-I) is based is highly classified, and it would not be in the national interest to discuss such information in detail.

Airfields

Mr. Harris: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether he has any plans to review the future of the airfields operated by the Procurement Executive of his Department.

Mr. Sainsbury: We have decided to conduct a study into the future requirements for the airfields which support the research and development programme undertaken by the Procurement Executive. The airfields concerned are at royal aerospace establishment Bedford, aeroplane and armaments experimental establishment Boscombe Down and royal aerospace establishment Farnborough. The study will start early in the new year and all interested parties will have the opportunity to submit their views.

Her Majesty's Forces (Car Registration Plates)

Mr. Speed: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when he expects to complete the transfer of car registration plates on civilian vehicles belonging to members of Her Majesty's forces in Germany.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: All personnel with private vehicles registered with the British Forces Germany licensing centre have now been issued with United Kingdom-style civilian number plates. This action will be completed today. I should like to take this opportunity to express my appreciation for the excellent work by all those involved in Germany and elsewhere, in this very considerable task, which has involved some 60,000 vehicles and which has been completed in a most timely and efficient manner.

Ingram Model 10 Gun

Mr. Livingstone: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is the calibre of the Ingram Model 10 sub-machine gun referred to in his answer of 13 June, *Official Report*, column 229.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: Nine millimetres.

Mr. Livingstone: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when the Ingram Model 10 sub-machine gun was first issued to the Army in Northern Ireland; to which Army units it has been issued; and whether it can be fitted with a silencer.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: I understand that the Ingram Model 10 was first issued to the Army in Northern Ireland in 1976. It is not our policy to comment on the issue of weapons to particular units. Although, like most firearms, the Ingram Model SMG Model 10 can be fitted with a silencer or suppressor, I am not aware of any occasion when a silenced or suppressed weapon has been used by the Army in Northern Ireland.

Keenie Meenie Services

Mr. Livingstone: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence in which Ministry of Defence publications Keenie Meenie Services (KMS) have placed advertisements.

Mr. Sainsbury: I am not aware of any advertisements having been procured or placed in Ministry of Defence publications by Keenie Meenie Services (KMS).

14 Intelligence Company

Mr. Livingstone: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence (1) at what date 14 Intelligence Company was formed; and whether it is still operative;

(2) if he will list the locations and dates of 14 Intelligence Company's tours of duty.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: It is not our policy to comment on intelligence matters.

Troops (Northern Ireland)

Mr. Livingstone: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will publish a table showing the number of troops deployed in Northern Ireland and the number of his Department's civil servants stationed there in each year from 1969 to the present date.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The information available on the Armed Forces and MOD civilian numbers in Northern Ireland on 1 January of each year since 1969 and at the latest date is as follows:

	Regular Forces	*UDR*	*Civilians*
1969	4,902	—	n/a
1970	8,816	—	n/a
1971	11,100	4,000	n/a
1972	15,323	6,700	n/a
1973	18,382	9,000	n/a
1974	16,991	7,816	n/a
1975	15,732	7,676	n/a
1976	15,627	7,793	n/a
1977	15,427	7,616	n/a
1978	15,287	7,812	3,364
1979	13,704	7,761	3,305
1980	13,389	7,425	3,231
1981	12,143	7,431	3,087
1982	11,799	7,350	2,947
1983	11,357	7,026	2,825
1984	10,260	6,929	2,761
1985	10,222	6,468	2,709
1986	10,090	6,508	2,693
1987	11,158	6,535	2,621
1988	10,887	6,364	2,618
(1 July) 1988	11,164	6,310	2,625

n/a = not available.
Regular Forces numbers in 1969, 1970 and 1971 are at 1 July.
Recruitment to the UDR was authorised to commence on 1 January 1970.
Civilian numbers prior to 1978 are not readily available and could only be produced at disproportionate cost.
Civilian numbers in 1978 are at 1 April.

Ulster Defence Regiment

Mr. Livingstone: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list the official duties and responsibilities separately of the Ulster Defence Regiment and the regular forces.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The role of the armed forces in Northern Ireland, including the Ulster Defence Regiment, is to support the RUC in the defeat of terrorism and the maintenance of law and order. The duties and responsibilities in connection with this role are set out in statements on the defence estimates and in such documents as "Regulations of the Ulster Defence Regiment" published by HMSO.

British Nuclear Fuels

Mr. O'Neill: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if, pursuant to his answer of 7 December, the British Nuclear Fuel plc team carrying out the programme audit of the capital works programme at Aldermaston and Burghfield communicated with his Department's officials prior to the completion of their report in March 1986.

Mr. Sainsbury: Yes. The conduct of the audit required communication and consultation between the BNFL audit team and MOD officials during the audit period.

Mr. O'Neill: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence (1) how many programme audits of the capital works programme at Aldermaston and Burghfield have been carried out;

(2) how many programme audits of the capital works programme at Aldermaston and Burghfield have been carried out by British Nuclear Fuels plc.

Mr. Sainsbury: Three programme audits have been carried out on the AWE capital programme. These were carried out by British Nuclear Fuels plc, the controller, establishments research and nuclear, and John Brown (Engineers and Constructors) Ltd.

AWE Capital Programme

Mr. O'Neill: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what, pursuant to his answer of 25 November, *Official Report*, column 50, was the nature of the indications that the estimated total cost of the AWE capital programme was rising.

Mr. Sainsbury: I refer the hon. Member to paragraphs 9 and 10 to appendix 4 of the report by the Comptroller and Auditor General, "Control and Management of the Trident Programme"—HC 27.

Premature Voluntary Release

Mr. Brazier: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what are the Army premature voluntary release figures for the third quarter of each year from 1983 to 1988; and what are the comparable full year figures for each year from 1983 to 1987.

Mr. Freeman: The information that my hon. Friend has requested is set out in the table:

Premature voluntary release: Army 1983-1988

Year	*1983: 3rd Quarter*		*1984: 3rd Quarter*		*1985: 3rd Quarter*		*1986: 3rd Quarter*		*1987: 3rd Quarter*		*1988: 3rd Quarter*[1]	
Male Officers	507	146	562	153	695	167	661	188	661	173	501	208
Female Officers	16	6	25	8	37	4	25	7	39	9	25	11
Servicemen	1,907	503	2,491	637	2,936	769	2,643	580	2,997	749	2,702	912
Servicewomen	76	19	86	24	101	22	130	28	128	29	107	36
Total	2,506	674	3,164	822	3,769	962	3,459	803	3,825	960	3,335	1,167

[1] figures up to end of September 1988

HEALTH

Food Poisoning

Mr. Alan W. Williams: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is the number of reported cases of people affected by food poisoning caused by the bacterium salmonella enteritida found in eggs *(a)* for each year from 1980 to the present time and *(b)* for each calendar month during 1988.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: We do not have readily available information for the years 1980-87 for cases of food poisoning caused by salmonella enteritidis found in eggs. To date, in 1988 there have been 46 outbreaks of salmonella food poisoning involving over 1,000 cases in which the most likely source of infection was eggs. The monthly breakdown of cases is as follows. While we do not have readily available precise figures, a high proportion of these cases was associated with the salmonella enteritidis bacterium.

	Number
January	27
February	—
March	—
April	60
May	302
June	159
July	207
August	145
September	114
October	127

Mr. Ashley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what responsibility his Department has for ensuring that foodstuffs are safe for human consumption and carry no risk of food poisoning; in what way this responsibility is carried out; how many and what type of staff are required; what is the annual cost to his Department; and what has been the change in the number of staff and the annual cost to his Department in each of the last five years.

Mrs. Currie: I shall let the right hon. Member have such information as can be obtained without incurring disproportionate cost as soon as possible.

Physicists

Mr. Ashley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is the starting salary of National Health Service physicists who determine radiation output levels in radiotherapy departments; what is the percentage gap between this starting salary and that for physicists in industry with similar qualifications; how many jobs for physicists in the National Health Service are currently vacant; and what proportion this is of the total number.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: Starting salaries of physicists who determine radiation output levels in radiotherapy departments range from £11,164 to £14,591 outside London, and from £12,431 to £15,858 in inner London. We do not collect information centrally about vacant physicist posts in the National Health Service or about starting salaries of physicists in industry.

Childminders

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what steps he proposes to take to ensure that applicants for registration as childminders take part in a local authority approved course of pre-registration training, and that registered childminders do not discriminate against children or their families on grounds of ethnic origin, culture or religion.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: Local authority social service departments have a duty to register childminders under the Nurseries and Childminders Regulation Act 1948. We intend to revise that legislation by introducing amendments in the Children Bill, now going through Parliament. We shall consider whether it is appropriate to specify training requirements in new legislation. Section 20 of the Race Relations Act 1976 makes it unlawful for a person who provides facilities or services to the public or a section of the public to discriminate against any person who seeks to obtain those services, that is to treat him less favourably on racial grounds. I am advised that childminders are within the scope of that provision and I am satisfied that it is not necessary or desirable to make any further provision in legislation.

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what representations he has received from *(a)* childminding associations, and *(b)* childcare and family service organisations, with regard to the White Paper, "The Law on Childcare and Family Services"; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: We have received representations on the Government's proposals for new legislation to regulate independently provided day care and out of school services set out in the White Paper from the National Childminding Association, the Staffordshire County Childminding Association and the pre-School Playgroups Association. We intend to introduce amendments to the Nurseries and Childminders Regulation Act 1948, which currently regulates these services, in the Children Bill.

Operating Department Assistants

Mr. Fearn: To ask the Secretary of State for Health whether operating department assistants from agencies are paid at a higher or lower rate than National Health Service staff.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: We have no information about the terms and conditions of service of operating department assistants employed by private agencies. Operating department assistants employed by the NHS receive a package of terms and conditions which includes items such as holidays, pensions and sick pay. Comparison is therefore not possible.

Education Act 1981

Mr. Tom Clarke: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what proportion of district health authorities are not complying fully with section 10 of the Education Act 1981.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: We do not collect this information centrally. However, the arrangements for identifying and providing for children under the age of five with special educational needs should be met through the continuous process of child health surveillance, including any necessary follow up arrangements, carried out by health authorities.

AIDS

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) if he will outline the specific aspects of the AIDS education programme designed to meet the needs of the deaf;

(2) if he will make a statement explaining the reasons for refusing to renew the grant to AIDS health education and advice for the deaf for 1988-89; and whether the grant will be restored in 1989-90;

(3) if he will allocate an additional separate budget for AIDS education for deaf people in 1988-89.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: During 1987-88 and 1988-89 financial support amounting to nearly £113,000 was given by my Department and the Health Education Authority, to AIDS AHEAD a consortium of organisations representing the deaf, for the production and distribution of educational materials including videos, leaflets and posters.

A bid by AIDS AHEAD for further funding in the current financial year is currently being considered, and they have been invited to submit an outline bid for 1989-90.

In setting programmes for AIDS prevention my Department and the Health Education Authority will continue to take account of the educational needs of people with sensory impairment.

Drug abuse

Mr. Wareing: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will publish a breakdown of how the £9·5 million paid during the current financial year to combat drug abuse has been allocated between regional health authorities.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: The £9·5 million available to regional health authorities for the development of drug misuse services in 1988-89 has been allocated as follows:

Regional health authority	*£'000s*
Northern	603
Yorkshire	718
Trent	932
East Anglian	393
North West Thames	719
North East Thames	765
South East Thames	718
South West Thames	576
Wessex	585
Oxford	530
South Western	617
West Midlands	1,044
Mersey	481
North Western	789
Total	9,470

The allocations are based on each region's population in the 15 to 34 years age group.

Grants

Mr. Wareing: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will list the national organisations to whom grants were made under section 64 of the Health Services and Public Health Act 1968 in each of the years 1985 to 1988; and if he will state the amount paid in grants in each case.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: Lists giving the details of grants awarded under the section 64 general scheme for the financial years 1984-85 to 1986-87 have been placed in the Library. For 1987-88 I refer the hon. Member to the reply given by the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Social Security on 27 June at columns *124-29*.

The majority of the grant recipients are national in scope.

Grading

Mr. McCartney: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many nursing, midwifery and health visiting staff from each of the old grades have been assimilated to each of the new grades in the recent clinical grading structure in Wigan district health authority.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke *[holding answer 12 December 1988]:* The information requested is given in the table.

The new clinical grading structure for nursing, midwifery and health visitor staff
Number of staff in each of the old clinical grades assimilated to each of the new clinical grades on the basis of duties and responsibilities on 1 April 1988: Wigan

Previous grade	*Staff in post whole time equivalents*	*Numbers transferred to each new clinical grade*								
		A	*B*	*C*	*D*	*E*	*F*	*G*[1]	*H*	*I*
Nursing Auxiliary	416·13	383·66	32·47	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Staff Nursery Nurse	5·64	—	5·64	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Enrolled Nurse[2]	406·60	—	—	197·73	81·81	127·06	—	—	—	—
Enrolled District Nurse[2]	70·82	—	—	—	69·23	1·59	—	—	—	—
Senior Enrolled Nurse[2]	28·30	—	—	—	12·47	15·83	—	—	—	—
Staff Nurse[2]	310·25	—	—	—	53·94	212·14	44·17	—	—	—
Staff Midwife[2]	44·98	—	—	—	2·00	27·76	15·22	—	—	—
Deputy Sister[2]	1·06	—	—	—	—	1·06	—	—	—	—
Nursing Sister II[2]	228·78	—	—	—	—	—	91·43	135·35	2·00	—
Midwifery Sister II[2]	87·72	—	—	—	—	—	36·76	50·96	—	—
District Nurse (Sister II)[2]	59·12	—	—	—	—	—	2·22	54·90	2·00	—
Nursing Sister I	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Midwifery Sister I	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Health Visitor	80·00	—	—	—	—	—	—	77·00	3·00	—
Senior Nurse 8	3·00	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	1·00	2·00
Senior Nurse 8 (Midwife)	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Senior Nurse 7	17·00	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	3·00	14·00
Senior Nurse 7 (Midwife)	6·00	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	6·00
Clinical Teacher	4·00	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	4·00	—
Fieldwork Teacher	12·00	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	12·00	—

Previous grade	Staff in post whole time equivalents	Numbers transferred to each new clinical grade: A	B	C	D	E	F	[1]G	H	I
Practical Work Teacher	10·00	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	10·00	—
Tutor	8·60	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	8·60
Tutor Midwife	3·00	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	3·00
Post Basic Students										
Enrolled Staff Nurse	46·00	—	—	—	46·00	—	—	—	—	—
Deputy Sister	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Sister II	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Others	2·80	—	2·80	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
TOTALS	1,851·80	383·66	40·91	197·73	265·45	385·44	189·80	318·21	37·00	33·60

[1] Excludes some additional G posts which health authorities have indicated they intend to create in future on existing two-sister wards.
[2] Excludes Post Basic Students.

Medical Records Staff

Mr. Squire: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) what is the cost per member of staff working in medical records, information and technology; and what comparable figure he has for *(a)* the United States of America, *(b)* France, *(c)* the Federal Republic of Germany and *(d)* Sweden, at current rates of exchange;

(2) how many employees, and at what average rates, are engaged in medical records information and technology aged, respectively, 16 to 18 years, 19 to 24 years, 25 to 35 years, 36 to 50 years and 50 to 65 years; and what are the comparable figures for employees engaged in similar work in (1) the United States of America, (2) France, (3) the Federal Republic of Germany and (4) Sweden;

(3) if he will provide the number of medical records information and technology staff analysed by each health service region and give for each region the percentage which the total of such staff bears to the overall number employed in that region.

Mr. Mellor: The work is performed by staff in a number of different grades and on different pay scales. Information on the average cost of such staff or on their breakdown into different age groups could not be provided except at disproportionate cost. The table shows, for each of the health service regions in England, the numbers of staff employed in medical records and in computing, and these numbers expressed as a percentage of total staff, at the latest available date of information. Comparative information on other countries is not available.

NHS staff in post in England by Regional Health Authority at 30th September 1987

RHA	Staff in Post[1]: Medical records	Computing	Medical[2] records as percentage of total directly employed	Computing[2] as percentage of total directly employed
England	15,470	2,320	1·9	0·3
Northern	810	130	1·5	0·2
Yorkshire	1,140	140	1·9	0·2
Trent	1,540	120	2·0	0·2
East Anglia	590	70	1·9	0·2
North West Thames	1,050	130	2·0	0·2
North East Thames	1,310	150	1·9	0·2
South East Thames	1,100	180	1·8	0·3
South West Thames	940	100	2·1	0·2
Wessex	1,090	80	2·5	0·2
Oxford	680	110	2·0	0·3
South Western	850	180	1·6	0·3
West Midlands	1,640	300	1·9	0·4
Mersey	930	100	2·2	0·2
North Western	1,520	150	2·1	0·2

Source: Department of Health Annual Censuses of NHS Medical and Non-Medical Manpower.
[1] Figures are for staff in Administrative and Clerical staff groups, and are independently rounded to nearest ten (10) Whole Time Equivalents.
[2] Percentages are rounded to nearest decimal point, calculated on unrounded figures.

SOCIAL SECURITY

Widows

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many widows under the age of 45 years currently receive widow's pensions.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: As at 31 March 1988, the latest date for which information is available, approximately 4,500 widows aged under 45 were in receipt of widow's pension, which is payable to widows without dependent children.

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what estimate he has of the number of women aged between 40 and 45 years of age who will be widowed during 1988.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Latest estimates indicate that approximately 4,000 women aged between 40 and 45 will be widowed during 1988.

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security when he last reviewed the level of the widow's pension; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: My right hon. Friend reviewed the widow's payment at the same time as other benefits, before he made his uprating announcement to the House on 27 October.

Pensioners

Mr. Harry Barnes: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what number and proportion of pensioners' households in Derbyshire are in receipt of *(a)* occupational pension payments, *(b)* income support, *(c)* housing benefit and *(d)* both income support and housing benefit.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The county of Derbyshire is served by the Department's local offices at Derby (Becket street), Derby (London road), Derby (Heritage gate), Ilkeston, Chesterfield and Buxton, although the boundaries are not conterminous.

The number of income support claimants in receipt of a pensioner premium from these offices as at 31 August 1988, the latest information available, was 22,594.

I regret that the other information requested is not available.

Source: 100 per cent. count of cases in action. The figures given include a small number of cases not actually in receipt of benefit and the information is provisional and subject to amendment.

Transitional Payments

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security when his Department will authorise Waltham Forest council to pay £5·58p per week transitional payment awarded to Mr. and Mrs. E. W. and R. J. Hirst of 77 Tyndall road, E10 on 26 August; and how many other residents in Leyton are similarly awaiting notification to the local authority by his Department.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: In this instance Mr. Hirst opted to have any transitional payments paid direct to Waltham Forest district council. Payments in respect of the period 4 April 1988 to 13 November 1988 have been sent to the council and in these circumstances it is for them to arrange direct with Mr. Hirst the level of future rent and rate liabilities to reflect any transitional payments received direct from the transitional payments unit. Details of applications outstanding within Leyton are not available.

Community Care Grants

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will instruct social fund officers to consider the possible award of a community care grant in every case they handle as a means of ensuring that the budget is not underspent at the end of the year.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Social fund officers are advised in "Social Fund Manual" paragraphs 1026, 3053 and 4032 that for each application they should consider whether a community care grant would meet the particular need.

Departmental Computer Systems

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security (1) if he will list in the *Official Report* the types of intrusion he is trying to prohibit in designing his departmental computer security systems;

(2) what steps are being taken to protect departmental computer systems against theft of data, malicious damage or illegal tampering with data;

(3) whether encryption techniques are being employed in his departmental security systems;

(4) what plans he has to deal with the safety of back-up storage facilities for computer data in his departmental security systems;

(5) what plans he has to control access to information held in individual files in his departmental computer systems;

(6) whether his computer security system will restrict access to the originator of the data;

(7) what recovery procedures are available to a security supervisor of his departmental computer system when pass words are forgotten;

(8) if there is any system for monitoring terminal usage in his departmental computer system;

(9) what procedures exist to remove protection in particular files to make a computer data available for general release;

(10) whether the Department's security system includes physical devices such as keys to protect computer data.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The Department has a large number of information technology systems in use and a wide range of measures are provided to safeguard them. Most of the existing computer systems are batch-processing systems, which are not susceptible to many of the threats of on-line systems. However, the Department has now begun to implement its operational strategy, a major programme of computerisation which will provide on-line services for all social security offices. In devising the strategy, we have taken great care to ensure the security of the system.

Entry to a system will be limited to those terminals which have authorised access to the system. The use of terminals will be carefully monitored. External users are unable to dial directly into a system. A dial-back facility will be imposed which ensures that only authorised external users are allowed entry.

Access to a system is limited to authorised users by means of passwords and personal identification devices. Passwords are changed regularly and whenever a password is compromised or forgotten the individual must be re-introduced to the system by an authorised officer.

Most computer data files record the personal details of individuals. These records are treated confidentially and are not avilable for general release. Access to data will be controlled by a system of access permissions which will ensure that officers address only those data needed to perform their work. All transactions will be audited to enable management to monitor access to data and to ensure attempted breaches of security are recognised and reported. Where appropriate, data will be encrypted. Back-up copies of data will be held separately and securely for all systems.

Social Fund

Mr. Foulkes: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what is his latest information on how much of the social fund has so far been allocated for loans at Ayr's Department of Social Security office; and how much has been allocated as a national average.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: As at 30 October 1988 45 per cent. of the social fund loans allocation to Ayr local office had been spent. At the same date national expenditure was 43 per cent. of the total loans budget allocation.

Mr. Foulkes: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he has any information as to whether there will be an underspend at local offices of his Department of the social fund allocation.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Future levels of expenditure by local offices will be dependent on the numbers, types and financial values of applications made, their relative priorities, the amounts available in local office budgets and the exercise of discretion by social fund officers on individual cases. It is not possible at this stage to predict with certainty the extent to which individual local offices might underspend their budget allocations.

Family Credit

Mr. Thurnham: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what are the latest estimates for the number of families who will receive family credit scheme benefit during 1988-89; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: This information will be published in the Public Expenditure White Paper in the new year.

Housing Benefit

Mr. Winnick: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many applications for housing benefit transitional payments are still outstanding; and if all such cases will be finalised by the end of 1988.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Up to 9 December 396,000 applications had been received at the transitional payments unit. Of these, 314,000 have been assessed and 146,000 cases are now receiving payments. The majority of the outstanding cases are awaiting the return of the inquiry form which is sent to the relevant local authority to obtain housing benefit details. Local authorities are being contacted asking them to deal with the forms as quickly as possible. The unit is processing cases as soon as these inquiry forms are returned by local authorities. All outstanding cases will be cleared once the relevant forms have been sent back.

Mr. Winnick: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what is the average weekly payment currently paid out in housing benefit transitional payments; and what is the equivalent estimated sum in the next financial year.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The current average weekly payment of housing benefit transitional payment is £4·06, but this figure has fluctuated over the period since payments began. This will continue up to 31 March 1989 which is the cut-off date for applications to be made. It is not therefore possible to predict the average payment for the next financial year until after this date when all applications have been processed.

Mr. Winnick: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will state the current estimated time for which housing benefit transitional payments are likely to continue.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: No decision has yet been made on how transitional payments will finally be phased out although it has always been made clear that these payments will be reduced as people's circumstances change and the need for them is reduced. We have already announced that transitional payments will be reduced in the majority of cases by £2 per week next April. Some payments will therefore cease after the first year and others will not be paid after the end of year two. However, where large payments are being made the need will continue for several years.

Benefit Changes

Mr. Fatchett: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services, pursuant to his reply of 9 December, if he will set out the weekly change in benefit in 1989-90 for the individual claimant of *(a)* retirement pension, *(b)* widow's benefit, *(c)* unemployment benefit, *(d)* invalidity benefit, *(e)* attendance allowance and *(f)* mobility allowance, if mortgage interest payments were excluded from the calculation of the retail price index.

Mr. Scott: The information requested is as follows:

	proposed April 1989 rates, increased in line with published RPI	*April 1989 rates, increased in line with RPI excluding mortgage interest payments*
	£	£
Full basic State Retirement Pension	43·60	43·30
Widow's Pension standard rate	43·60	43·30
Unemployment Benefit (under pension age)	34·70	34·45
Invalidity Pension	43·60	43·30
Attendance Allowance (higher rate)	34·90	34·65
Mobility Allowance	24·40	24·25

Benefit Levels

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what level of inflation has been allowed for in his Department's calculations leading up to the setting of social security benefit levels for *(a)* 1988-89 and *(b)* 1989-90.

Mr. Scott: The April 1988 uprating was based on the published movement in the retail prices index (RPI) between September 1986 and September 1987; the index rose by 4·2 per cent. The rates of the new income-related benefits took account of a rise of 3·2 per cent. in the RPI less housing costs over the same period.

The uprating in April 1989 is based on the movement in the RPI between September 1987 and September 1988; the RPI rose by 5·9 per cent. and the RPI less housing by 4·7 per cent. over that period. Because the RPI was subject to an error which was corrected during the relevant period, benefits are being increased by more than the rise in the RPI where necessary to compensate for the error. Also in recognition of the error the premiums in the income-related benefits will receive an extra increase.

Board and Lodging Payments

Mr. Rooker: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will make a statement on proposed changes in board and lodging payments for people in supported lodgings and the level of representations in respect of the changes.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: A total of 52 representations on supported lodgings were made in response to consultative proposals to reform income support payments to people in lodgings. There will be generous transitional measures to protect this group against loss when new arrangements for people in board and lodgings accommodation come into force next April.

Tax Benefit Model Tables

Mr. Nicholas Baker: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security when he will publish the April 1988 edition of the tax benefit model tables; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: I have placed copies of these tables in the Library today.

We have improved the presentation of the tables. By including take-home pay and net income before as well as after housing costs, we have made clearer the steps by which gross earnings are turned into final figures. We have also replaced the heading "marginal tax rate" by "marginal tax/benefit withdrawal rate". This more accurately describes the marginal deduction from income which occurs as gross earnings rise. As in previous editions, and in order to illustrate fully the interplay between the tax and the benefit systems, the tables apply to local authority tenants. This year we have reflected this in the title of the tables.

In the tables expenses which claimants are expected to meet themselves are now treated as a part of net disposable income rather than deducted as they were before. This applies in particular to water service charges and fares to work. For those out of work and receiving income support, water service charges are treated like any other ordinary item of domestic expenditure. No particular fares-to-work figure, including the average, can represent the range of costs which occur in practice. Moreover, as many as one in three working people have no travel-to-work costs. The tables, therefore, assume no fares to work or other work-related expenses, but anyone wishing to deduct a particular amount, for example, the estimated average amount of £6·30 (which would be consistent with previous years figures), can make the appropriate adjustment to the net income figures shown in the tables.

Despite these improvements, the examples in the tables remain arbitrary. They cannot reflect, except by chance, the actual circumstances of particular people and cannot claim to be representative of the population at large. The tables use average rents and local authority rates so they do not reflect the full range of housing costs which people can pay. The family characteristics in the tables are chosen only to illustrate various features of the social security system.

Incomes

Sir Ian Gilmour: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will publish figures showing by how much the real equivalent incomes of the bottom 5 per cent. and the top 5 per cent. of the population rose between 1979 and 1985, after payment of housing costs.

Mr. Peter Lloyd *[holding answer 9 December 1988]:* Estimates of real equivalent increase in income are available only in 10 per cent. bands. Between 1979 and 1985, the incomes of the bottom 10 per cent. of individuals in Great Britain, calculated on the basis of "Households Below Average Income" and expressed after housing costs, rose by an average of 3 per cent. in real terms. The real incomes of the top 10 per cent. rose by 19 per cent.

Income Support

Mrs. Beckett: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many claims for and awards of supplementary benefit or income support for persons over pension age, unemployed and in other circumstances were made in each month since April 1987.

Mr. Peter Lloyd *[holding answer 13 December 1988]:* The information requested is as follows:

	Month ending									
	7 April 1987	*5 May 1987*	*2 June 1987*	*30 June 1987*	*28 July 1987*	*25 August 1987*	*22 September 1987*	*20 October 1987*	*17 November 1987*	*13 December 1987*
Pensioner claims	44,940	29,678	32,581	29,447	29,493	29,172	25,576	28,326	33,385	37,057
Pensioner awards	15,766	11,488	13,870	13,099	13,350	13,474	11,838	12,832	14,079	14,533
Unemployed claims	237,316	201,428	243,318	248,918	407,275	343,851	359,695	338,023	278,325	233,861
Unemployed awards	180,506	157,519	191,536	197,897	344,576	277,976	301,629	273,011	220,325	184,073
Other claims	79,073	62,457	74,867	72,503	79,239	80,120	77,122	83,390	81,949	74,023
Other awards	42,260	34,891	41,752	40,598	45,106	44,986	43,108	47,792	45,883	41,008

	Month ending									
	12 January 1988	*9 February 1988*	*8 March 1988*	*8 April 1988*	*29 April 1988*	*31 May 1988*	*30 June 1988*	*31 July 1988*	*31 August 1988*	*30 September 1988*	*31 October 1988*
Pensioner claims	27,525	41,695	50,079	59,579	17,867	39,387	37,469	28,838	28,347	22,008	28,563
Pensioner awards	10,603	16,648	17,805	18,901	8,399	19,907	19,278	15,442	15,037	12,504	15,550
Unemployed claims	186,828	254,803	219,918	205,795	87,810	182,543	227,364	325,864	274,054	268,409	246,098
Unemployed awards	147,739	203,520	169,123	157,004	74,097	153,171	192,091	288,723	234,408	233,869	207,785
Other claims	54,819	79,503	81,732	84,677	30,385	62,676	68,360	63,974	67,732	63,963	69,652
Other awards	30,631	46,119	43,924	44,158	19,914	41,770	46,355	45,511	47,938	47,486	49,329

Note: Recording of the information changes from four weekly to calendar monthly from April 1988.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Obscene Publications Act

13. **Sir Michael McNair-Wilson:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether he has any proposals for seeking to amend the Obscene Publications Act.

Mr. Renton: We see no case for continuing the exemption of broadcasting from the Obscene Publications Act 1959, and would like to see it removed at the earliest opportunity. We have no other proposals at present.

Wolverhampton Town Centre (Security Cameras)

14. **Mrs. Maureen Hicks:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what information he has as to whether similar action is being considered for other town centres, following the introduction by the police of security cameras in Wolverhampton town centre.

Mr. John Patten: The introduction of such schemes by the police in England and Wales is an operational matter for chief officers. Schemes of this kind might be considered in other "safer cities" areas. We are aware of similar schemes in Southampton, Bournemouth and King's Lynn.

Remand Centres

15. **Mr. Pike:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what recent representations he has received regarding the future of remand centres.

Mr. Hurd: About 65 individuals and organisations have sent in comments on the Green Paper "Private Sector Involvement in the Remand System", which was published in July.

Police Forces (Establishment)

16. **Mr. Stern:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many police forces are unable to recruit to their permitted establishement at the present time; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: All forces in England and Wales are at, or very close to, their authorised establishment, although force strengths fluctuate in the light of recruitment and wastage patterns. Only four forces were more than 2 per cent. below establishment on 31 August: these were Bedfordshire 2·62 per cent. below establishment; Northants 2·35 per cent.; Cheshire 2·15 per cent.; and Avon and Somerset 2·07 per cent.

75. **Mr. Rathbone:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he is yet ready to announce increases in police establishments for police forces.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: My right hon. Friend is not yet in a position to announce increases in police establishments for 1989-90. He will do so as soon as possible.

Police/School Liaison Group

17. **Mr. Key:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement on the code of practice on police and schools produced by the police/school liaison group.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The Government welcome the spirit of co-operation between teachers and the police which is reflected in the production of their code of practice.

I have to say that we do not agree with some of the detailed recommendations in the code, but we share the authors' view that police work in schools has an extremely important role to play in helping to develop the concept of social responsibility among young people and in maintaining the essential relationship of confidence and trust between the police and the public.

National Disaster Unit

18. **Mr. McCrindle:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he has any plans to establish a national disaster unit.

Mr. John Patten: We are looking closely at our arrangements for handling disasters and I will be announcing our conclusions in the due course.

Neighbourhood Watch Scheme

19. **Mr. Cash:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what are the numbers of neighbourhood watch schemes operating *(a)* nationally and *(b)* in the Stafford area.

Mr. John Patten: At the beginning of October, there were almost 60,000 neighbourhood watch schemes in England and Wales with 159 schemes in the Stafford police division covering nearly 17,000 households. This is an increase of almost 100 schemes over the last 12 months and the number of households covered has more than doubled.

36. **Mr. Sumberg:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what are the numbers of neighbourhood watch schemes operating *(a)* nationally and *(b)* in the Bury, South constituency.

Mr. John Patten: At the end of October, there were almost 60,000 neighbourhood watch schemes in England and Wales and 288 schemes in the Bury metropolitan district division of the Greater Manchester police force area. I understand from the chief constable of Greater Manchester that figures are not readily available on the number of schemes in my hon. Friend's constituency.

45. **Mr. Simon Coombs:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many households in England and Wales are now members of a neighbourhood watch scheme; and if he will make a statement.

88. **Mr. Pawsey:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many households in England and Wales are now members of a neighbourhood watch scheme; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John Patten: There are now almost 60,000 neighbourhood watch schemes in England and Wales covering some 3·25 million households. Since the establishment of the first scheme in 1982, neighbourhood watch has caught the public's imagination and I welcome this clear evidence of their commitment to help the police in dealing with local crime problems.

55. **Mr. Mans:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what are the numbers of neighbourhood watch schemes operating *(a)* nationally and *(b)* in the north-west area.

Mr. John Patten: At the beginning of October there were almost 60,000 neighbourhood watch schemes in England and Wales, with over a quarter of this total (16,800) in the Cheshire, Cumbria, Greater Manchester, Lancashire and Merseyside police force areas.

97. **Mr. Roger King:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement on the role of the neighbourhood watch scheme in crime prevention.

Mr. John Patten: Neighbourhood watch schemes can be effective in reducing crime and the fear of crime, in increasing public awareness of the part they can play in preventing crime, in improving co-operation between the public and the police, and in providing a focus for action for those who wish to work against crime.

Crime Statistics (South Yorkshire)

20. **Mr. Patnick:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what are the latest quarterly recorded crime figures in the South Yorkshire metropolitan area; and what were the comparable figures for *(a)* the previous quarter and *(b)* one year ago.

Mr. John Patten: There was a further drop in recorded crime. In the three months to September, South Yorkshire police recorded 20,883 notifiable offences. This compares with 22,000 in the second quarter of 1988 and 22,888 in the third quarter of 1987.

Forensic Science Service

21. **Mr. Patchett:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what are, by grade, the manpower levels within the forensic science service; and what they were three and five years ago.

Mr. Hurd: The information is as follows:

The numbers of staff in post in 1985 (at 31 December) and 1988 (at 31 October) at the six forensic science laboratories and the central research and support establishment (CRSE) were as follows:

Grade	*1985*	*1988*
5	6	6
6	8	8
7	54	51
Senior Scientific Officer	107·5	118
Higher Scientific Officer	86	95
Scientific Officer	101·5	115·5
Assistant Scientific Officer	81·5	54·5
Laboratory Attendant	11	9·5
Professional and Technology Officer	2	2
Totals	457·5	459·5

Staff in post figures for 1983 for the Chorley forensic science laboratory are not available. The number of staff in post at the other laboratories (including CRSE) on 31 December 1983 were as follows:

Grade	*1983*
5	5
6	6
7	43
Senior Scientific Officer	101
Higher Scientific Officer	76·5
Scientific Officer	76·5
Assistant Scientific Officer	90
Laboratory Attendant	9·5
Professional and Technology Officer	1
Total	408·5

Voluntary Bodies (Participation)

22. **Mr. David Harris:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what action he is taking to ensure that the policies of all public bodies and agencies for which he is responsible support and encourage the role of the citizen in participation in voluntary bodies.

Mr. John Patten: Involvement in voluntary work is one of the ways in which responsible and active citizens make a positive contribution to their community and I take every opportunity to encourage this. Many of the bodies and agencies for which I have responsibility already work closely with voluntary organisations and with individual volunteers. Volunteers do valuable work for example in the crime prevention field and with young offenders. The Home Office also provides grant aid to a number of organisations which support and promote volunteering.

"Death on the Rock"

23. **Mr. Riddick:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what information he has received on the steps taken by the Independent Broadcasting Authority in relation to Thames Television's programme "Death on the Rock".

Mr. Renton: The board of Thames Television has appointed two independent assessors to inquire into the making of the programme "Death on the Rock". The IBA, as the regulatory authority for the ITV companies, will consider the report from Thames as soon as it becomes available, and decide whether any action is necessary.

Broadwater Farm (Incident)

24. **Mr. Corbyn:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he has made inquiries into the alleged violations of police procedures during investigations into the death of PC Blakelock at Broadwater Farm in 1985; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: An investigation into allegations and complaints against the police is being carried out under the supervision of the Police Complaints Authority in accordance with the provisions of the Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984. It would be wrong for my right hon. Friend to intervene in this process.

Police Officers (Stress)

25. **Mr. Sheerman:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he will next meet the chairman of the Association of Chief Police Officers to discuss stress among police officers.

Mr. Hurd: At the meeting of the Police Advisory Board on 25 October, which was attended by the president of the Association of Chief Police Officers, I announced that a central facility would be provided within the Home Office to advise chief officers of police on matters of organisation health and welfare, including stress. I have no plans for a further meeting with the president on this issue.

Offensive Weapons

26. **Mr. Andy Stewart:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what steps his Department has taken to prevent the manufacture and supply of offensive weapons; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: We have taken powers in the new Criminal Justice Act enabling the Secretary of State to specify, by affirmative order, weapons which it will be an offence to manufacture, sell, import, hire, give or lend. The purpose of this provision is to take out of circulation altogether weapons which have no legitimate use. An order specifying 14 martial arts and other weapons was recently debated and approved by Parliament. The order was made on 17 November and comes into force on 18 January 1989.

87. **Mr. David Evans:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what proposals his Department has to limit the manufacture and supply of offensive weapons; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: We have taken powers in the new Criminal Justice Act enabling the Secretary of State to specify, by affirmative order, weapons which it will be an offence to manufacture, sell, import, hire, give or lend. The purpose of this provision is to take out of circulation altogether weapons which have no legitimate use. An order specifying 14 martial arts and other weapons was recently debated and approved by Parliament. The order was made on 17 November and comes into force on 18 January 1989.

Fire Services

27. **Mr. Allen McKay:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the cost of the fire service *(a)* in south Yorkshire and *(b)* in other metropolitan county areas.

61. **Mr. O'Brien:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the cost of the fire service *(a)* in West Yorkshire and *(b)* in other metropolitan counties.

Mr. John Patten: The budgets set by the fire and civil defence authorities in South Yorkshire and West Yorkshire in respect of all their functions show expected total expenditure for 1988-89 to be £22·422 million and £37·558 million, respectively. Corresponding information in respect of the other metropolitan fire and civil defence authorities is as follows:

	£ million
Greater Manchester	46·931
Merseyside	31·932
Tyne and Wear	22·982
West Midlands	44·227

Robbery (Sentences)

28. **Mr. Janman:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what has been the change in the last year in the average sentence for robbery; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John Patten: The average sentence imposed on men aged 21 or over (this being the average generally used for purposes of comparison) increased by 9 per cent. in the last year and by over 20 per cent. in the last three years.

Broadcasting Satellites

29. **Mr. Patrick Thompson:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what steps his Department is taking to prevent broadcasting of obscene and violent programmes in the United Kingdom from foreign-owned satellites.

40. **Mr. Tredinnick:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what steps his Department will be taking to prevent broadcasting of obscene and violent programmes in the United Kingdom from foreign-owned satellites.

72. **Mr. Greg Knight:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what steps his Department is taking to prevent broadcasting of obscene and violent programmes in the United Kingdom from foreign-owned satellites.

Mr. Renton: I refer my hon. Friends to paragraphs 7.12 to 7.14 of our White Paper "Broadcasting in the '90s: Competition, Choice and Quality" (November 1988, Cm. 517), copies of which were placed in the Library. Since the White Paper was published, we have made further significant progress, at last month's Stockholm ministerial conference, towards achieving agreement on an effective Council of Europe convention on transfrontier broadcasting (to which paragraph 7.13 refers). Subject to further discussion by Ministers' deputies, prospects now seem good for opening the convention for signature early in 1989.

HIV Infection (Prisoners)

30. **Mr. Butler:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement on the level of HIV infection amongst prisoners.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: On 5 December 1988 the number of reported HIV antibody positive prisoners in England and Wales was 55. These are the identified cases. An informed assessment of the rate of infection in the prison population could be made only by taking the unacceptable step of requiring prisoners to submit to blood testing arrangements different from those which apply in the general community. Prisoners will, however, where appropriate be included in future approved research programmes based on anonymous blood testing.

Prison Kitchens

31. **Mr. Ashley:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he has any plans to meet the Institution of Environmental Health Officers to discuss the inspection of prison kitchens.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Neither my right hon. Friend nor I have plans to meet representatives of the institution at present.

Official Secrets Bill

32. **Mr. Andrew Smith:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what representations he has received concerning the need for a public interest defence in the Official Secrets Bill.

Mr. Hurd: From the publication of our White Paper on the reform of section 2 of the Official Secrets Act 1911 on

29 June up to 6 December I had received representations from 13 organisations and eight individuals supporting a public interest defence. In addition, right hon. and hon. Members had passed to me representations supporting such a defence which they had received from three organisations and three individuals.

Broadcasting White Paper

33. **Mrs. Margaret Ewing:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what discussions he has had with representatives of the Scottish broadcasting media regarding the Government's White Paper, Cm. 517.

66. **Mr. Andrew Welsh:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what discussions he has had with representatives of the Scottish broadcasting media regarding the Government White Paper, Cm. 517.

84. **Mr. Salmond:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what discussions he has had with representatives of the Scottish broadcasting media regarding the Government's White Paper, Cm. 517.

Mr. Renton: I refer the hon. Members to the reply I gave to the hon. Member for Glasgow, Govan (Mr. Sillars) earlier today.

70. **Mr. Teddy Taylor:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department why his broadcasting White Paper proposes that the new television channels should be available only to EEC companies and that each such station should have a required quota of programmes produced in the EEC.

Mr. Renton: Under European community rules the Government must not discriminate between United Kingdom and other EC television companies. The White Paper's proposals reflect well-established principles in existing legislation. Terrestrial television channels have power, immediacy and influence, and are a scarce national resource: the Government do not consider it desirable that non-EC companies should be able to control them. We are considering further whether this restriction should also apply to the proposed franchise for the local delivery of TV. The requirement for a proper proportion of programme material of EC origin should help to maintain a competitive and flourishing United Kingdom programme market.

Guildford Pub Bombing

34. **Mr. Boateng:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will refer the Guildford four cases to the Court of Appeal, in view of the new evidence submitted to him concerning the cases; and if he will make a statement.

Guildford and Woolwich Pub Bombings

62. **Mr. Mullin:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he expects to announce the outcome of his review of the convictions of the four people convicted of the Guildford and Woolwich pub bombings.

Mr. John Patten: I refer the hon. Members to the reply I gave to the question by my hon. Friend the Member for Bristol, North-West (Mr. Stern) on 6 December at column *113*.

Children (Rights)

35. **Miss Lestor:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will take steps to ensure that United Kingdom immigration rules and the United Nations draft conventions on the rights of the child are consistent; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Renton: The draft conventions remain under discussion and I have no present plan to make changes to the rules for this purpose.

Frontier Controls (Ports)

37. **Mr. Morley:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he has any proposals to alter frontier controls and arrangements at United Kingdom ports of entry in advance of 1992.

Ports (Controls)

63. **Mr. McLeish:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what consideration he has given to controls at United Kingdom ports of entry after 1992.

Frontier Control

74. **Mrs. Fyfe:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement on control of EEC frontiers after 1992.

Mr. Renton: I refer the hon. Members to the reply given to a question from my hon. Friend the Member for Romsey and Waterside (Mr. Colvin) on 14 December 1988 at columns *576-77*.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Carlisle Report (Parole)

38. **Mr. Boyes:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether he will estimate the effects upon the total prison population of the implementation of the Carlisle report on parole.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The review committee's assessment of the prison population effects of the proposed scheme is given in paragraphs 429-434 and in table 10, appendix 5 of its report, "The Parole System in England and Wales", November 1988, Cm. 532.

Child Destruction

39. **Sir Bernard Braine:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many inmates of Her Majesty's prisons are currently serving custodial sentences for the crime of child destruction under the Infant Life Preservation Act.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The records held centrally show one offender currently serving a custodial sentence having been convicted under the Infant Life Preservation Act 1929. I also refer my right hon. Friend to the reply given earlier to a question from my hon. Friend the Member for Basildon (Mr. Amess).

Footballers (Incidents)

41. **Mr. Harry Ewing:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he has discussed with chief police officers in England and Wales the role of police in attendance at football grounds in relation to incidents involving players on the field of play.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: No. It is for the appropriate chief officer of police to decide whether criminal charges should be brought as a result of incidents during football matches. Any cases in which charges are made in England and Wales are then referred to the Crown Prosecution Service.

Police Authorities

42. **Mr. Tony Lloyd:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what steps he has taken to ensure that adequate resources are available to police authorities.

69. **Mr. Hardy:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what steps he will take to increase the resources and staffing of the South Yorkshire police.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The Home Office meets, through police specific grant, 51 per cent. of all police authorities' expenditure for policing purposes. An additional contribution is made from central funds through block grant.

Applications by police authorities for increases in police establishments in 1989-90 are under consideration and decisions will be announced as soon as possible. Eight hundred police posts are available outside London.

Association of Chief Police Officers

43. **Mr. Hind:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he last met the Association of Chief Police Officers; and what was discussed.

Mr. Hurd: I hold many meetings with the officers and committees of ACPO. The most recent was with members of the ACPO traffic committee on 24 October. The matters that we discussed included police breath-testing powers and the enforcement of road traffic law.

Gaelic Broadcasting Service

44. **Mr. Macdonald:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what representations he has received from those campaigning for a Gaelic language broadcasting service.

Mr. Renton: We have received representations on this matter from various interested parties on behalf of the Gaelic community in Scotland, including the report "Towards a Gaelic Television Service" submitted by Comunn na Gaidhlig. Those representations were taken into account in the preparation of the Government's recently published White Paper on broadcasting which, amongst other things, addresses the question of Gaelic broadcasting and how it might benefit from future television services.

65. **Mrs. Ray Michie:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what representations he has received regarding Gaelic broadcasting since the publication of the broadcasting White Paper.

Mr. Renton: We have received one representation from a Member of Parliament on behalf of his constituent. The question of Gaelic broadcasting, and how it might benefit from future television services, is addressed in the Government's recently published White Paper on broadcasting, and Home Office officials have met Comunn na Gaidhlig to discuss the implications of this part of the White Paper.

Criminal Injuries Compensation Board

46. **Mr. Bradley:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he will next meet the chairman of the Criminal Injuries Compensation Board to discuss delays in processing claims.

Mr. Hurd: I have no plans for such a meeting at present.

50. **Mr. Lofthouse:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what further resources he intends to make available in order to reduce the backlog of submissions to the Criminal Injuries Compensation Board.

Mr. John Patten: I refer the hon. Member to the reply given to a question from my hon. and learned Friend the Member for Feltham and Heston (Mr. Ground) on 1 December at column *395*.

90. **Mr. Holt:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the average waiting time between the injury and receipt of compensation payments from the Criminal Injuries Compensation Board.

Mr. John Patten: The statistics kept by the board use the date of application as the baseline and not the date of the injury. The available information on the proportion of cases submitted to a single member for decision within certain periods from the date of application is published in the Board's annual reports. The most recent report was published on 6 December (Cm. 536).

EC (Security and Frontier Controls)

47. **Mr. Colvin:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what recent talks he has had with European Ministers about security and frontier controls following implementation of the single European market, in particular in connection with the fight against terrorism.

Mr. Hurd: I attended a meeting of Trevi Ministers in Athens on 9 December under the presidency of the Greek Minister for Public Order, Mr. Petsos. We agreed that Trevi should pursue its study of border checks, which had been instituted at my initiative at our previous meeting in Munich, so that the changes to take place on 1 January 1993 should not adversely affect prevention of terrorism, drug trafficking and other serious crime in the Community.

In view of recent events and the important contribution that effective extradition arrangements can make to counter terrorism, we also agreed to ask our Foreign Minister colleagues to arrange for the working group on judicial co-operation to examine co-operation over the preparation and processing of extradition applications as part of its consideration of the subject as a whole. We also agreed an updated assessment of the terrorist threat to the Community countries.

In recent months I have also had bilateral discussions with my French, Italian and Spanish counterparts on terrorism, including the security aspects of frontier checks and controls.

European Court of Human Rights (Brogen and Others)

48. **Mr. Archer:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he has yet considered the implications for United Kingdom legislation of the judgment of the European Court of Human Rights in the case of Brogen and others; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hurd: I refer the right hon. and learned Member to the statement I made on this matter when moving the Second Reading of the Prevention of Terrorism (Temporary Provisions) Bill on 6 December at columns 210-11.

Crimes of Violence (Sentences)

49. **Mrs. Mahon:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether he will consider legislation to ensure greater consistency of sentencing for crimes of violence.

Mr. John Patten: From 1 February next, under the Criminal Justice Act 1988, the Attorney-General will be able to bring before the Court of Appeal for review sentences imposed by the Crown court for the most serious offences which appear unduly lenient. We have no plans for further legislation for the purpose which the hon. Member suggests.

Rape

51. **Miss Emma Nicholson:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what has been the rise in the average sentence for rape over the past year; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John Patten: The average length of sentence imposed on men aged 21 or over (this being the average generally used for purposes of comparison) upon conviction of rape at the Crown court increased by 16 per cent. between 1986 and 1987, the latest year for which figures are available. The average sentence is now over six years.

Old-Age Pensioners (TV Licence)

52. **Mr. Skinner:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will now introduce free television licences for all old age pensioners; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Renton: No. This suggestion has been rejected by the House on a number of occasions.

Infant Life Preservation Act 1929

53. **Mr. Brazier:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many convictions there have been as a result of prosecutions brought under the Infant Life Preservation Act 1929 in the last 10 years; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John Patten: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply given earlier to a question from my hon. Friend the Member for Basildon (Mr. Amess).

Prisoners (Solitary Confinement)

54. **Mr. Ron Brown:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many prisoners in England and Wales are currently held in solitary confinement; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Solitary confinement, which entails deprivation of all human contact, is not available as a punishment in England and Wales. Cellular confinement may be awarded as a punishment at a disciplinary hearing, but figures are not available for the number so held at any one time. In such circumstances, governors have discretion concerning matters such as visits, education facilities and religious observance.

Independent Television Franchises

56. **Mr. Grocott:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what representations he has received on his White Paper proposal to auction the independent television franchises.

Mr. Renton: We have received a number of representations on the proposal for licences to be allocated by competitive tender subject to a quality threshold. We have invited comments on the White Paper before 28 February 1989.

Parking Enforcement

57. **Ms. Abbott:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he expects to publish the report of the working party on parking enforcement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: I understand that the parking enforcement working party is nearing the end of its deliberations and is likely to submit its report early in the new year. A decision about publication of the report will be taken when it is received.

Mr. Shersby: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what conclusions have been reached by his Department's parking enforcement working party; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: I understand that the parking enforcement working party is nearing the end of its work, and is likely to submit its report early in the new year.

Abortion

58. **Mr. Ken Hargreaves:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when the last inquest was carried out on a baby aborted under the *Abortion Act* 1967.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: I am not aware of any such inquest. This information is not collected centrally and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

80. **Mr. Amos:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what criteria he used when deciding that it was not in the public interest to order an inquest on the baby of 21 weeks gestational age aborted at the Carlisle city general hospital in July 1987.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The conclusion was reached after careful consideration of all the information provided by the coroner.

92. **Mr. Evennett:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what representations he has received concerning the procedures adopted in determining whether inquests should be held on the deaths of babies aborted alive.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: After the decision was made not to direct the coroner to hold an inquest into the death of the Carlisle baby, we received some representations from Members and six letters from the public variously supporting or seeking reconsideration of the decision.

Burglary

59. **Mr. Summerson:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what progress his Department is making in reducing burglary; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John Patten: There were 73,000 fewer recorded burglaries in England and Wales in the 12 months ending September 1988, compared with the corresponding period to September 1987, a decrease of 8 per cent. This is very encouraging and great credit is due to the police and the public in their co-operation in a range of crime prevention measures, in particular neighbourhood watch.

Rural Violence

60. **Mr. Colin Shepherd:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what action his Department has taken to curb rural violence.

Mr. John Patten: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply given earlier today to the question by my hon. Friend the Member for Leominster (Mr. Temple-Morris).

Broadcasting

64. **Mr. Turner:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he will next meet the chairman of the BBC to discuss the future of broadcasting.

Mr. Hurd: I meet the chairman of the BBC often to discuss this and other matters.

Sunday Trading

67. **Mr. Andrew MacKay:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he has any plans to seek to amend the legislation on Sunday trading.

Mr. Renton: We are continuing our consultations with interested parties to see if we can find a practicable solution which will command sufficient support.

Young Children (Attacks)

68. **Mr. Robert G. Hughes:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what steps his Department is taking to prevent and reduce the number of violent attacks upon young children.

Mr. John Patten: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply I gave on 9 December 1988 to my hon. Friend the Member for Canterbury (Mr. Brazier), at column *354*.

Punishment in the Community

71. **Mr. Maclennan:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what are his plans for punishment in the community.

Mr. John Patten: Our proposals are set out in the Green Paper "Punishment, Custody and the Community" (Cm. 424). We have invited responses to our long-term proposals by 31 January 1989. Meanwhile we issued in August an action plan for dealing with young adult offenders (those aged 17 and under 21). This calls on probation services in co-operation with other agencies to make arrangements to enable more offenders to be kept out of custody.

89. **Mr. Blunkett:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what representations he has received on his Department's paper, "Punishment in the Community", Cm. 474.

Mr. John Patten: A number of representations have been received from individuals and organisations. We asked for comments by 31 January 1989, and we shall then give detailed consideration to all the responses.

Football Clubs (Membership Schemes)

73. **Mr. Lester:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will seek to legislate to ensure that a conviction for any crime of violence will automatically disqualify the offender from the proposed national football membership scheme.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: I refer the hon. Member to the report of the working party chaired by my hon. Friend the Minister for Sport, published on 9 November. A copy is in the Library. The working party recommended that disqualification from membership should be linked specifically to conviction for football related offences. The Government's conclusion will be made known shortly when my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment introduces a Bill on the football membership scheme.

Passport Office (Staff)

76. **Mr. Nellist:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what response he has made to the

claim by the Passport Office trade union side for an increase in numbers of permanent staff; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Renton: As I indicated in my reply to a question from the hon. Member for Glasgow, Provan (Mr. Wray) on 28 November at column 72, passport department officials are in consultation with the trade unions about staffing levels.

83. **Mr. Doran:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what representations he has received about staffing levels in passport offices.

Mr. Renton: A number of hon. Members have written recently on the matter, following an approach to them by the Civil and Public Services Association and the National Union of Civil and Public Servants. Replies will be sent shortly.

Metropolitan Police (Fingerprinting)

77. **Mr. Bell:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will call for a report from the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis on the average length of time in the Metropolitan police area taken for the fingerprint department to match a set of fingerprints found at the scene of crime with those of a suspect or suspects.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: I understand from the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis that searches of this kind are generally completed within a month. Priority is, however, given to cases involving serious offences and where there is a good quality mark, and the time taken in a particular case will depend therefore on the nature of the offence and the quality of the mark obtained at the scene.

Prisoners (Statistics)

78. **Mr. Knox:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many people were in prison at the most recent count.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: On Friday 2 December, the latest date for which figures are readily available, 49,235 prisoners were held in prison service establishments in England and Wales. A further 937 prisoners were held in police cells.

Passport Applications

79. **Mr. Worthington:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what was the number of passport applications at each passport office in 1985, 1986, 1987 and 1988, to September; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Renton: The table shows the number of passports issued in each of the last three years, and in the first nine months of this year.

	1985	*1986*	*1987*	[1] *1988*
London	418,036	437,857	355,475	342,437
Liverpool	446,813	556,664	554,993	583,865
Peterborough	392,460	482,797	480,422	470,982
Newport	369,981	427,800	439,302	452,769
Glasgow	137,098	159,954	159,723	142,726
Belfast	34,655	45,472	51,305	55,713
	1,799,043	2,110,544	2,041,220	2,048,492

[1] January to September.

Police Service (Value for Money)

81. **Mr. Wood:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what measures his Department is taking to secure value for money in the police service.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The Home Office shares with chief officers of police and local police authorities the responsibility for securing value for money in the police service. Significant improvements in efficiency and effectiveness have been achieved, with the encouragement and support of my Department and Her Majesty's inspectors of constabulary, through, for example, the civilianisation of police posts (some 3,300 police officers were released for operational duties in this way in the last five years or so); the streamlining of procedures and the elimination of unnecessary paperwork; the contracting out of support services; and the introduction of efficiency scrutinies in the police service. The Home Office pays full regard to value for money in exercising central controls on police manpower and capital expenditure on land and buildings, and in fulfilling my right hon. Friend's responsibilities as police authority for the Metropolitan police; in providing central services for training, research and development, science and technology; and in promoting good practice across a wide range of police activity.

Drug Taking

82. **Mr. Michael J. Martin:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what extra resources he intends to make available in order to reduce drug taking.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: In accordance with the Government's strategy for reducing both supply and demand, extra resources are being committed for: reducing supplies from India by a contribution of £1 million a year through the United Nations fund for drug abuse control; increasing the effectiveness of enforcement by the provision of some £10 million for additional specialist drugs investigators and improved technical aids for Her Majesty's Customs and Excise; developing prevention and education through the latest phase of the drug prevention publicity campaign and, in England and Wales, by an additional year of central funding for drugs education co-ordinators in the area of each local education authority; and improving treatment and rehabilitation. An additional £3 million is to be provided in 1988-89 for the expansion of drug misuse services in England to help prevent the spread of HIV infection.

Scientific Advisory Group

85. **Mr. Clelland:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what payments are made to the

members of the scientific advisory group under the chairmanship of Sir Ronald Mason FRS; and what is the total expenditure made by his Department on this group to date.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: No payments are made to members of the forensic science service scientific advisory group other than reimbursement of travelling and subsistence expenses under the usual Civil Service rules.

Horserace Betting Levy Scheme

86. **Mr. Duffy:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how much progress has been made in discussions over the 28th horserace betting levy scheme; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John Patten: The chairman of the Horserace Betting levy Board and the Bookmakers' Committee have been asked to submit written representations about the disputed 28th levy scheme to us by 16 December. Each side will then be invited to comment on the other's memorandum of representations. We intend also to make available to both sides any other representations which we receive about the dispute. It will be open to either side to comment on such representations as it wishes. If either side to the dispute wishes to add to its written representations any further points at a meeting with my right hon. Friend, it is our intention to ensure that both sides are represented at any such meeting. This will afford each side the opportunity to comment on points made by the other.

Police Interviews (Tape Recording)

91. **Mr. Andrew F. Bennett:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a progress report to the House on the tape recording of interviews with suspects, indicating in how many police authority areas this procedure is now in full operation.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: We understand that about one-third of all forces will be equipped to tape record interviews forcewide by April 1989. By the same date, all forces are expected to have completed plans to introduce tape recording in at least part of their force area. The tape recording of interviews in respect of indictable offences and offences triable either way should be standard practice throughout England and Wales by 1991.

Excessive Drinking

93. **Mr. Devlin:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what steps his Department is taking to deter foolish and excessive drinking; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John Patten: We have strengthened the powers of licensing justices. Since 22 August, they have had discretion to grant or refuse late-night drinks extensions; from 1 March 1989 they will be in a position to order, if it is justified, the revocation of current licences for licensed premises at any licensing session. We have also strengthened the law on sales to under-age drinkers. We have prepared crime prevention advice and approved the experimental byelaw in Coventry banning the consumption of alcohol in designated streets and other public places. Similar byelaws will be introduced in six other towns. The ministerial group on alcohol misuse is taking forward further work on other aspects of alcohol misuse.

Police Federation

94. **Mr. Illsley:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he will next meet the chairman of the Police Federation; and what matters he expects to discuss.

Mr. Hurd: I met the chairman of the Police Federation at a social function on 1 December, when conversation ranged over a number of police matters. The date for our next meeting has not yet been fixed.

Private Security Firms

95. **Mr. Martyn Jones:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what steps he intends taking to control the unregulated proliferation of private security firms.

99. **Mr. George:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement on his policy towards matters raised in the report on the private security industry produced by the Association of Chief Police Officers.

Mr. John Patten: The Government have made it clear that they look to the private security industry to provide self-regulation. However, following publication of the report on the industry by the Association of Chief Police Officers, I have asked officials to consider with the police and the industry ways in which self-regulation might be improved.

102. **Mr. Allason:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will consider extending to England and Wales the regulations concerning the registration of private security company employees to be registered and vetted, currently in force in Northern Ireland.

Mr. John Patten: The reason for regulating security firms in Northern Ireland is to prevent proscribed organisations from benefiting from their activities. There is no equivalent need for statutory regulation in England and Wales, but following publication of the report by the Association of Chief Police Officers on the private security industry, we are considering ways in which the industry's self-regulatory role might be improved.

Non-violent Crime

96. **Mr. Rees:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what steps he proposes to take to achieve a reduction of custodial sentences for offenders convicted of non-violent crimes.

Mr. John Patten: Our proposals are set out in the Green Paper "Punishment, Custody and the Community" (Cm. 424). We have already taken steps to give effect to those which can be implemented under present legislation: we have circulated an action plan to encourage initiatives in developing non-custodial sentences for young adult offenders, and we have issued draft national standards for community service orders. By ensuring that community service is rigorous and demanding, we hope to encourage its use for offenders who might otherwise receive a custodial sentence.

Prisons (Building and Refurbishment)

98. **Mr. Ian Bruce:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what new prison building and refurbishment initiatives are planned during the coming year; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The expansion and acceleration of the prison building programme continues with 18 new prisons at various stages of planning, design and construction in addition to the eight new prisons which have already opened. Seven prisons are now being constructed, the first of which should be ready for occupation in 1990. At least two further prisons will be added to this programme from the additional funds recently announced by my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer in his Autumn Statement. The full programme of new prison building is set out in the table.

The prison building programme includes major capital projects at existing establishments. Many of these schemes, some of which will take a number of years to complete, involve refurbishment and modernisation of living accommodation, including the provision of integral sanitation, and extra places. Work is also in progress to provide new places at existing establishments by the construction of ten 100-place houseblocks at Dover, Featherstone, Littlehey, Glen Parva (two), Full Sutton (two), New Hall, Stocken and Wayland. Details of the individual major capital projects for the coming year are currently being assembled and these will in due course be published as part of the 1989-90 Supply Estimates.

The new prison building programme

Name	*Type of establishment*	*Number of places*	*Ready for occupation*
Already open			
1. Wayland	Category C	484	1985
2. Stocken	Category C	300	1985
3. Thorn Cross	Youth Offender Institution	300	1985
4. Full Sutton	Category B (Dispersal)	444	1987
5. Littlehey	Category C	484	1988
6. Mount	Youth Offender Institution	484	1988
7. Swaleside	Category B	504	1988
8. Garth	Category B	512	1988
Under construction			
9. Brinsford	Training prison	448	1990
10. Bullingdon	Local prison	620	1991
11. Whitemoor	Training prison	522	1991
12. Woolwich	Local prison	850	1991
13. Lindholme II	Training prison	620	1991
14. Lancaster Farms	Youth Offender Institution	360	1992
15. Milton Keynes	Local prison	544	1992
Planning clearance obtained			
16. Swaleside II	Training prison	620	1991
17. High Down (Banstead)	Local prison	620	1991
18. Ashford	Training prison	600	1992
19. Doncaster	Local prison	720	1994
Planning clearance being sought			
20. Hewell Grange	Local prison	620	1991
21. Holme House Farm (Tees-side)	Local prison	620	1992
22. Kirkham	Training prison	600	1992
23. Rochdale	Local prison	600	1994
Location and categories yet to be decided			
24-28.			

Terrorism

100. **Ms. Mowlam:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what recent representations he has received concerning the Prevention of Terrorism (Temporary Provisions) Bill.

Mr. Hurd: I have received a number of letters from members of the public expressing support for the Government's proposals for new measures aimed at curbing the finances of terrorist organisations, provision for which is now contained in the Bill. We have also consulted representatives of the banks and other financial institutions, both in London and Belfast, about these proposals and they have welcomed them and assured the Government that they will be co-operating fully with police investigations into dealings in suspected terrorist funds once the new provisions come into force.

Police Establishments (Civilians)

101. **Mr. Stevens:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what are the numbers of civilians currently employed in police establishments.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: A total of 42,107 in England and Wales at the end of August (counting part-time staff on a two-for-one-basis).

Women Police Officers

Ms. Quin: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many women police officers there are in the United Kingdom police forces; and what percentage this is of the total forces.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: My right hon. Friend is responsible for police forces in England and Wales. At 31 August 1988

there were 12,936 women police officers in England and Wales. This represents 10·4 per cent. of the total police strength.

Probation Service

Mr. John Evans: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the planned level of spending on the probation service in England for each of the next five years in real terms.

Mr. John Patten: Current expenditure on the probation service by local authorities in England is estimated to be £205 million in 1988-89. This represents an increase in real terms of over 60 per cent. since 1979-80, while probation service manpower has risen by 38 per cent. over this period. The proposed level of expenditure in 1989-90 is £219 million. The Government's expenditure plans down to 1991-92, which are set out in cash terms, will be published early next year in the forthcoming public expenditure White Paper.

Cigarettes (Children)

Mr. Home Robertson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many prosecutions were brought against retailers for illegal sales of cigarettes to children in the last year for which figures are available; of these how many led to convictions; where these cases were heard; what penalties were imposed; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John Patten: The information requested is published annually in "Criminal Statistics, England and Wales", 1987, supplementary volume 1 (table S.1. (A) under classification 144) a copy of which is in the Library of the House.

Wandsworth Prison

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what plans there are to improve facilities for people awaiting entry into Wandsworth prison to visit inmates; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: There are no present plans to improve facilities for visitors waiting access to Wandsworth prison, except that separate entry into the prison for pedestrians will be provided next year. This should enable visitors to be admitted rather more quickly than is possible at present.

Empty Properties (Durham)

Mr. Steinberg: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many properties in the City of Durham constituency which are owned by his Department by subordinate organisations for which his Department is responsible, or by the police authority, are standing empty.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The number of properties owned by the Home Office in the City of Durham constituency that are currently standing empty is 53 of which 15 are currently in the course of disposal, two have structural faults awaiting rectification; and three are awaiting occupation. No records are maintained by the Home Office of vacant properties in the other categories mentioned.

Drugs

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will seek to make the irresponsible prescribing of drugs a criminal act; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Under the Misuse of Drugs Act 1971 the Secretary of State may, subject to certain statutory procedures, give a direction against any practitioner who in his opinion is or has been prescribing any controlled drugs in an irresponsible manner, prohibiting him from prescribing any or all controlled drugs. It is an offence to contravene such a direction. These provisions seem to us sufficient.

Passports

Mrs. Clwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many items of correspondence he has received from hon. Members about the work of the passport department since 1 July.

Mr. Renton: A total of 342 such letters were received between 1 July and 7 December.

Prisons (Rule 43)

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what was the number of prison inmates on rule 43 on 1 December 1987 and 1988.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Figures for the dates mentioned are not readily available. The number of male prisoners on rule 43 in prisons in England and Wales on 1 January 1988 was 1,916 and on 1 July 1988, the most recent date for which information is available, was 2,126.

MI5

Mr. Winnick: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether in light of the Security Services Bill, he will make it his policy to publish annually the establishment figures for MI5.

Mr. Hurd: No.

Mr. Albert Baker

Mr. Ken Livingstone: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will review the case of Mr. Albert Baker No. 241254, Her Majesty's prison, Long Lartin, and consider whether he could complete the rest of his sentence in Northern Ireland.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Mr. Baker's request for a transfer to Northern Ireland was turned down in February this year after a full review. Mr. Baker was told in April that the Home Office and Northern Ireland Office would be willing to reconsider the matter on the basis of further reports on his suitability for transfer after a year had elapsed.

Deportations

Mr. Winnick: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many cases regarding applications for deportation of Italian nationals from the United Kingdom to Italy in connection with terrorist offences are

still outstanding; when a decision is likely to be reached by him on each such case; and how many requests for deportation by the Italian authorities in the last five years have been agreed to and duly implemented.

Mr. Hurd: I assume that the question relates to extradition rather than deportation. There are no requests outstanding from Italy for the extradition of persons in connection with terrorist offences. Within the last five years there has been one request by the Italian authorities for the extradition of a person believed to have terrorist connections and she was surrendered in 1986.

Mr. Winnick: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement on the reasons for the delay in reaching a decision on the application for the deportation of Roberto Fiore to Italy where he is wanted in connection with the bombing in 1980 of Bologna railway station.

Mr. Hurd: In 1981 the Italian Government requested the extradition of Mr. Fiore for a number of terrorist offences, but the request failed in the courts because a prima facie case could not be established. This requirement has of course been removed in the Criminal Justice Act 1988.

No further request has been received from the Italian Court, but Mr. Fiore has been informed that consideration is being given to his deportation under section 3(5)(b) of the Immigration Act 1971. He has made representations against such action, and the case is being further considered.

Prisoners (Escapes)

Mr. Sheerman: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) if he will list the names of the 152 prisoners who escaped from British prisons between 1 January 1981 and 30 September 1988 and who were unlawfully at large on that date;

(2) if he will list the names of the 52 prisoners who escaped from closed or high security prisons, between 1 January 1981 and 30 September 1988 and who were unlawfully at large on that date;

(3) if he will give the number of escaped prisoners who were unlawfully at large on 30 September and who were serving prison sentences for crimes of violence;

(4) if he will list the escaped prisoners who were unlawfully at large on 30 September who were serving prison sentences for fraud offences;

(5) if he will list the escaped prisoners unlawfully at large on 30 September who were serving sentences for crimes involving drugs.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Figures in relation to adult prisoners who escaped from within a closed prison between 1 January 1981 and 30 September 1988, or who absconded from within an open prison between the same dates, and who were recorded as being unlawfully at large on 30 September 1988, were given in my reply to a question by the hon. Member for Tooting (Mr. Cox) on 15 November at column *550*. It would not be right to publish the details requested, but if the hon. Member has a particular reason for requiring more information about incidents to which the previous reply referred, he may wish to write to me.

Extraditions (South Africa)

Mr. Wilson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will take steps to secure the extradition of Colonel Henrik Botha, Stephanus De Jager, William Meteler Kamp and Jacobus La Gramse from South Africa.

Mr. John Patten: The United Kingdom has no extradition treaty with South Africa, and therefore no means of securing the return of these men.

Vigilante Groups

Mr. Rooker: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is his policy towards police co-operation with vigilante groups in areas where there is a shortage of police on the beat.

Mr. Douglas Hogg *[holding answer 14 November 1988]:* At the end of August, police strength stood at 124,426, an increase of 12,933 since 1979. My right hon. Friend recently announced that police establishments would be increased by a further 1,100 posts in 1989-90. These increases, together with the civilianisation programmes which all forces are pursuing, mean that the number of police officers available for beat duties has been substantially increased since 1979.

The ultimate responsibility for maintaining law and order rests with the police. We welcome the growing support of members of the public to local crime prevention initiatives, such as neighbourhood watch or the special constabulary, but groups which seek to take over the role of the police, for example by patrolling the streets, are not acceptable.

Motorways (Police Control)

Mr. Lawrence: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what consideration he has given to a centralised police control of motorways; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg *[holding answer 9 December 1988]:* We have no plans at present to centralise control of motorway policing.

Dogs

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will seek powers to disqualify from ownership of a dog, anyone who knowingly allows the animal to trespass on a railway line.

Mr. Portillo *[holding answer 12 December 1988]:* I understand that the courts already have powers to disqualify persons from ownership of domestic or captive animals where cruelty or unnecessary suffering is caused to them.

ENVIRONMENT

Radioactive Waste

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement on progress made in his Department's radioactive waste research programme using the "SYVAC" computer programme; what

developments have been made with the "Time 2" environmental change simulation programme; and what progress has been made with the "VANDAL" research computer model in evaluating future corrosion of nuclear waste containers.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: SYVAC was used during 1982-86 to develop the basis of the Department's approach to the risk assessment of underground disposal of solid radioactive wastes and led to the development of VANDAL. VANDAL is not used for evaluating container corrosion. TIME 2 was developed to help estimate the likely effects on disposal sites of future changes in the environment to approximately 25,000 years. It is being further developed (TIME 4) to permit consideration of periods up to approximately a million years.

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement on progress in the hocus hole closure experiments conducted jointly by his Department and the BRE in support of the radioactive waste management research programme.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The hocus hole closure experiments were performed in November 1986 as part of an OECD/NEA study and have been reported in "Hocus Cruise Report, OECD/NEA Seabed Working Group, edited by C. Papucci, ENEA, La Spezia (Italy), May 1988".

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what restrictions are applied to civil servants in his Department's radioactive waste division travelling to the Soviet Union on holiday.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: None.

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is his present estimate per tonne of the cost of the long-term disposal of high-level radioactive waste.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: Accurate cost estimates are not possible as high-level waste will not be disposed of for at least 50 years. An indicative estimate for vitrified high-level waste is £200,000 per tonne.

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if there are any plans to export quantities of United Kingdom—generated high level radioactive waste to countries that have commercial contracts with British Nuclear Fuels Ltd. at Sellafield to manage and reprocess spent nuclear fuel.

Mr. Michael Spicer: I have been asked to reply.

The Government's policy on the return of high-level radioactive waste was set down in the reply given by my hon. Friend the Member for Eddisbury (Mr. Goodlad) to the hon. Member for Great Grimsby (Mr. Mitchell) on 2 May 1986 at columns 502-503.

Seals

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what information is held by his Department on the link between phocine distemper and the recent increase in seal deaths in the North sea and off the north and west coast of the United Kingdom.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The term phocine distemper and seal plague have been used by scientists to describe the virus which has seriously affected seal populations in the North Sea this summer. As far as United Kingdom waters are concerned, the latest information provided by the sea mammal research unit shows that a total of 2,705 dead seals in the United Kingdom had been reported to the unit since 1 August this year. Of these 189 were grey seals. This compares with total United Kingdom population estimates of 25,000 common seals and 100,000 grey seals. It is likely that a very high proportion, but not all, of the seal deaths reported are due to the virus, which has been identified as a member of the morbilli family, of a similar type to rinderpest and canine distemper. Reported seal deaths have declined in recent weeks but the virus seems likely to continue to affect seal populations into 1989. Present evidence is that grey seals appear able to resist the virus.

Greenhouse Effect

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what information he possesses on research undertaken by Du Pont chemicals in the United States of America on the use of halon 121 to combat ozone layer damage from other halons.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The Government are aware that Du Pont is investigating the use of halon 121 for discharge testing of fire fighting equipment. The use of halon 121, also known as HCFC 22, is one of several possible approaches to avoiding the use in discharge testing of the halons controlled by the Montreal protocol.

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what studies have been sponsored by his Department or the Health and Safety Executive into replacements for halon 1211, halon 1301, and halon 2402, to mitigate damage from the greenhouse effect.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The Government have sponsored no such studies. Officials keep in close touch with the steps being taken by industry to reduce use of these halons and to find suitable replacements.

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what research has been conducted by his Department on replacement options for chlorofluorocarbon (CFC) 113; and what information his Department has on international research on CFC 113 by the electronics industry.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The Department has not conducted research into replacement options for chlorofluorocarbon (CFC) 113. The Department keeps in touch with the steps the electronics industry is taking, in the United Kingdom and internationally, both to make more efficient use of CFC 113 and to develop alternative methods of cleaning printed circuit boards, including not cleaning them at all.

Tied Housing

Mr. Home Robertson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will give an estimate of the respective number of farmworkers and other employees in tied housing who at present have their rates paid by their employer.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: This information is not available.

Chlorofluorocarbon Refrigerant

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he has any plans to develop a collection network and incineration plants for the safe disposal of the chlorofluorocarbon refrigerant which will be removed from refrigeration machinery during the next 10 years.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The EC code of good practice on reducing emissions of chlorofluorocarbons (CFCs) 11 and 12 in commercial and industrial refrigeration and air-conditioning applications, published in 1984 and currently being updated, includes advice on recovery, re-use and disposal of refrigerants. Both United Kingdom manufacturers of CFCs offer a reprocessing service to their customers.

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he has any plans to include in government contracts for the servicing and replacement of refrigeration and air conditioning equipment, a provision for the safe disposal of used or contaminated chlorofluorocarbon.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: Government Departments have been asked to review their policies, specifications and practices with a view to promoting the objective of reducing use of chloroflurocarbons and halons to the maximum possible extent. The Department is assessing the preliminary results of this exercise and considering what further steps may be required.

Rimnet

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment, pursuant to the answer of 7 December on Rimnet, what is the gamma dose rate.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: Gamma rays are emitted by many radioactive substances. The gamma dose rate is a measure of the quantity of gamma radiation over a fixed period.

House of Commons Chandeliers

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will undertake investigations to discover if any of the House of Commons chandeliers survived the 1941 bombing.

Mr. Chope: Some chandeliers within the Palace did survive and are still hanging in various locations: but all those in the Chamber itself were destroyed.

Rating Reform

Mr. Couchman: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what are his latest estimates of the distributional impact of the community charge on household finance.

Mr. Gummer: I have today placed in the Library a note updating figures on the impact on household finances of the community charge. The new figures show that: when fully implemented 58 per cent. of households (11·1 million) will gain from the introduction of the community charge; 83 per cent. of single pensioner households and 75 per cent. of other single adult households will gain from these proposals; percentage gains in net income are largest for the lowest income households; community charges on average would be less than domestic rates in all bands up to £200 per week.

The community charge will reduce the burden on the poorest. The lowest income group will pay less for local government. On average, their rates after rebates account for 3·9 per cent. of net income, whereas the community charge accounts for 3·0 per cent. Of course there will be gainers and losers in any change but these figures show that the community charge with its rebate system cuts the direct cost of local government on the poorest (those households with less than £50 a week) by nearly 25 per cent.

Many poorer people pay more in rates than those who are better off, even in the same local authority, because there is no necessary connection between rateable value and ability to pay. Generally, people buy their homes while they are working, when their incomes are at their highest, but remain in the home and have to continue paying the same rates when they retire with reduced incomes. So it is no surprise that 41 per cent. of households living in homes with above average rateable values have below average incomes.

These figures demonstrate that the majority of households will in fact gain from the community charge; that the poorest households stand to gain; and that domestic rates do not reflect ability to pay.

The revised figures take account of amendments made during the passage of the Local Government Finance Act 1988, local authorities budgetted spending levels in 1988-89, the 15 per cent. community charge rebate taper announced on 14 April and incorporate the uprating of social security benefits announced for 1989-90.

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he can estimate the average community charge in 1990 for *(a)* all adults and *(b)* income support claimants.

Mr. Gummer: The Government have made no estimates of future community charges. Illustrative figures were published on 23 June showing what the community charge would have been in each area had the new system been in force in 1988-89. Those illustrative figures assume existing levels of spending and existing local authority responsibilities.

Football Clubs (Membership Scheme)

103. **Mr. Wareing:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he will next meet the president of the Football League to discuss the football club membership scheme.

Mr. Moynihan: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave to the hon. Member for Stalybridge and Hyde (Mr. Pendry) on 14 December 1988.

Clay Pigeon Shooting

104. **Mr. Speller:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what changes he proposes in the laws governing clay pigeon shooting.

Mr. Chope: The Town and Country Planning General Development Order 1988 allows land to be used for clay pigeon shooting for up to 14 days in any calendar year without planning permission. My Department is issuing this week a consultation paper about whether the 1988 Order should be amended to revert to the 28 days maximum allowed by the previous, 1977 order.

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list those organisations he is proposing to consult with regard to the provisions of the General Development Order 1988 concerning clay pigeon shooting; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Chope: I propose to consult 150 organisations, including the Sports Council, The Clay Pigeon Shooting Association, other shooting bodies, amenity and environmental groups, and the local authority associations. I will place a copy of the consultation paper, and a full list of consultees, in the Library of the House.

Research and Development

Mr. Gordon Brown: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will update table 5A of the Cabinet Office review of research and development for 1988 in the light of announcements made subsequent to publication of the 1988 review.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: Table 5A is produced from detailed analysis of research programme expenditure and plans by the Department, the Countryside Commission, the Nature Conservancy Council and the Sports Council. This analysis is now taking place as part of the Cabinet Office review of research and development for 1989 and will not be complete for some time.

30-year Rule

Mr. Frank Cook: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will initiate a review of all statements, made to the House by Ministers of his Department or of predecessor Departments having responsibility for environmental protection, that may require revision in the light of official information made public under the 30-year rule on 1 January 1989.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: No.

Private Tenancies

Mr. Winnick: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) what will be the effects of the arrangements for new private tenancies on families currently on local authority waiting lists; and if he will make a statement;

(2) what will be the effects of the arrangements for new private tenancies on families currently in bed and breakfast accommodation; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Trippier: The new assured tenancy scheme should increase the supply of privately rented accommodation and therefore provide greater choice for families currently on local authority waiting lists or living in bed-and-breakfast accommodation.

Bed and Breakfast Accommodation

Mr. Winnick: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he has any plans to visit families who are currently in bed and breakfast hostel accommodation; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Trippier: My right hon. Friend has no such plans at present.

Council Properties

Mr. Winnick: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is the policy of Her Majesty's Government on the percentage of existing council-owned residential properties which should remain in such ownership; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Trippier: The Government take no view on such percentages. Our policy is to promote variety of tenure, and wherever possible to give tenants an opportunity to choose for themselves.

Animal Welfare

Mr. Cyril D. Townsend: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what recent representations he has received from the international fund for animal welfare.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: We have received cards from members of the public responding to an appeal by the international fund for animal welfare to express concern about the marine environment on an international basis. We recognise that many people are genuinely concerned about the health of our seas and the marine life that they support. Organisations such as IFAW can also play a valuable role in supporting on a voluntary basis conservation and research work on marine species such as seals. That is why I met it today to discuss their campaign.

As the recent seal virus has shown, it is simplistic and wrong to imagine that every change in the marine environment including the death or decline of a particular species is brought about by the impact of human activities, whether through the discharge of wastes or otherwise.

The Government are strongly committed to protecting and improving the quality of the marine environment and where there are good grounds for concern, scientifically supported, we have been ready to act. The precautionary measures, adopted at the North sea conference hosted in London last year by my right hon. Friend, to reduce inputs of dangerous substances to rivers and estuaries, and to phase out dumping and incineration of industrial waste at sea are illustrations of this. On 31 October my hon. Friend announced additional protection measures for seals and on 31 December new restrictions will come into force on the dumping of plastic garbage including nets from ships, one of the issues on which IFAW have campaigned strongly.

Air Pollution

Mr. Chapman: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he expects to publish the consultation paper on the categories of works to be scheduled for control under proposals for changes to industrial air pollution legislation.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: I have today published a consultation paper which lists those works which we propose should be subject to control by Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution, Her Majesty's industrial pollution inspectorate and by local authorities under legislation to amend the air pollution control system. Under proposals for a cross-media approach to pollution control, the works listed for authorisation by Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution would come under the integrated pollution control system.

The paper largely discharges the commitment to further public consultation that was made in the consultation

papers on air pollution control and integrated pollution control issued (respectively) in December 1986 and in July of this year. A final consultation paper on charging will be issued in the early part of next year.

Today's consultation paper is accompanied by a paper containing a summary of the responses to the consultation paper issued in 1986, a note on our decision now to favour enforcement of air pollution controls by means of binding authorisations, as recommended by the Royal Commission on environmental pollution, and two specimen authorisations.

Copies of both papers are being sent to local authority and industrial trade associations, environmental organisations and others with an interest, and are available in the Library of the House.

Urban Programme

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will show for each authority currently designated with partnership or programme status, for each year from 1981-82 to 1988-89, at constant prices *(a)* the amount of rate support grant received and *(b)* total grants received under the urban programme.

Mr. Gummer *[holding answer 13 December 1988]:* The information is as follows:

Rate support grant payable under latest supplementary report and 1988-89 settlement report

(£m at constant 1988-89 prices)

	1981-82	*1982-83*	*1983-84*	*1984-85*	*1985-86*	*1986-87*	*1-87-88*	*1988-89*
Barnsley	71·06	65·01	64·40	60·72	56·12	63·1	64·05	60·96
Birmingham	253·29	228·60		235·87	224·07	225·10	200·50	207·72
Blackburn	13·45	12·04	12·82	12·35	11·79	12·66	11·36	10·55
Bolton	76·22	73·50	72·92	70·57	69·02	76·73	78·23	76·40
Bradford	149·35	143·32	146·94	139·82	139·09	146·70	150·39	155·81
Bristol	25·21	21·08	20·31	19·51	17·94	18·75	17·11	16·19
Burnley	7·79	6·80	7·01	6·68	5·69	5·79	5·49	5·35
Coventry	86·39	82·53	79·00	75·17	66·71	68·13	69·05	69·39
Derby	10·02	11·13	10·77	10·31	9·48	10·98	10·20	9·60
Doncaster	86·43	78·58	78·00	74·46	70·64	77·76	78·34	76·36
Dudley	51·13	47·47	49·78	48·78	43·53	53·57	44·36	41·17
Gateshead	63·33	57·14	55·98	54·54	51·24	57·49	56·40	55·06
Halton	6·33	5·53	5·25	4·98	4·42	4·71	4·02	4·03
Hartlepool	6·16	5·60	6·05	5·85	5·47	5·28	4·56	4·57
Kingston upon Hull	19·84	20·30	19·92	18·99	18·55	22·08	19·79	21·33
Kirklees	113·65	114·02	114·45	111·64	107·36	118·93	125·12	125·99
Knowsley	59·30	53·53	51·04	49·82	45·51	48·22	48·03	48·11
Langbaurgh-on-Tees	7·66	6·26	6·27	5·82	5·08	5·08	4·73	2·83
Leeds	176·06	158·43	158·63	152·29	136·84	151·14	150·97	146·09
Leicester	18·25	15·21	18·74	16·68	17·57	15·12	18·65	18·16
Liverpool	172·80	156·91	151·82	146·02	143·51	148·66	144·47	150·03
Manchester	165·09	132·82	126·10	120·04	112·29	110·98	93·11	110·33
Middlesbrough	14·72	12·85	12·06	12·38	11·60	12·98	12·40	13·96
Newcastle upon Tyne	70·82	51·71	54·06	50·46	46·85	23·86	45·27	55·16
North Tyneside	58·11	51·87	50·30	50·81	47·18	44·18	47·25	47·53
Nottingham	16·06	15·92	16·63	16·04	17·62	19·36	16·84	16·61
Oldham	74·76	68·86	68·99	66·36	64·61	70·38	73·59	73·71
Plymouth	13·98	13·18	12·54	12·21	11·62	14·36	13·31	13·71
Preston	7·42	7·23	7·86	7·54	6·93	7·05	6·59	6·29
Rochdale	69·28	66·58	66·74	63·74	60·64	64·11	63·67	63·84
Rotherham	79·47	72·68	71·37	68·62	64·07	72·10	72·82	71·43
St. Helens	50·62	47·35	48·07	46·66	42·83	46·75	48·10	46·13
Salford	85·20	75·64	74·41	65·64	61·97	63·06	63·22	59·98
Sandwell	58·03	62·04	67·34	66·80	57·96	77·31	65·81	54·60
Sefton	73·03	66·74	63·12	59·50	56·92	68·94	65·15	63·86
Sheffield	136·48	122·73	119·70	124·38	113·44	98·12	121·66	115·72
South Tyneside	58·92	53·10	51·02	48·45	45·85	50·19	51·16	51·08
Stockton-on-Tees	7·50	6·59	6·78	6·44	4·68	5·67	5·12	4·55
Sunderland	91·46	86·61	83·62	79·91	77·46	79·98	84·75	86·95
Walsall	59·58	52·62	60·14	59·36	52·78	56·89	57·58	49·66
Wigan	90·28	86·49	78·06	77·46	73·30	75·83	79·92	77·08
Wirral	86·10	79·80	79·57	75·80	72·23	81·89	78·05	76·50
Wolverhampton	63·88	61·20	61·22	59·04	54·56	70·79	56·70	53·52
Wrekin	7·35	6·71	6·56	5·93	5·06	4·65	4·01	3·93
Brent	72·36	76·62	65·76	77·01	60·08	57·69	76·38	74·32
Greenwich	41·03	38·52	35·04	38·98	40·81	54·07	56·46	50·66
Hackney	58·56	56·24	52·41	58·92	53·92	84·35	73·19	72·74
Hammersmith and Fulham	43·78	43·01	44·21	42·18	43·35	56·39	55·20	51·35
Haringey	80·99	80·73	72·94	69·07	73·49	57·06	75·98	84·67
Islington	35·61	37·80	43·17	4·72	28·93	51·38	60·51	52·54
Kensington and Chelsea	16·23	22·74	25·77	22·85	15·37	42·61	36·68	36·74
Lambeth	70·08	73·26	65·31	59·91	58·59	57·31	82·47	89·95
Lewisham	63·09	61·76	59·56	55·70	58·31	74·01	68·72	69·22
Newham	84·44	95·59	76·56	91·24	90·40	80·82	87·60	98·41
Southwark	57·80	49·17	42·33	18·96	48·67	74·24	63·12	68·74
Tower Hamlets	36·93	33·73	31·59	28·83	24·76	66·91	66·74	60·49
Wandsworth	62·94	59·99	64·11	60·95	61·62	80·54	75·03	73·49

Urban Programme Grant Paid

(£ million at constant 1988-89 prices)

	1981-82	1982-83	1983-84	1984-85	1985-86	1986-87	1987-88	[1]1988-89
Barnsley	0·32	0·27	0·38	0·37	0·23	0·34	[1]0·45	0·64
Birmingham	8·98	10·30	13·05	11·09	9·94	11·19	13·32	10·91
Blackburn	0·06	0·09	0·26	0·61	0·92	0·89	1·24	1·14
Bolton	1·58	1·61	2·18	1·95	1·62	1·68	[1]2·10	1·74
Bradford	2·52	2·94	3·71	3·78	3·47	3·36	3·66	3·15
Bristol	0·20	0·28	0·38	0·45	0·47	0·47	[1]0·12	0·12
Burnley	0·13	0·13	0·26	0·24	0·11	0·22	[1]0·27	0·17
Coventry	1·10	0·94	0·90	1·95	1·85	1·68	1·61	1·21
Derby	0·28	0·29	0·31	0·31	0·29	0·39	0·46	0·09
Doncaster	0·63	0·54	0·77	0·85	0·46	0·56	0·63	0·57
Dudley	0·26	0·39	0·58	1·47	1·48	1·21	[1]0·41	0·29
Gateshead	3·31	3·75	3·97	4·63	4·28	4·47	5·54	4·35
Halton	0·17	0·10	0·36	0·43	0·61	0·65	0·71	0·30
Hartlepool	0·32	0·40	0·38	0·49	0·46	0·45	0·74	0·52
Kingston-upon-Hull	0·95	1·34	1·66	2·19	2·31	2·24	[1]2·97	2·52
Kirklees	0·95	0·97	1·02	0·95	0·87	0·76	0·69	0·43
Knowsley	0·79	0·94	1·28	1·95	1·62	1·68	2·81	1·97
Langbaurgh	0·03	0·03	0·13	0·12	0·11	0·11	[1]0·24	0·45
Leeds	3·31	3·08	3·46	3·90	4·04	3·36	4·38	2·94
Leicester City	1·58	2·81	3·07	2·68	2·08	2·34	2·72	1·76
Liverpool	13·55	15·92	18·94	20·47	20·11	20·13	17·73	11·64
Manchester	6·77	6·82	7·42	7·07	7·05	8·85	[1]10·38	8·65
Middlesbrough	1·10	1·34	1·66	1·95	1·85	1·68	[1]2·11	1·65
Newcastle-upon-Tyne	3·31	3·21	4·48	5·48	9·82	5·59	7·73	4·94
North Tyneside	1·10	1·07	1·41	2·07	1·27	1·68	1·85	0·49
Nottingham City	0·63	1·20	1·92	2·44	3·12	2·80	[1]2·89	2·94
Oldham	1·58	1·74	2·18	1·58	2·08	1·68	[1]3·54	2·13
Plymouth	0·01	0·02	0·03	0·02	0·03	0·05	0·22	0·28
Preston	0·08	0·17	0·18	0·17	0·15	0·18	0·28	0·28
Rochdale	1·26	1·07	1·28	1·58	1·50	1·68	[1]1·79	1·59
Rotherham	0·47	0·54	0·51	0·61	0·46	1·68	0·75	0·73
St. Helens	0·47	0·67	0·89	0·73	0·11	1·68	[1]0·15	—
Salford	3·78	3·61	4·10	3·53	3·81	3·36	[1]3·44	4·25
Sandwell	0·95	1·07	1·54	1·83	1·96	1·68	2·42	2·41
Sefton	0·47	0·54	0·89	0·97	0·92	0·89	0·81	0·83
Sheffield	4·25	2·54	2·56	3·69	4·60	4·08	4·80	1·84
South Tyneside	1·73	1·74	1·79	1·95	2·20	2·24	2·77	2·21
Stockton	0·10	0·15	0·19	0·22	0·22	0·21	0·31	—
Sunderland	2·36	2·14	2·30	1·58	0·92	1·68	3·69	2·69
Walsall	1·26	1·07	1·15	1·10	1·04	1·00	[1]0·35	0·09
Wigan	0·47	0·67	0·64	0·73	0·58	0·56	0·59	0·62
Wirral	1·10	1·61	2·30	2·92	2·66	2·24	[1]2·48	1·10
Wolverhampton	2·05	1·87	2·05	2·31	2·31	2·24	[1]2·03	2·24
Wrekin	0·06	0·12	0·23	0·24	0·27	0·30	0·25	0·17
Brent	2·21	1·61	2·18	2·07	1·39	0·67	0·48	—
Greenwich	2·05	3·08	2·30	2·68	0·81	2·24	2·47	1·42
Hackney	3·62	4·42	5·89	5·48	5·66	5·59	5·20	1·36
Hammersmith/Fulham	2·68	2·81	3·33	3·17	2·77	2·80	[1]1·87	1·27
Haringey	1·73	1·61	1·79	1·71	1·39	1·45	0·65	0·17
Islington	6·46	6·69	5·50	9·72	9·11	5·99	[1]5·76	0·57
Kensington/Chelsea	1·11	0·94	0·94	0·99	0·97	0·95	[1]0·46	0·12
Lambeth	5·83	5·62	6·27	5·73	5·78	5·59	[1]5·48	2·62
Lewisham	2·05	2·01	1·92	0·61	0·58	1·12	[1]0·85	0·40
Newham	2·52	2·01	2·05	1·71	1·04	1·68	1·09	0·82
Southwark	4·88	5·08	3·20	2·20	3·78	3·91	[1]2·10	2·43
Tower Hamlets	2·68	2·54	3·58	4·48	3·98	5·04	[1]4·33	0·52
Wandsworth	1·42	1·34	1·79	1·95	4·39	3·91	4·28	1·38
TOTALS	115·62	121·86	139·49	148·15	146·91	147·15	153·45	102·12

[1] Part year.

Press Gallery (Leak)

Mr. Porter: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when the roof leaking in the Press Gallery, off Press Gallery Library, Star Court extension, first reported in April, will be repaired.

Mr. Chope *[holding answer 5 December 1988]:* The flat roof which is leaking supports a two-storey Portakabin. This severely restricts access to the roof structure and it has not yet been possible to establish precisely where the water is entering. Further repairs were undertaken earlier in December but it will not be possible to judge their effect until they have stood the test of heavy rain. If this latest work proves to have been unsuccessful it may eventually prove necessary to remove the Portakabins. If so, it would be discussed with the House authorities.

Sports Centres

Mr. Fearn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what grants are available to local authorities to enable them to establish sports centres if they so wish; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Moynihan: The Sports Council provides grants towards the provision of sports centres by local authorities; as does the Department under the urban programme. I am delighted that the number of sports halls in England has risen from 770 in 1981 to 1,117 now; participation in sport and recreation has risen from 17 million in 1977 to 23 million now.

Written Answers to Questions

Friday 16 December 1988

WALES

Nurses (Grading)

Mr. Denzil Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many nursing and midwifery staff from each of the old grades have been assimilated to each of the new grades in the clinical grading structure in Wales.

Mr. Grist: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the replies given to my hon. Friend the Member for Vale of Glamorgan (Sir R. Gower) on 30 November at columns *244-46* and on 1 December at columns *349-50*.

Haverfordwest Bypass

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales when work on the Haverfordwest eastern bypass is to commence; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: The road programme for Wales is presently under review. Details of individual schemes will be given in "Roads in Wales", to be published in the new year.

Economic Assistance

Mrs. Clwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will give the total amount of agricultural guidance and guarantee fund moneys allocated to Wales in each of the years 1983 to 1987, inclusive, and for each assisted area or function so designated to receive such funds.

Mr. Peter Walker: The information is as follows:

Public expenditure on grants and subsidies payable in Wales under the CAP[1]
(£ million; calendar year unless indicated otherwise)

	Total					Against which receipts from EAGGF					
	1983	*1984*	*1985*	*1986*	*1987*	*1983*	*1984*	*1985*	*1986*	*1987*	*(Per cent. EAGGF reimbursement 1987[2])*
Hill livestock compensatory allowances	23·8	23·9	25·4	28·7	28·9	10·8	5·7	—	5·6	6·0	25
Suckler cow premium scheme	2·1	3·4	3·6	3·9	4·8	1·6	1·3	1·4	1·5	2·4	50
					Scheme						
Non-marketing of milk and conversion scheme	1·4	0·8	0·4	—	terminated	1·4	0·8	0·4	—	—	100
Sheep annual premium scheme	5·0	26·3	26·8	31·2	28·3	5·0	26·3	26·8	31·2	28·3	100
School milk subsidy	0·7	0·8	0·6	0·4	0·4	0·6	0·5	0·8	0·9	1·0	100
Farm capital grants scheme (EC element)	15·4	14·6	9·8	9·1	9·1	4·9	—	3·2	5·0	1·7	25
Marketing and processing improvement grants[3]	0·8	0·7	0·9	0·3	0·2	0·8	0·7	0·9	0·2	0·1	25
Beef premium scheme	4·5	5·0	5·0	5·0	3·7	4·9	4·7	5·0	5·3	5·7	40
Sheep variable premium scheme	28·2	22·4	21·3	23·3	17·3	30·3	21·4	21·0	21·0	21·4	100
Common fisheries policy awards[3]	—	0·5	0·2	0·7	0·1	0·4	0·1	0·2	0·8	0·4	25
Milk supplementary levy (Outgoers) scheme	—	0·1	0·6	0·8	0·7	—	—	—	—	0·1	100
TOTALS[4]	81·9	98·5	94·6	103·3	93·5						

[1] Excludes expenditure by the Intervention Board for Agricultural Produce on market regulation under the CAP because separate figures are not available for Wales.
[2] The figures shown for reimbursements from the European Agricultural Guidance and Guarantee Fund (EAGGF) may not correspond exactly to these percentages because of lags between expenditure and reimbursement from EAGGF. The percentage rates of reimbursement have also changed over time for some schemes.
[3] Awards from EAGGF under these schemes are made up to a maximum of 25 per cent. For both these schemes and the beef premium scheme the figures shown for EAGGF reimbursement are on a financial year basis.
[4] Total EAGGF reimbursements are not shown because figures for the individual schemes are based on financial and calendar years.

Mrs. Clwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will give the total amount of European regional development fund moneys allocated to Wales in each of the years 1983 to 1987, inclusive, broken down by county areas.

Mr. Peter Walker: European regional development fund commitments to Wales since 1983 have amounted to more than £270 million. The county breakdown is shown in the following table:

European regional development fund (1983 to 1987) commmitments (net)[1]

County	*1983*	*1984*	*1985*	*1986*	*1987*	*Total 1983-1987*
Clwyd	9,658,852	4,293,245	18,312,315	19,155,531	10,204,739	61,624,682
Dyfed	3,393,893	3,922,841	14,417,924	2,730,857	4,285,535	28,751,050
Gwent	10,341,870	7,679,511	2,927,907	10,020,199	17,408,377	48,377,864
Gwynedd	1,664,076	1,305,972	3,773,701	4,102,332	1,247,940	12,094,021
Mid Glamorgan	5,828,655	18,455,007	3,733,570	3,639,302	[2]4,769,400	36,425,934
Powys	−5,139	1,413,387	1,328,249	693 832	74,161	3,504,490
South Glamorgan	6,438,275	22,712,497	2,136,124	1,755,475	14,541,500	47,583,871
West Glamorgan	6,894,318	2,179,691	8,318,214	2,432,747	5,256,395	25,081,365
Other[3]	914,298	1,050,000	—	5,167,911	—	7,132,209
TOTAL	45,129,098	63,012,151	54,948,004	49,698,186	57,788,047	270,575,486

[1] Commitment figures are shown net of grants which have been decommitted.
[2] Includes £3,930,400 drawn down for schemes within the Mid Glamorgan programme.
[3] Commitments that cannot be disaggregated to a county level.

Mrs. Clwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will give the total amount of loans made to Wales by the European investment bank; and to whom they were given in each of the years 1983 to 1987, inclusive.

Mr. Peter Walker: The annual breakdown of loans provided to Wales between 1983 and 1987 by the European investment bank is as follows:

	£ million
1983	23·1
1984	13·2
1985	47·1
1986	25·3
1987	31·7

Details of individual loans are listed in the bank's annual reports for the years in question.

Mrs. Clwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list the geographical areas or functions in Wales which are eligible for moneys from *(a)* the European regional development fund, *(b)* the social fund, *(c)* agricultural guidance and guarantee fund and *(d)* the European investment bank.

Mr. Peter Walker: Eligibility for each of the four sources of finance is as follows:

(a) European regional development fund—Grants are available to local and public authorities for the promotion of regional development projects and programmes undertaken in the assisted areas and in the area covered by Mid Wales Development;

(b) European social fund—Assistance is available throughout Wales including the following areas to which the Commission accords priority:
Clwyd, Gwent, Gwynedd, Mid Glamorgan, South Glamorgan, West Glamorgan and the Llanelli travel-to-work area;

(c) Agricultural guidance and guarantee fund—Assistance under the individual grant schemes is available throughout Wales except for the environmentally sensitive areas grant which is limited to the Lleyn peninsula and the Cambrian mountains, and the hill and livestock compensatory allowances which are limited to the designated less favoured areas;

(d) The European investment bank—Loans are available to public and private sector borrowers throughout Wales.

Welsh Language

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what advice his Department is giving to parents who wish their children's school to be exempted from the requirement to include Welsh as a foundation subject from September 1990.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: I would advise parents who are interested in the position of Welsh in their children's school to read the interim report of the national curriculum Welsh working group and to let the working group know their views. When we have received the final report of the working group—due at the end of April 1989—the Government will publish proposals on which there will be wide-ranging consultation. Until then it would be premature to consider cases where it might be appropriate for schools to be exempted. I hope that the working group's report will be widely acceptable and will minimise the need for exemptions.

Housing (Expenditure)

Mr. Gwilym Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how expenditure which needs to be incurred by housing for Wales between now and 31 March 1989 is to be met.

Mr. Peter Walker: Housing for Wales has been established under powers contained in the Housing Act 1988. Parliamentary approval of expenditure on this new service will be sought in a supplementary Supply Estimate for the "Tourism, roads and transport, housing, other environmental services (including civil defence), education and science, arts and libraries, and health and personal social services, Wales" vote. Pending that approval, urgent expenditure estimated at £106,000 will be met by repayable advances from the contingencies fund.

TRANSPORT

Minibus Drivers

Mr. Allen McKay: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will take steps to ensure that drivers of mini-buses for voluntary organisations, charitable organisations and community transport organisations will be exempted from the provisions of the European Community directive on driver licensing harmonisation.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: There is no justification for tougher controls on minibus drivers. Statistics show that minibuses are at least as safe as cars.

Public consultations confirmed that the EC proposals would cause serious problems for voluntary and community transport organisations. The groups that they serve would suffer as a result.

We want to support a modified directive. We want to maintain and enhance safety. We want to maintain and enhance mobility for special needs groups and common interest groups. We do not want statutory additional driving and medical tests for non-commercial drivers of minibuses.

The United Kingdom has wide experience in safe mobility for the handicapped. We aim to share our approach with others. We aim to achieve the modification needed so that each country may choose to develop safe services like ours.

Clapham Junction (Disaster Fund)

Mr. Bowis: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will give further details of the Government's contribution to the disaster fund set up by the London borough of Wandsworth for the victims of the Clapham junction railway accident and their families.

Mr. Channon: As my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister told the House yesterday, the Government will be making a contribution of £250,000 to the Clapham junction disaster fund. I very much hope that the Government's example will encourage others to join in helping the bereaved and those who suffered in the accident. Neither the fund nor the Government's donation to it will affect claims for compensation.

Parliamentary approval for this payment will be sought in a supplementary Supply Estimate for the administration and transport services vote. Pending that approval, the

£250,000 donation will be met by a repayable advance from the contingencies fund. As savings have occurred in class VIII, 2, there will be no increase in the public expenditure planning total.

Rail Closures

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will call for a report from the chairman of British Rail on the status of British Rail's plans to close 36 lines, including the Swansea to Milford Haven line; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Portillo: I see no need to call for a report. The 36 lines referred to in an article in *The Guardian* newspaper concern a review of engineering costs by BR's freight business; they are not a list of planned closures for passenger services.

EMPLOYMENT

Training

Mr. Janner: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what percentage of trainees in companies, employing 100 or more YTS trainees, in *(a)* the United Kingdom, *(b)* the east midlands region and *(c)* Leicestershire, are from (i) the Afro-Caribbean community, (ii) the Asian community and (iii) ethnic minorities in general.

Mr. Cope: The information is not available in the form requested. Percentages of YTS trainees from Afro-Caribbean, Asian and all ethnic minorities in employer-led schemes are given in the table.

Percentages of YTS trainees stating their ethnic origin as being from Afro-Caribbean, Asian and all ethnic minorities in employer-led schemes at 31 March 1988.

	Afro-Caribbean *Per cent.*	*Asian* *Per cent.*	*Total ethnic minorities* *Per cent.*
Great Britain	1·1	1·1	2·6
East midlands	0·8	1·0	2·3
Leicester	1·1	2·4	4·4

Mr. Frank Field: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many local authorities are co-operating with employment training; and how many authorities and other public employers are known to the Training Agency to be boycotting employment training.

Mr. Nicholls: Contracts have been signed with 55 local authorities to be training agents and with 176 local authorities to be training managers. In addition, many other local authorities are involved as members of consortia or as subcontractors to training managers. We are aware of a small number of local authorities which are boycotting the programme or campaigning against it.

Mr. Frank Field: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what proportion and number of trainees on employment training had either been offered or undertaken work placements by early December.

Mr. Nicholls: I refer the hon. Member to the reply to his earlier question on 28 November at column *114*.

Mr. Frank Field: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what effect the decision by a number of Labour-controlled local authorities to boycott employment training has had on *(a)* the number of work placements available to trainees and *(b)* the overall quality of the programme.

Mr. Nicholls: The opposition to employment training by some Labour-controlled local authorities has had no long-term effect on the number of training places available to trainees and has not impeded the development of good quality training.

However, the opposition to employment training by a small number of local authorities has in some cases unnecessarily restricted opportunities for training, particularly in some inner city areas where co-operation by local authority is important in helping to secure access to suitable premises for training activities. I very much regret that in a small number of such cases the deplorable attitude of Labour local authorities is making it more difficult than necessary for long term unemployed people to undertake the quality training they need and want to get back into a job.

Disabled People

Mr. Hannam: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment (1) what proportion of registered disabled people who have received career development loans have gained employment within three months of completion of the training course funded by the loan;

(2) how many registered disabled people have taken up career development loans since their introduction.

Mr. Lee: Career development loans were launched nationally in July. An in-depth survey next year will provide information about participants which is not sought on the application form, including whether the individual is registered as disabled. The survey will also cover employment after completing training with a loan.

Overseas Visitors

Mr. Fearn: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what proportion of overseas visitors enter the United Kingdom by *(a)* plane and *(b)* ship; and in (i) the latest available annual period, and (ii) 10 years previously.

Mr. Lee: The information readily available from the international passenger survey relates to the mode of transport used by overseas visitors when leaving the United Kingdom rather than when arriving. During 1987, 66 per cent. of overseas visitors left the United Kingdom by air and 34 per cent. left by sea. The equivalent figures for 1977 were 59 per cent. and 41 per cent.

Labour Statistics

Mr. Nigel Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many employees are in employment by industry in *(a)* non-metropolitan areas and *(b)* rural areas giving the figures by region and by county for 1979 and the most recent year available.

Mr. Lee: Information on employees in employment classified by non-metropolitan and rural areas is not available.

Mr. Nigel Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will give long and short-term unemployment rates in rural areas for 1979 and 1987.

Mr. Lee: Information is not available in the form requested.

Earnings

Mr. Nigel Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will give average gross hourly earnings for males and females in *(a)* non-metropolitan and *(b)* rural areas in 1979 and 1987.

Mr. Lee: The available information is published in table 110 for males, and table 113 for females, of part E of the reports on the new earnings surveys for 1979 and 1987. Copies of the reports are in the Library.

NATIONAL FINANCE

Civil Service Manpower

Mr. John Greenway: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if copies of the Treasury report on Civil Service manpower changes in 1987-88 will be made available to hon. Members.

Mr. Major: Yes. The report for 1987-88 has been passed to the Treasury and Civil Service Select Committee today and copies placed in the Library of the House.

EEC

Mr. Anthony Coombs: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make a statement on the outcome of the latest meeting of the European Community's Economic and Finance Council.

Mr. Lawson: The ECOFIN Council met in Brussels on 12 December. I represented the United Kingdom.

The Council agreed in principle on two own resources implementing regulations, successors to 2891/77 and 2892/77, and agreed on declarations to cover arrangements after 31 December until the new regulations are formally adopted.

The Council agreed the Commission's annual economic report for 1988-89 as amended in discussion with member states.

The Council reached a common position on the draft directive on own funds of credit institutions and on the draft directive on public offer prospectuses.

The Council agreed that the Commission's proposals for the abolition of fiscal frontiers need further study by the new Commission and the Council.

The Council agreed a two-year extension modifying a Danish derogation on traveller's allowances.

The Council agreed on proposed increases in the limits on travellers' allowances and tax relief for small consignments within the Community.

The Council heard a proposal from the Commission for a further instalment of the New Community Instrument (NIC V).

Court of Auditors

Mr. Teddy Taylor: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer which body within the Community has the responsibility for pursuing the reports made by the Court of Auditors; and what action was taken on the report by the Court that 19 million lire of Community funds were spent on financing the delivery of non-existent fruit juice to NATO in Palermo by the Mafia-connected firm.

Mr. Brooke: The court's annual report is discussed chapter by chapter by the Council's budget committee, which formulates a draft council recommendation for discharge of the accounts to which the report relates. Under article 206(b) of the treaty of Rome, the European Parliament has the final responsibility for deciding whether or not to grant the discharge.

I am looking into the specific issue referred to in the second part of the question and will let my hon. Friend have an answer as soon as possible.

Mr. Teddy Taylor: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make a statement on the report of the Court of Auditors published on 13 December.

Mr. Brooke: The Government will consider the court's report in detail, preparatory to a chapter by chapter examination of its findings by the Council's budget committee. In line with established practice, the House of Commons will have an opportunity to debate the report before it is considered by the Economic and Finance Council.

Interest Rates

Sir Ian Gilmour: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will set out figures showing his estimates of: *(a)* how many families with children have lost more as a result of increased interest rates than they gained as a result of the Budget tax cuts, *(b)* the amounts by which they are worse off and *(c)* the income groups worst affected.

Mr. Lawson *[holding answer, 29 November 1988]:* I regret the delay in replying.

Out of some 6·9 million families with children, the number whose income tax and mortgage interest payments during 1988-89 are likely to exceed the payments which would have been made if the tax rates, allowances and average mortgage interest rates in force in 1987-88 had applied is estimated to be about 570,000. The table shows a breakdown by total income and also the average difference in tax and interest payments.

Total income £	*Number of families with children paying more in tax and interest at 1988-89 rates*[1] *(thousands)*	*Average extra payment* £
Up to £5,000	225	85
£5,000 to £10,000	220	100
Over £10,000	125	60
TOTAL	570	85

[1] Assumes that current mortgage rates remain unchanged for the rest of the financial year.

Most of these 570,000 families are likely to be in receipt of a pay increase which comfortably exceeds the extra payment that they will make, quite apart from any extra income from higher interest on savings.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Oil

Mr. Denzil Davies: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster to what factors he attributes the fall from

£1,063 million in the period August to October 1987 to £393 million in the period August to October 1988 in the United Kingdom's trade in oil.

Mr. Peter Morrison: I have been asked to reply.

The biggest single factor explaining the change in the United Kingdom trade balance in oil over the period was the significant fall in crude prices, which reflects a weakening in the world oil market.

In addition, oil production is provisionally estimated to have fallen by around 14 per cent. between the two periods —a significant part of which is due to the loss in output from fields affected by the Piper accident. Domestic oil consumption has also increased.

Non-Life Insurance

Mr. Teddy Taylor: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster why the non-life insurance directive to operate in 1992 and later years does not include provisions for freedom of trade in mass risks; and if he will explain the purpose of the Cumul rule included in the directive.

Mr. Maude: The non-life insurance services directive, which will enter into force in July 1990, lays down procedures for the conduct of business on a services basis for both large and mass risks. A majority of member states considered that for mass risks it should be open to them to impose measures needed in their view to protect consumers. The distinctions between mass and large risks was endorsed by the European Court of Justice judgments in December 1986 on certain insurance cases. The purpose of the Cumul rule is to assist these member states with the regulation of mass risks.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Gloucestershire Regiment (Official Visits)

Mr. Irving: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many visits he or Ministers and officials in his Department paid to the Gloucestershire regiment at Bally Kelly, Northern Ireland, during the past 12 months.

Mr. Tom King: None.

Royal Victoria Hospital, Belfast

Mr. John D. Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many motor cars have been stolen from the grounds of the Royal Victoria hospital, Belfast, in the past 12 months; how many of those cars were recovered intact; how many were recovered damaged; how many were not recovered; and what measures he will take to improve security for staff and visitors' vehicles within the grounds of this hospital.

Mr. Needham: A total of 238 cars were stolen from the grounds of the Royal Victoria hospital between 15 January 1988 and 7 December 1988; 23 were recovered intact, 195 were recovered damaged and 20 have not been recovered.

Security at the Royal Victoria hospital site is primarily the responsibility of the eastern health and social services board which, I understand, recently spent £400,000 on security measures recommended by the Royal Ulster Constabulary. The board is seeking at present to identify what additional steps can reasonably be taken to improve security.

Accountancy Firms

Mr. Beggs: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will publish the information he has readily available on the accountancy firms which have submitted business plans or proposals in each of the last three years to the local employment development unit and the industrial development board on behalf of clients.

Mr. Viggers: Although most applicants to the industrial development board and the local enterprise development unit for selective financial assistance are supported by business plans, these are not necessarily prepared by accountancy firms. Information on the authors of business plans for the approximately 2,900 applications received by IDB and LEDU over the last three financial years is not readily available and could be compiled only at disproportionate cost by examination of individual applications.

Health Visitors (Grading)

Rev. Martin Smyth: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement about the effect of the new grading structure on health visitors in Northern Ireland and upon individual health visitors.

Mr. Needham: As a result of the clinical grading review, 98·9 per cent. of health visitors in Northern Ireland were placed on scale G and are now on salary scales 13·7 per cent. to 19·1 per cent. higher than those applying prior to the review. 1·1 per cent. of health visitors were placed on scale H are are now on salaries 25·3 per cent. to 33·2 per cent. higher than before.

Rev. Martin Smyth: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement about the guidance issued to health boards by his Department as to how they should determine gradings for health visitors and any further advice he has issued.

Mr. Needham: Guidance on the grading of health visitors is contained within the management guidance issued to health and social services boards in the departmental circular HSS(TC5)3/88, copies of which are available in the Library. No other advice relating specifically to the grading of health visitors has been issued.

Secondary Schools

Mr. Hume: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what figures are available to indicate pupil numbers and expenditure for each of Northern Ireland's secondary schools in the past three school years.

Dr. Mawhinney: Information is not readily available in the form requested and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

RUC (Statistics)

Mr. Ken Livingstone: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will publish a table showing the number of officers of the Royal Ulster Constabulary serving in Northern Ireland in each year from 1969 to the current date.

Mr. Ian Stewart *[holding answer 15 December 1988]:* The information is as follows:

Strength of the Royal Ulster Constabulary

	Royal Ulster constabulary	Royal Ulster constabulary reserve (full time)	Royal Ulster constabulary reserve (part time)
31 December			
1969	3,044	—	—
1970	3,809	—	578
1971	4,086	—	1,284
1972	4,257	153	1,981
1973	4,391	290	2,224
1974	4,565	510	3,350
1975	4,902	661	4,158
1976	5,253	870	3,827
1977	5,692	1,002	3,684
1978	6,110	1,188	3,417
1979	6,614	1,305	3,209
1980	6,935	1,685	3,067
1981	7,334	2,060	2,810
1982	7,718	2,173	2,666
1983	8,003	2,294	2,198
1984	8,127	2,533	1,907
1985	8,259	2,755	1,753
1986	8,234	2,753	1,659
1987	8,236	2,987	1,657
30 November			
1988	8,245	3,000	1,666

Robert McConnell

Mr. Livingstone: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland whether, in the light of the undertaking given in the reply to the hon. Member for Brent, East on 23 May, *Official Report*, column *35* on firearms, he will look into the case of Robert McConnell, convicted for the murder of John Turnley at Belfast Crown Court in June 1982.

Mr. Ian Stewart *[holding answer 15 December 1988]:* The murder of Mr. Turnley has been fully investigated by the RUC. In the absence of any new evidence, there are no plans for the case to be reopened.

Police and Criminal Evidence Act

Ms. Mowlam: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he intends to seek to extend the Police and Criminal Evidence Act to Northern Ireland.

Mr. Tom King *[holding answer 15 December 1988]:* A proposal for a draft Police and Criminal Evidence (Northern Ireland) Order was published on 20 July 1988, and distributed widely to political parties both here and in Northern Ireland and to a number of other interested groups and individuals.

We are presently assessing all the responses that we have received. After considering these, we intend to finalise the contents of the order and lay it before Parliament early in the new year.

Dromara Police Station

Mr. Molyneaux: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland whether he will ensure that Dromara police station will not be disposed of before 30 June 1989.

Mr. Ian Stewart *[holding answer 8 December 1988]:* Operational matters concerning the Royal Ulster Constabulary are the responsibility of the chief constable, but I understand that no decision has yet been taken regarding the disposal of Dromara police station.

Mr. Molyneaux: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland whether he will give the financial savings resulting from the closure of Dromara police station, including a breakdown of the sum in terms of wages and running costs.

Mr. Ian Stewart *[holding answer 8 December 1988]:* Operational matters concerning the Royal Ulster Constabulary are the responsibility of the chief constable. I understand, however, that the decision to redeploy the police personnel from Dromara police station was one of several measures recently announced by the chief constable to support and maintain the current thrust of police operations against terrorist activities rather than produce actual financial savings. The savings resulting from the closure of Dromara police station would therefore be limited to running costs.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

North Atlantic Assembly

Mr. Arbuthnot: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, when he last attended a meeting of the North Atlantic Assembly.

Mr. Eggar: My right hon. and learned Friend has never attended a meeting of the North Atlantic Assembly in plenary session.

Kampuchea

Mr. Sumberg: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether any progress is being made to find an international solution to the problems of Kampuchea; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar: While a number of difficult issues remain to be solved, progress is being made in talks between the Cambodian factions, through the "JIM" process initiated by the Jakarta informal meeting in July, in which the countries of south east Asia also participate, at the United Nations, and in bilateral meetings between those most concerned.

Visas

Mr. Teddy Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when Mr. Hobbein Zaminpour, reference 885675/704 and Mr. Mortela Faghih of the National Petroleum Company of Iran applied to the United Kingdom post in Geneva for permission to visit the United Kingdom to purchase equipment; and when decisions are likely to be made on their applications.

Mr. Eggar: Mr. Zaminpour and Mr. Faghih applied on 8 December and 14 December respectively at the British consulate-general in Geneva for business visit visas. After personal interview, which is an essential part of our entry clearance procedure, both applications were referred to London for decision. Authority to issue visas was sent to Geneva today.

Mr. Teddy Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations he has received from the National Petroleum Company of Iran's office in London about delays experienced by

members of their staff at present in Geneva in coming to the United Kingdom to purchase equipment in consequence of delays in securing interviews at the United Kingdom post to discuss visa applications; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar: None.

Correspondence

Sir Barney Hayhoe: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when the right hon. Member for Brentford and Isleworth may expect the reply, hastened four weeks ago, to his letter of 18 August originally addressed to the Secretary of State for Defence, and transferred by him on 22 August.

Mr. Eggar: My right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State replied to the right hon. Member for Brentford and Isleworth's letter today (16 December).

ENERGY

Plutonium

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what were the total annual sales of safeguarded plutonium to the United States of America for each year since the end of December 1982.

Mr. Michael Spicer: Total sales of safeguarded plutonium to the United States since the end of December 1982 have amounted to significantly less than one gram. Transfers of plutonium under the fast reactor collaborative programme announced by the UKAEA in 1979 were covered in my reply to the hon. Member on 14 December 1988 at column *582*.

Laser Isotope Separation

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he will make a statement on progress made by research sponsored by his Department through the United Kingdom Atomic Energy Authority or British Nuclear Fuels Ltd. on laser isotope separation (LIS); for how long, and with what financial resources for the research and development, the laser isotope separation programme has continued; and what specific attention has been paid to safeguarding laser isotope separation technology in conjunction with the International Atomic Energy Agency and Euratom.

Mr. Michael Spicer: Laser isotope separation studies have been proceeding for some years in the United Kingdom Atomic Energy Authority and British Nuclear Fuels plc, but it is too early to quantify progress towards a competitive commercial system. It is also too early to formulate specific safeguards measures since these measures will depend on the physical feature of the production unit.

Private Sector Power Stations

Sir Trevor Skeet: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy how many projects there are of which he has knowledge for power stations to be built by the private sector; and if he will outline *(a)* the average capacity per plant, *(b)* whether any station exceeds 1,000MW and *(c)* the aggregated capacity involved.

Mr. Michael Spicer: We already know of nearly 20 proposed independent generation projects, with a total capacity of some 7 gigawatts. Specific details of individual projects are commercial-in-confidence until the companies announce them.

ENVIRONMENT

Radioactive Waste

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he has had any recent discussions with the chairman of the Radioactive Waste Management Advisory Committee, following on the concern he expressed at a Nuclear Industry Radioactive Waste Executive technical seminar at Didcot, that excavations for deep underground repositories would disturb the integrity of surrounding rock strata, and allow for transmigration of radionuclides from the repository.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: My right hon. Friend has not met the chairman of the Radioactive Waste Management Advisory Committee since the United Kingdom Nirex Ltd. seminar at Didcot.

Greenhouse Effect

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will place in the Library a copy of the European Commission report on the causes of and solutions to atmospheric warming (greenhouse effect) presented at the meeting of European Environment Ministers on 24 November; and if he will make a statement on his response to the Commission report.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: A copy of the report has now been received. We are arranging through the Foreign and Commonwealth Office for this document to be deposited in Parliament in accordance with the usual procedures. An explanatory memorandum will be prepared in due course.

Water Abstraction

Sir Charles Morrison: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will publish in the *Official Report*, for the most recent period for which figures are available, the total amounts of licensed abstraction of water in each water authority area and the amount, expressed as a percentage, of water actually taken up in each area.

Mr. Howard: For the calendar year 1987, the latest period for which figures are available, the information requested is as follows:

Water authority (England)	*Amount of water licensed for abstraction (megalitres per day)*	*Percentage taken up*
Anglian	3,614	57
Northumbrian	12,629	9
North West	5,922	64
Severn-Trent	10,282	62
Southern	2,849	60
South West	2,542	36
Thames	18,033	25
Wessex	1,775	57
Yorkshire	6,368	48

Old Perry Bridge, Birmingham

Mr. Rooker: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement regarding the delay in granting schedule monument consent for the repairs to the medieval packhorse bridge known as Old Perry, Aldridge road, Birmingham.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: A provisional decision indicating that the Secretary of State is minded to grant conditional scheduled monument consent for the repairs to the bridge was issued on 18 November 1988. A final decision can be issued as soon as Birmingham city council has indicated its acceptance of the proposed conditions.

Redundant Farm Buildings

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what discussion his Department has had with local authority planning committees on the granting of planning permission on redundant farm buildings to be developed as holiday accommodation.

Mr. Chope: We have had no recent discussions with local authority planning committees specifically about this. The re-use of redundant farm buildings for a range of purposes arises quite frequently in correspondence with local authorities and others. The Government's policy is to encourage the granting of planning permission for beneficial re-use of such buildings whenever possible.

Nature Reserves

Mr. Bermingham: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he has any plans to make funds available to voluntary conservation bodies to assist them with the purchase and management of those national nature reserves which are currently owned or part-owned by the Nature Conservancy Council in the event of such areas being taken out of the public sector; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: I refer the hon. Member to the reply that I gave to the hon. Member for Clwyd, South-West (Mr. Jones) on 9 December at column *350*. The Government will consider whether any financial assistance to voluntary bodies is required in the light of the Nature Conservancy Council's report.

Nitrate Desk Studies

Mr. David Davis: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when a report on the nitrate desk studies will be published.

Mr. Howard: Today I, together with my right hon. Friend the Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, have published a research study of the economic and other consequences of various local options for limiting nitrate concentrations in drinking water. I have placed a copy in the Library. The Government will take these studies into account in developing its nitrate strategy and a further announcement will be made in the new year.

Ten widely different catchment areas were chosen for the study. They were selected to provide a good mixture of farming type, geology and climate. There is no implication that the choice of areas in any sense increases the possibility that measures will be introduced in these particular locations.

Rating Reform

Mr. Burt: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what capital allocations he is making available to charging authorities in England in 1989-90 for the capital costs of preparing for the community charge.

Mr. Gummer: My right hon. Friend announced on 21 October that capital allocations totalling £135 million will be made for the capital costs in 1989-90 of preparing for the community charge. This level of allocations derives from the forecast made by Price Waterhouse in its independent report on costs.

Letters have today been sent to each charging authority in England informing them of their individual allocations. A list of these allocations has been placed in the Library. The allocations have been made to charging authorities on a basis which reflects the number and relative mobility of charge payers in each area.

Now that these allocations have been made and charging authorities know the resources they have for 1989-90 they have no excuse for not getting on with the job of implementing the community charge.

National Rivers Authority

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many professional staff there are in the legal departments of each of the shadow National Rivers Authority unit of each regional water authority.

Mr. Moynihan *[holding answer 9 December 1988]:* The information is as follows:

Shadow National Rivers Authority unit in regional water authority	*Fully qualified legal staff*	*Legal assistants*
Anglian	2	3
Northumbrian	1	0
North West	1	2
Severn Trent	3	0
Southern	3	3
South West	3	1
Thames	3	4
Welsh	4	4
Wessex	1	1
Yorkshire	2	2
TOTAL	23	20

These figures do not include the contracting out by many water authorities of the legal work on prosecutions for pollution incidents.

Water (Disconnections)

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many disconnections of water supplies there have been in each water authority for the half year since April.

Mr. Moynihan *[holding answer 14 December 1988]:* This information is not held centrally.

SOCIAL SECURITY

Community Care Grants

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security (1) whether he has any plans to extend community care grants to persons leaving hospital and in receipt of invalidity benefit; and if he will make a statement;

(2) if he will amend his direction 25 in such a way as to enable those discharged from mental institutions and who are in receipt of invalidity benefit to be eligible for community care grants;

(3) if he will extend the criteria for allowing community care grant as a means of increasing the take up of the current budget.

Mr. Scott: We have no such plans, but we have undertaken to monitor the operation of the recent social secrity reforms, including the social fund.

Pensioners

Mr. Andrew Bowden: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what proportion of (i) all pensioners, (ii) male single pensioners, (iii) female single pensioners, (iv) pensioner couples, (v) newly retired single men, (vi) newly retired single women and (vii) newly retired pensioner couples are in receipt of a state additional pension; and, for each group, what is the average amount received.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: I regret that the information is not available in the form requested, as records of recipients of the state additional pension are not broken down by marital status.

Mr. Andrew Bowden: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what is (i) the total number and (ii) the proportion of *(a)* single pensioners and *(b)* pensioner couples who are in receipt of housing benefit.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The latest available information is for autumn 1987 when the estimated total number of pensioners receiving housing benefit was 3·8 million. Information about the number of single pensioners and pensioner couples is not available.

Mr. Harry Barnes: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many persons and what proportion of those over pensionable age in Derbyshire are in receipt of payments from occupational pension schemes.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: I regret that the information is not available.

Benefit Take-up

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what assumptions his Department has made for the percentage take-up of each social security benefit in making its calculations for the impact upon public expenditure for the latest year for which figures are available.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Forward expenditure estimates are based on expected caseload. Estimates for 1989-90 will be published in the next public expenditure White Paper. Precise take-up estimates are available only on the basis of historical surveys. For the latest available estimates, I refer the hon. Member to pages 272 and 273 of Cm. 288 "The Public Expenditure White Paper". Later take-up estimates, for 1985, will be published in the new year.

Credit Transfer System

Mr. Anderson: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will seek to amend existing legislation to permit the direct payment of income support into the personal bank accounts of disabled pensioners already receiving all other benefits through the credit transfer system.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The facility to have benefit paid directly into a bank account is restricted to beneficiaries paid by computer because a transfer of magnetic tapes is required to effect the payment to the bank. Income support is paid clerically in local social security offices and the direct payment facility cannot be made available at present.

However, it is anticipated that payment of income support will be computerised by the early 1990s and direct payment to bank accounts will then be offered as an option. Amending legislation is not required.

Social Security Schemes (Equal Treatment)

Mr. Madel: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what proposals he has for implementing Council directive 86/378/EEC on the principle of equal treatment for men and women in occupational social security schemes.

Mr. Scott: The Social Security Bill published today includes provisions to equalise treatment for men and women in occupational schemes. The Occupational Pensions Board will be given powers to assist schemes to modify their rules to conform with the equal treatment requirements, but scheme rules which by 1 January 1993 do not comply will be overridden so that the more favourable treatment accorded to persons of one sex will apply equally to persons of the other sex. An exception to the general principle of equal treatment will be allowed for survivors' benefits, and we intend to introduce an amendment during the passage of the Bill permitting schemes to retain in accordance with the terms of the directive different ages at which retirement benefits come into payment.

Miss B. M. Shaw

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security whether he will investigate why the Post Office has failed to pay the national insurance contributions deducted from Miss B. M. Shaw, formerly sub-post mistress of the Freshwater East sub-post office, for the first nine months of the financial year 1986-87; how many other Post Office employees are similarly affected; what action is being taken by his Department; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The Department is currently investigating the deficiency in the 1986-87 contribution record for Miss B. M. Shaw. I regret that I cannot as yet say how many other Post Office employees are similarly affected. I shall write to my hon. Friend when investigations are completed.

Unemployment Benefits

Mr. Dunn: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he is planning any further changes in benefits for unemployed people.

Mr. Scott: In addition to the legislative measures that we introduced into the House yesterday, we propose to abolish the outdated and complicated rules applying to

seasonal workers claiming unemployment benefit. At the same time, the income support rules for calculating notional earnings of seasonal workers will be removed. We also propose to amend the unemployment benefit earnings rules where they operate harshly on people earning very small amounts and yet leave the benefit of people in highly paid weekend jobs unaffected. Our proposals to add a de minimis provision to the so-called "full extent normal" rule and to introduce a cut-off point, at which those on high earnings from part-time work will lost all benefit in the week concerned, will remove these anomalies.

Fuel Direct

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will indicate for each of the Hoxton, Bloomsbury, and Finsbury Park Department of Social Security local offices, the number of cases of fuel direct payment in *(a)* 1981, *(b)* 1983, *(c)* 1985 and *(d)* 1987; and if he will indicate the amount of the average deduction made under fuel direct in each category.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: No reliable data are available before 1987. The number of fuel direct cases in the local offices requested is set out in the table.

Local office	*November 1987*
Bloomsbury	514
Finsbury Park	1,807
Hoxton	2,167

Note: Information about the average amount of deductions is not available at a local level.
Source: Internal management information returns.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Ashford Remand Centre

Mr. Bermingham: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will outline the nature and extent of library services at Ashford remand centre; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: There are two library facilities available at this establishment. A non-fiction paperback collection is available on the two wings to which all inmates have access. There is a central library containing a non-fiction book stock which is situated in the education department to which all inmates who wish have access.

Remand in Custody

Mr. Favell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what was the average time spent on remand in custody by those who had completed their period of remand in the three months before 1 April 1987 and 1 April 1988 and who were remanded from courts in *(a)* Avon, *(b)* Somerset, *(c)* Kent, *(d)* the west midlands and *(e)* the rest of England and Wales.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The information requested is not available centrally.

Armley Prison

Mr. Battle: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many prisoners in Armley prison are on remand in respect of charges of violent crime, murder, burglary and theft, expressed by number and percentage of the total on remand.

Mr. Douglas Hogg *[holding answer 8 December 1988]:* Details of the offences with which remand prisoners are charged are not recorded centrally until the completion of court proceedings. The readily available information is given in the table.

Untried and convicted unsentenced prisoners initially received into Leeds prison: by type of offence, 1987

Offence with which charged[2]	*Number*[1]	*Per cent.*
Murder	9	0
Other violence against the person	454	14
Sexual offences	125	4
Burglary	914	28
Robbery	118	4
Theft	540	17
Handling, fraud and forgery	162	5
Drugs offences	68	2
Arson	40	1
Criminal damage	122	4
Motoring offences	101	3
Other offences	216	7
Not recorded	398	12
Total	3,267	100

[1] The figures, which are provisional, are those recorded centrally and are approximate.
[2] In the case of prisoners convicted, the offence is that for which convicted.

EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

A-Level Results

Mr. Straw: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will list the percentages of those aged 18 years in both schools and colleges obtaining two or more A-levels for each year since 1970-71.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: Information is not readily available for years before 1974-75. The table below shows the numbers of English school leavers and students at colleges of further and higher education, of any age, who attained two or more A-levels, expressed as a percentage of the average of the 18 and 19 year age groups.

England
Qualifiers with two or more A-levels at schools and colleges as a percentage of the relevant age group [1]

Academic years	*Per cent.*
1974-75	14·0
1975-76	14·7
1976-77	14·7
1977-78	14·8
1978-79	14·4
1979-80	14·4
1980-81	14·6
1981-82	15·1
1982-83	15·6
1983-84	16·1
1984-85	16·2
1985-86	16·0
1986-87	16·7

[1] The numbers of qualifiers are derived from sample surveys. The figures are therefore subject to sampling error.

"Learning in Terror"

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will make a statement on the implications

for his policies of the report of the Commission for Racial Equality on racial harassment in schools, entitled "Learning in Terror".

Mr. Butcher: There is no place in our schools or colleges for racial antagonism or intolerance. The Government are pursuing a range of measures to try to promote racial harmony. These include action on initial and in-service teacher training and a number of projects funded through the education support grant activity on educational needs in a multi-ethnic society. It is Government policy that ethnic minority pupils should have the same opportunity as all others to profit from what schools can offer them and that schools should preserve and transmit our national values in a way which accepts Britain's ethnic diversity and promotes tolerance and racial harmony.

Student Grants

Mr. Mans: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will publish the rates of student grants and parental contributions for 1989-90.

Mr. Jackson: Subject to Parliament's approval of the necessary regulations, the main rates of grant will be increased in the 1989-90 academic year by 5 per cent. for students studying outside London and students who study from the parental home. For those studying in London, the main rate of grant will be increased by 9·3 per cent. in recognition of their higher living costs. In England and Wales the new rates will be as follows (rates for 1988-89 are shown in brackets):

	undergraduate (£)	*postgraduate (£)*
Halls or lodgings		
(i) London	2,650 (2,425)	3,970 (3,630)
(ii) Elsewhere	2,155 (2,050)	3,125 (2,975)
Parental home	1,710 (1,630)	2,270 (2,160)

The threshold for parental contributions, and the points on the contribution scale at which the rate of contribution changes, will be uprated to reflect the movement of earnings. Parents whose residual income is below £10,600 will not be assessed for a contribution.

The full parental contribution scales for 1989-90 are as follows:

Residual income £	*Contribution* Scale 1 £	Scale 2 £
10,000	0	0
10,600	60	45
11,000	117	88
12,000	260	195
13,000	402	302
13,500	474	356
14,000	574	431
15,000	774	581
16,000	974	731
17,000	1,174	881
18,000	1,374	1,031
19,000	1,574	1,181
19,800	1,734	1,301
20,000	1,784	1,338
21,000	2,034	1,526
22,000	2,284	1,713
23,000	2,534	1,901
24,000	2,784	2,088
25,000	3,034	2,276
26,000	3,284	2,463
27,000	3,534	2,651
28,000	3,784	2,838
29,000	4,034	3,026
30,000	4,284	3,213
31,000	4,534	3,401
32,000	4,784	3,588
33,000	5,034	3,776
34,000	5,284	3,963
34,064	5,300	3,975
35,000	5,300	4,151
36,000	5,300	4,338
37,000	5,300	4,526
38,000	5,300	4,713
39,000	5,300	4,901
40,000	5,300	5,088
41,000	5,300	5,276
41,130	5,300	5,300

Notes:

(1) The second scale of parental contribution was introduced following the announcement on 15 March 1988 that tax relief on new non-charitable covenants would cease. Contributions assessed on scale 2 are 25 per cent. less than those assessed on scale 1.

(2) For 1989-90 the level of contribution will be assessed as follows:

Residual income	*Scale 1*	*Scale 2*
From £10,600 to £13,500	£1 in £7	£1 in £9·3
From £13,501 to £19,800	£1 in £5	£1 in £6·6
From £19,801	£1 in £4	£1 in £5·3

(3) The maximum contribution, which applies to parents with more than one child holding an award, will rise from £4,900 to £5,300. The minimum contribution will be increased from £50 to £60 for parents whose student children began their courses before the 1988-89 academic year (and whose grant is assessed on scale 1) and from £37 to £45 where students first entered higher education in 1988-89 or later (and whose grant is assessed accordingly to scale 2).

(4) The contribution payable may be less than the amounts shown on the scale, particularly at its top end and where the contribution is in respect of one award-holder only. This will depend on the amount of grant against which the contribution has to be set and whether any of the assessed contribution is offset by allowances for other dependent children.

Technology Training

Mr. Straw: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science whether he will make a statement on the policy of Her Majesty's Government towards the European Community programme, second phase, on co-operation between universities and enterprises regarding training in the field of technology (Comett II); what funds will be available to the United Kingdom under this phase; and what will be the net cost to Her Majesty's Treasury.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: Her Majesty's Government are today negotiating at the Labour and Social Affairs Council the terms of the proposed second phase of the European Community programme on co-operation between universities and enterprises regarding training in technology. As soon as a final decision has been reached, I shall write to the hon. Member and place a copy of my reply in the Library.

Schools (Computers)

Mr. Jack: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what plans he has to ensure that schools have access to computers capable of running MS-DOS software.

Mr. Butcher: Education support grants are now available to LEAs for the purchase of microcomputers, including those which run MS-DOS software.

HEALTH

Personal Social Services

Ms. Harman: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what *(a)* amount and *(b)* proportion of total public spending on personal social services is accounted for by local authorities for each year since 1967-68 projected to 1990-91 in 1987-88 prices.

Mr. Mellor: The information requested is shown in the table for 1971-72 and later years. Information prior to 1971-72 is not available in a comparable form.

Local authority net expenditure on PSS: capital and current combined
£ million revalued by GDP deflator (base 1987-88)

	1971-72	1972-73	1973-74	1974-75	1975-76	1976-77	1977-78	1978-79	1979-80	1980-81
Local authority PSS (current and capital)	1,295	1,542	1,889	2,173	2,314	2,327	2,231	2,276	2,391	2,504
Local authority as percentage of total	94·1	95·3	96·8	98·2	99·1	99·4	99·4	99·5	99·4	99·5

	1981-82	1982-83	1983-84	1984-85	1985-86	1986-87	1987-88	1988-89	1989-90	1990-91
Local authority PSS (current and capital)	2,528	2,574	2,672	2,707	2,670	2,870	3,060	3,151	3,086	3,092
Local authority as percentage of total	99·4	99·5	99·4	99·5	99·5	99·5	99·5	99·5	99·4	99·4

Figures are derived from public expenditure White Papers up to and including the 1988 edition, as subsequently amended by the 1988 Autumn Statement. The figures up to and including 1986-87 are final outturn, 1987-88 are provisional outturn, 1988-89 are local authority budgets and 1989-90, 1990-91 are planned provision.

It should be noted that from 1977-78 local authority net expenditure includes recharged central administration.

Grading

Mr. Cummings: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will give for each health authority in the northern region the number of nurses in each grade prior to any review or appeal.

Mr. Mellor: The information is given in the table.

The new clinical grading structure for nursing, midwifery and health visitor staff
Numbers of old clinical grades assimilated to each of the new clinical grades on the basis of duties and responsibilities on 1st April 1988: Northern Regional Health Authority

District	Staff in post (whole time Equivalents)	Numbers transferred to each new clinical grade								
		A	B	C	D	E	F	G[1]	H	I
Hartlepool	676·00	108·00	5·00	128·00	75·00	162·00	73·00	108·00	17·00	—
North Tees	1,037·00	164·00	42·00	152·00	140·0	275·00	59·00	170·00	28·00	7·00
South Tees	2,343·00	381·00	60·00	125·00	574·00	558·00	274·00	294·00	41·00	36·00
East Cumbria	1,319·00	300·00	22·00	202·00	181·00	307·00	79·00	185·00	26·00	17·00
South Cumbria	1,010·00	240·00	11·00	158·00	146·00	186·00	47·00	180·00	26·00	16·00
West Cumbria	979·00	246·00	30·00	62·00	206·00	182·0o	58·00	152·00	30·00	13·00
Darlington	1,042·00	175·00	56·00	168·00	238·00	191·00	35·00	138·00	40·00	1·00
Durham	1,067·00	223·00	20·00	113·00	228·00	180·00	58·00	212·00	24·00	9·00
North West Durham	597·00	131·00	1·00	44·00	127·00	139·00	53·00	89·00	7·00	6·00
South West Durham	1,321·00	389·00	10·00	15·00	304·00	274·00	109·00	176·00	37·00	7·00
Northumberland	2,836·00	968·00	34·00	375·00	314·00	398·00	216·00	446·00	58·00	27·00
Gateshead	1,237·00	293·00	20·00	119·00	252·00	211·00	95·00	206·00	31·00	10·00
Newcastle	4,253·00	758·00	103·00	509·00	1,009·00	850·00	333·00	529·00	103·00	59·00
North Tyneside	845·00	155·00	12·00	99·00	137·00	159·00	73·00	176·00	21·00	13·00
South Tyneside	846·00	211·00	13·00	94·00	132·00	164·00	56·00	151·00	18·00	7·00
Sunderland	2,117·00	430·00	31·00	277·00	335·00	466·00	146·00	359·00	66·00	7·00
Blood Transfusion	68·00	59·00	—	3·00	3·00	1·00	—	1·00	1·00	—
TOTAL	23,593·00	5,231·00	470·00	2,643·00	4,401·00	4,703·00	1,764·00	3,572·00	574·00	235·00

[1] Excludes some additional '6' posts which health authorities have indicated they intend to create in future on existing two-sister wards.

Mr. Bradley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many nursing, midwifery and health visiting staff from each of the old grades have been assimilated to each of the new grades in the recent clinical grading structure in South Manchester district health authority.

Mr. Mellor: The information is given in the table.

The new clinical grading structure for nursing, midwifery and health visitor staff
Old clinical grades assimilated to each of the new clinical grades on the basis of duties and responsibilities on 1 April 1988: South Manchester

Previous grade	Staff in post whole time equivalents	Numbers transferred to each new clinical grade								
		A	B	C	D	E	F	[1]G	H	I
Nursing Auxiliary	598·10	556·60	40·50	1·00	—	—	—	—	—	—
Staff Nursery Nurse	36·60	—	36·60	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Enrolled Nurse[2]	497·90	—	—	186·61	306·29	5·00	—	—	—	—
Enrolled District Nurse[2]	22·00	—	—	—	22·00	—	—	—	—	—
Senior Enrolled Nurse[2]	52·10	—	—	—	39·90	10·20	1·00	1·00	—	—
Staff Nurse[2]	535·60	—	—	—	175·30	257·20	103·10	—	—	—
Staff Midwife[2]	64·40	—	—	—	12·20	52·20	—	—	—	—
Deputy Sister[2]	13·30	—	—	—	—	—	12·30	1·00	—	—
Nursing Sister II[2]	362·40	—	—	—	—	—	152·50	205·40	4·50	—
Midwifery Sister II[2]	113·20	—	—	—	—	—	65·15	47·05	1·0	—
District Nurse (Sister II)[2]	40·80	—	—	—	—	—	5·40	29·00	4·40	2·00
Nursing Sister I	7·00	—	—	—	—	—	—	5·00	—	2·00
Midwifery Sister I	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Health Visitor	43·30	—	—	—	—	—	—	41·30	2·00	—
Senior Nurse 8	53·70	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	20·00	33·70
Senior Nurse 8 (Midwife)	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Senior Nurse 7	18·80	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	6·80	12·00
Senior Nurse 7 (Midwife)	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Clinical Teacher	6·00	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	6·00	—
Fieldwork Teacher	5·00	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	5·00	—
Practical Work Teacher	10·00	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	10·00	—
Tutor	5·60	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	5·60
Tutor Midwife	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Post Basic Students										
Enrolled	22·00	—	—	22·00	—	—	—	—	—	—
Staff Nurse	87·00	—	—	—	87·00	—	—	—	—	—
Deputy Sister	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Sister II	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Others	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
TOTALS	2,594·80	556·60	77·10	209·61	642·69	324·60	33945	329·75	59·70	55·30

[1] Excludes some additional G posts which health authorities have indicated they intend to create in future on existing two-sister wards.
[2] Excludes Post Basic Students.

Mr. Steinberg: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many nursing, midwifery and health visiting staff from each of the old grades have been assimilated to each of the new grades in the recent clinical grading structure in Durham district health authority.

Mr. Mellor: The information is given in the table.

The new clinical grading structure for nursing, midwifery and health visitor staff
Old clinical grades assimilated to each of the new clinical grades on the basis of duties and responsibilities on 1 April 1988: Durham

Previous grade	Staff in post whole time equivalents	Numbers transferred to each new clinical grade								
		A	B	C	D	E	F	[1]G	H	I
Nursing Auxiliary	240·00	223·00	17·00	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Staff Nursery Nurse	3·00	—	3·00	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Enrolled Nurse[2]	235·00	—	—	104·00	130·00	1·00	—	—	—	—
Enrolled District Nurse[2]	14·00	—	—	—	14·00	—	—	—	—	—
Senior Enrolled Nurse[2]	14·00	—	—	—	14·00	—	—	—	—	—
Staff Nurse[2]	219·00	—	—	—	50·00	150·00	18·00	1·00	—	—
Staff Midwife[2]	35·00	—	—	—	2·00	30·00	3·00	—	—	—
Deputy Sister[2]	11·00	—	—	—	—	—	11·00	—	—	—
Nursing Sister II[2]	106·00	—	—	—	—	—	22·00	82·00	2·00	
Midwifery Sister II[2]	33·00	—	—	—	—	—	4·00	28·00	1·00	—
District Nurse (Sister II)[2]	57·00	—	—	—	—	—	—	56·00	1·00	—
Nursing Sister I	1·00	—	—	—	—	—	—	1·00	—	—
Midwifery Sister I	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Health Visitor	37·00	—	—	—	—	—	—	35·00	2·00	—
Senior Nurse 8	6·00	—	—	—	—	—	—	1·00	5·00	—
Senior Nurse 8 (Midwife)	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Senior Nurse 7	10·00	—	—	—	—	—	—	1·00	1·00	8·00
Senior Nurse 7 (Midwife)	1·00	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	1·00	—
Clinical Teacher	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Fieldwork Teacher	8·00	—	—	—	—	—	—	3·00	5·00	—
Practical Work Teacher	9·00	—	—	—	—	—	—	3·00	6·00	—
Tutor	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Tutor Midwife	1·00	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	1·00

Previous grade	Staff in post whole time equivalents	Numbers transferred to each new clinical grade A	B	C	D	E	F	[1]G	H	I
Post Basic Students										
Enrolled	6·00	—	—	6·00		—	—	—	—	—
Staff Nurse	20·00	—	—	—	18·00	2·00	—	—	—	—
Deputy Sister	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Sister II	1·00	—	—	—	—	—	—	1·00	—	—
Others	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	
TOTALS	1,067·00	232·00	20·00	110·00	228·00	183·00	58·00	212·00	24·00	9·00

[1] Excludes some additional G posts which health authorities have indicated they intend to create in future on existing two-sister wards.
[2] Excludes Post Basic Students.

Mr. Caborn: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many nursing, midwifery and health visiting staff from each of the old grades have been assimilated to each of the new grades in the recent clinical grading structure in Sheffield district health authority.

Mr. Mellor: The information is given in the table.

The new clinical grading structure for nursing, midwifery and health visitor staff
Old clinical grades assimilated to each of the new clinical grades on the basis of duties and responsibilities on 1 April 1988: Sheffield

Previous grade	Staff in post whole time equivalents	Numbers transferred to each new clinical grade A	B	C	D	E	F	[1]G	H	I
Nursing Auxiliary	1,441·58	1,277·91	163·67	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Staff Nursery Nurse	45·13	—	45·13	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Enrolled Nurse[2]	1,060·54	—	—	280·47	581·35	198·72	—	—	—	—
Enrolled District Nurse[2]	81·00	—	—	—	81·00	—	—	—	—	—
Senior Enrolled Nurse[2]	85·55	—	—	—	33·55	52·00	—	—	—	—
Staff Nurse[2]	1,202·05	—	—	—	198·51	901·25	102·29	—	—	—
Staff Midwife[2]	100·40	—	—	—	12·00	87·35	1·05	—	—	—
Deputy Sister[2]	36·91	—	—	—	—	1·00	34·91	1·00	—	—
Nursing Sister II[2]	691·46	—	—	—	—	—	300·43	359·30	31·73	—
Midwifery Sister II[2]	80·94	—	—	—	—	—	52·54	28·40	—	—
District Nurse (Sister II)[2]	160·32	—	—	—	—	—	—	160·32	—	—
Nursing Sister I	2·00	—	—	—	—	—	—	1·00	1·00	—
Midwifery Sister I	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Health Visitor	88·73	—	—	—	—	—	—	88·73	—	—
Senior Nurse 8	57·00	—	—	—	—	—	—	5·00	29·00	23·00
Senior Nurse 8 (Midwife)	5·00	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	2·00	3·00
Senior Nurse 7	60·00	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	4·00	56·00
Senior Nurse 7 (Midwife)	7·00	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	1·00	6·00
Clinical Teacher	21·22	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	21·22	—
Fieldwork Teacher	12·00	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	12·00	—
Practical Work Teacher	16·00	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	16·00	—
Tutor	35·90	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	35·90
Tutor Midwife	8·00	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	8·00
Post Basic Students										
Enrolled	48·00	—	—	48·00	—	—	—	—	—	—
Staff Nurse	218·50	—	—	—	200·50	18·00	—	—	—	—
Deputy Sister	3·00	—	—	—	—	—	3·00	—	—	—
Sister II	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Others	2·00	—	—	—	—	—	—	1·00	1·00	—
TOTALS	5,570·23	1,277·91	208·80	328·47	1,106·91	1,258·85	493·69	644·75	118·95	131·90

[1] Excludes some additional G posts which health authorities have indicated they intend to create in future on existing two-sister wards.
[2] Excludes Post Basic Students.

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many nursing, midwifery and health visiting staff from each of the old grades have been assimilated to each of the new grades in the recent clinical grading structure in Newcastle district health authority.

Mr. Mellor: The information is given in the table.

The new clinical grading structure for nursing, midwifery and health visitor staff
Old clinical grades assimilated to each of the new clinical grades on the basis of duties and responsibilities on 1 April 1988: Newcastle upon Tyne

Previous grade	*Staff in post (whole time equivalents)*	*Numbers transferred to each new clinical grade*								
		A	*B*	*C*	*D*	*E*	*F*	[1]*G*	*H*	*I*
Nursing Auxiliary	845·00	758·00	85·00	2·00	—	—	—	—	—	—
Staff Nursery Nurse	26·00	—	18·00	7·00	1·00	—	—	—	—	—
Enrolled Nurse[2]	997·00	—	—	452·00	523·00	22·00	—	—	—	—
Enrolled District Nurse[2]	19·00	—	—	—	19·00	—	—	—	—	—
Senior Enrolled Nurse[2]	24·00	—	—	—	12·00	12·00	—	—	—	—
Staff Nurse[2]	1184·00	—	—	—	280·00	735·00	167·00	2·00	—	—
Staff Midwife[2]	82·00	—	—	—	3·00	56·00	23·00	—	—	—
Deputy Sister[2]	24·00	—	—	—	—	24·00	—	—	—	—
Nursing Sister II[2]	459·00	—	—	—	—	—	116·00	316·00	27·00	—
Midwifery Sister II[2]	90·00	—	—	—	—	—	25·00	61·00	4·00	—
District Nurse (Sister II)[2]	80·00	—	—	—	—	—	—	77·00	3·00	—
Nursing Sister I	25·00	—	—	—	—	—	1·00	9·00	12·00	3·00
Midwifery Sister I	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Health Visitor	63·00	—	—	—	—	—	—	62·00	1·00	—
Senior Nurse 8	24·00	—	—	—	—	—	—	2·00	11·00	11·00
Senior Nurse 8 (Midwife)	9·00	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	2·00	7·00
Senior Nurse 7	38·00	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	12·00	26·00
Senior Nurse 7 (Midwife)	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Clinical Teacher	8·00	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	8·00	—
Fieldwork Teacher	11·00	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	11·00	—
Practical Work Teacher	12·00	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	12·00	—
Tutor	6·00	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	6·00
Tutor Midwife	6·00	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	6·00
Post Basic Students										
Enrolled	48·00	—	—	48·00	—	—	—	—	—	—
Staff Nurse	171·00	—	—	—	171·00	—	—	—	—	—
Deputy Sister	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Sister II	2·00	—	—	—	—	—	2·00	—	—	—
Others	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
TOTALS	4253·00	758·00	103·00	509·00	1009·00	850·00	333·00	529·00	103·00	59·00

[1] Excludes some additional G posts which health authorities have indicated they intend to create in future on existing two-sister wards.
[2] Excludes Post Basic Students.

Hepatitis B

Mr. Shersby: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is his policy for encouraging a programme of vaccination against hepatitis B; what guidance he has given to general medical practitioners on this matter; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Mellor: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply that I gave to the hon. Member for Burnley (Mr. Pike) on 12 December at column *450* about immunisation programmes for health authority staff. The guidance from the joint committee on vaccination and immunisation, which was sent to all doctors in the United Kingdom in July, deals also with other at risk groups for whom immunisation by general medical practitioners may be appropriate.

Residential Homes

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) whether he has any current plans to review the Registered Homes Act 1984;

(2) whether there are any current plans to extend registration requirements to all residential nursing homes with more than two residents;

(3) whether he has any plans to seek to change the existing statutory requirements for head managers of residential homes to be suitably qualified; and whether he will consider setting out prescribed training to be undertaken on a continuing basis by staff directly involved in caring for residents;

(4) whether he will introduce regulations to ensure that individual programme plans are introduced and published for each client in a registered residential home.

Mr. Mellor: Sir Roy Griffiths' report, "Community Care: An Agenda for Action" and Lady Wagner's "A Positive Choice" contain recommendations with implications for the registration system for residential care homes including the regulation of homes with fewer than four residents. Some of these recommendations would require amendment of the Act. The latter report also included proposals concerning the qualifications and training of the management and staff of homes and arrangements for the care of residents. We are considering these reports and the responses to them and will be bringing forward our own proposals in due course. Copies of both reports are in the Library. There are no legislative provisions governing the qualifications of managers of residential homes; that is a matter for registration authorities to determine.

Smoking

Mr. Amos: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what was the total number of recorded deaths *(a)* from drug addiction and *(b)* from smoking-related diseases for the last year for which figures are available.

Mrs. Currie: The number of deaths of persons aged 28 days and over registered with drug dependence (ICD[1] 304) as the underlying cause of death in England and Wales in 1987 is 165.

It is not possible to be precise about smoking-related deaths. Most deaths associated with cigarette smoking arise from three diseases: lung cancer, chronic bronchitis and "heart attacks" due to obstruction of the arteries of the heart. However, the proportion of deaths attributable to smoking from each of these diseases varies. Furthermore, smoking is also implicated in certain other conditions where no estimate of the numbers of the deaths caused by smoking is available—for example, obstruction of the arteries of the lower limbs, and strokes.

It is estimated that at least 90 per cent. of deaths from cancers of the lung, lip, oesophagus and larynx, and 90 per cent. of deaths from chronic brochitis, obstructive lung disease, chronic pulmonary heart disease and aortic aneurysm are attributable to smoking. The total number of deaths from these conditions involved is given in the table.

England and Wales 1987

ICD[1] code		*Number[2]*
162	Malignant neoplasm of trachea, bronchus and lung	35,138
140–149	Malignant neoplasm of lip, oral cavity and pharynx	1,689
150	Malignant neoplasm of oesophagus	4,770
161	Malignant neoplasm of larynx	866
416	Chronic pulmonary heart disease	680
441	Aortic aneurysm	7,844
490–492, 496	Bronchitis and emphysema, chronic airways obstruction, not elsewhere classified	24,996

In its report "Health or Smoking" (1983) the Royal College of Physicians estimated that perhaps 20 per cent. of deaths due to obstruction of the arteries of the heart were related to smoking. The medical term for this condition is "ischaemic heart disease", but it is commonly referred to as "coronary heart disease". The total number of deaths from this condition for England and Wales is as follows:

England and Wales 1987

ICD[1] code		*Number[2]*
410–414	Ischaemic heart disease	155,235

[1] International Classification of Diseases 9th revision.
[2] Persons, at ages 28 days and over.

Medicines

Mr. Thornton: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what was the total value of parallel imports of prescription medicines in the last year for which figures are available.

Mr. Mellor: The latest information is for 1986 when a representative sample survey of purchasing of prescription medicines for the National Health Service by pharmacists gave an estimate of about £30 million as the value of parallel imported medicines dispensed by pharmacists.

Resources

Mr. Fearn: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what action his Department is taking to ensure that the scientific services involved in patient care are adequately staffed and funded; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Mellor: The numbers of staff working in scientific services overall continues to increase.

Regional health authorities have been asked to prepare for all staff groups—including scientific staff—manpower supply strategic assessing demand; supply measures necessary to meet assessed demand together with proposed steps to deal with any shortfalls. Also where necessary to produce training strategies.

Overall staffing levels and funding of scientific services is a matter for local determination.

Community Care

Sir Geoffrey Pattie: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what information is possessed by his Department in relation to the provision of services in the community for the mentally ill as set out in the 1975 White Paper, and whether the targets set out in the White Paper still apply.

Mr. Mellor: The Command Paper "Better Services for the Mentally Ill", published in 1975 by the then Labour Government, did not set illustrative targets.

The development of mental illness services, including the shift to locally-based services, is a regular feature of the annual review meeting which Ministers and the National Health Service management board hold with each regional health authority. This forum is the main method by which health authorities are held accountable for their work. In addition, the Department's social services inspectorate maintains liaison with local social services departments, taking an interest in the development of their services, including those for patients discharged from mental hospitals.

Salmonella

Mr. Fearn: To ask the Secretary of State for Health whether he will make a further statement on the alleged salmonella outbreak in eggs.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: Today's newspapers will carry the first run of an advertisement advising consumers about eating eggs. The advertisement will be carried by national daily, Sunday and leading regional newspapers over the coming weekend. These advertisements set out the facts of the matter and give clear and sensible advice to consumers.

Sir Geoffrey Johnson Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how much evidence there is of salmonella enteriditis existing in the egg yolk before the egg is laid; and by whom and where this evidence was obtained.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: A number of scientific papers by American and European researchers report that certain salmonella serotypes including salmonella enteritidis may infect the ovaries and oviducts of laying hens with the resulting potential to contaminate egg contents before the egg is laid. Two recent papers by research workers in the United Kingdom report the isolation of salmonella enteritidis from the ovary of birds from a broiler breeder flock and the ovary, oviducts and yolk of soft shelled egg in hens from a commercial laying flock.

Sir Geoffrey Johnson Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what measures were taken to warn egg producers that the catering trade should use pasteurised bulk egg prior to the comments made by the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Health concerning salmonella in fresh eggs.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: Liaison with producer representatives has been a feature of the joint consultation between my Department and the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food. Producer representatives have known since July this year that caterers were being advised to use pasteurised egg instead of raw shell eggs in foods that were not to be cooked.

Radiographers and Pathologists

Mr. Fearn: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many radiographers and pathologists are employed in the National Health Service; and how many of those radiographers and pathologists who have contracted out in the last 12 months were state registered.

Mr. Mellor *[holding answer 12 December 1988]:* We are not aware of such services at present being contracted out.

Such information as is available for radiographers and pathologists employed in the National Health Service is as follows:

NHS staff in post in England at 30 September 1987

	Number[1]	*Whole time equivalent*[2]
Non medical staff		
Radiographers[3]	9,400	8,250
Helpers	370	270
Radiography[4]	9,770	8,530
Medical staff		
Pathologists[5]	2,910	2,390

Source: DH annual censuses of NHS medical and non-medical manpower.

[1] Figures are headcount independently rounded to the nearest ten (10).

[2] Figures are whole time equivalent independently rounded to nearest ten (10).

[3] Excludes helpers and technical assistant/driver technician.

[4] Includes helpers, excludes technical assistant/driver technician.

[5] Includes permanent paid, honorary and directly employed locums. Excludes agency locums (not separately identified).

DEFENCE

Aircraft (Permitted Speeds)

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if the maximum permitted speeds for military aircraft in the United Kingdom low-flying system apply to aircraft authorised to fly down to 100 ft in the three tactical training areas; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Freeman: Yes.

Low-level Flying

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence which unit of the Royal Air Force Police has responsibility for surveying potential new areas for low flying.

Mr. Freeman: The flying complaints flight of the headquarters provost and security services (United Kingdom) is the unit responsible for surveying potential new areas for low flying, at the direction of the Ministry of Defence.

Aircrew Training (Nuclear Power Stations)

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what means are used to provide realistic training of Royal Air Force aircrews in attacks on nuclear power stations in wartime.

Mr. Freeman: It is not our practice to comment on wartime targeting policy. The RAF does not use nuclear power stations as targets during low flying training.

Aircraft (Noise)

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if the locations of complaints about noise from low-flying aircraft are mapped by his Department in order to monitor the distribution of noise disturbance.

Mr. Freeman: The locations of inquiries and complaints about low-flying aircraft are mapped to show their distribution and indicate particular problem areas. Not all representations are primarily concerned with aircraft noise, and the map does not purport to indicate the distribution of aircraft noise disturbance.

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list all research work currently being carried out *(a)* by his Department and *(b)* by external agencies under contract to his Department investigating the health effects of aircraft noise on human beings and animals.

Mr. Sainsbury: No specific research work on the health effects of external aircraft noise is currently being carried out by MOD, either internally or under outside contracts, but we do, of course, monitor developments in this field. The MOD contributed to early work on the human response to noise measurements units which are embodied in the current aircraft noise legislation.

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when the final report of the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation's committee on the challenges of modern society's pilot study "Aircraft Noise in a Modern Society" will be published.

Mr. Freeman: Work on the pilot study is continuing and the final report is unlikely to be completed before the end of 1989. The timing of its subsequent publication is a matter for NATO.

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence (1) what additional measures have been introduced in the United Kingdom, following the recommendation of the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation's committee on the challenges of modern society's interim report "Aircraft Noise in a Modern Society," that efforts to inform the public of the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation's reasons for low flying and the steps taken to mitigate the effects of aircraft noise, should be expanded;

(2) what contribution is being made by his Department to the development by the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation committee on the challenges of modern society, of a public information package on the noise impact of aircraft operations.

Mr. Freeman: Following publication of the North Atlantic Organisation (NATO) committee on the

challenges of modern society's interim report, it was decided that expansion of the reasons for low flying and the steps taken to mitigate the effects of aircraft noise should take the form of a NATO public information package.

The development of this package is being led by the NATO directorate of information. The Ministry of Defence has made available examples of the material in use in the United Kingdom and has responded to a questionnaire circulated by the director of information. The Department is participating fully in the programme of work through its representation on the committee established under the chairmanship of the dirctor of information. Meanwhile, the Department continues to recognise the importance of providing adequate infomation to the public about low flying, the need for it, and the steps taken to minimise consequent disturbance. Our efforts include responding to complaints and inquiries, distributing a pamphlet and making available a video on low flying, briefing journalists and flying them in front-line aircraft, and arranging presentations to the public by both the RAF presentation team and the low flying presentation team.

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what steps have been taken by his Department to implement the recommendation of the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation's committee on the challenges of modern society's pilot study "Aircraft Noise in a Modern Society" that multinational research into the long-term effects of aircraft noise on humans, animals and structures should be vigorously pursued.

Mr. Freeman: When I wrote to the hon. Member on 31 July 1987 I explained that the analysis of international data on the effects of aircraft noise on humans, animals and structures with a view to working towards the development of agreed technical assessment criteria was one of the tasks to be addressed further by the pilot study. This is continuing. In parallel, the Ministry of Defence continues to participate in international symposia and is also in discussion with academic institutions.

Calder Hall and Chapelcross (Replacement Reactors)

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he has had any meetings with British Nuclear Fuels Ltd. officials on the future funding of replacement plutonium and tritium production reactors at Calder Hall and Chapelcross, respectively.

Mr. Sainsbury: No.

Military Personnel (Travel Restrictions)

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what restrictions on travel to Communist countries exist for serving military personnel.

Mr. Freeman: Serving personnel who wish to visit a Communist country are required to seek approval in advance of their visit. Each application is considered on its merits.

Equipment Procurement (Anglo-French Meeting)

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on progress arising from the third Anglo-French meeting on co-operation in procurement of military equipment held on 23 November; and if short and intermediate range nuclear weapon systems have been discussed at any of these three meetings.

Mr. Sainsbury: The Anglo-French conference which was held on 23 and 24 November covered air systems equipment. Previous conferences have covered land and sea systems. The conferences form part of an initiative aimed at increasing co-operation to avoid costly duplication of development effort in conventional equipment. Progress on this initiative has been good and a framework of administrative measures, including the publication of contracts bulletins in both countries, has now been established. Some contracts have already been signed and more tenders are under consideration on both sides of the Channel. No nuclear projects have been discussed.

Radioactive Waste (Devonport)

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will set out the total volume and curie content of the radioactive waste stored at Plymouth, Devonport.

Mr. Sainsbury: No. It is not our practice to disclose information about quantities and radioactivity levels of intermediate level nuclear waste.

Low Flying (Public Meetings)

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list the dates and locations of public meetings on low flying held by his Department in Wales since 1979.

Mr. Freeman: According to available records, the Ministry of Defence has held the following public meetings on low flying in Wales since 1979.

Date	*Location*
30 September 1982	Carmarthen,Dyfed
15 October 1986	Raglan, Gwent
27 July 1987	Aberedw, Powys
27 May 1988	Dolgellau,Gwynedd
27 July 1988	Kidwelly, Dyfed
28 July 1988	Tumble, Dyfed

Royal Aircraft Establishment

Mr. Jack: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is the acreage of the site currently occupied by the Royal Aircraft Establishment at Farnborough.

Mr. Sainsbury: The Farnborough site comprises 1,196 acres. This includes the airfield and the 50 acre site which is being leased out as a civil enclave. The nearby Royal Aircraft Establishment site at Pyestock comprises 257 acres.

Mr. Jack: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will publish in the *Official Report* details of the number of people employed at the Royal Aircraft Establishment at Farnborough together with a breakdown of their Civil Service grades and total salaries paid for each grade.

Mr. Sainsbury: The total number of people employed by the Royal Aerospace Establishment as a whole at 1 April 1988 was 5,378. It is not our policy to provide further breakdown of this figure.

Farnborough (Runway Length)

Mr. Jack: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is the length of each runway at Farnborough.

Mr. Sainsbury: The lengths are:

	Metres
Runway 07–25	2,400
Runway 18–36	1,196
Runway 11–29	1,350

Army Guns (Northern Ireland)

Mr. Livingstone: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is his policy on the use by the Army in Northern Ireland of guns previously withdrawn from Regular Army service.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: Guns which have been withdrawn from Regular Army service are not used by the Army in operations in Northern Ireland.

Hong Kong

Mr. Wilson: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what plans exist for further troops and equipment withdrawals from Hong Kong.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The Government intends to retain until 30 June 1997 a garrison in Hong Kong to demonstrate British sovereignty and assist the Hong Kong Government in maintaining the stability, and security of the territory. We plan, however, to reduce the strength of the garrison during the period to 1997, as the Royal Hong Kong police become capable of resuming full responsibility for anti-illegal immigration. Adjustments to the strength of the garrison will be made in consultation with the Hong Kong Government and in the light of the security situation at the time.

Harwell

Mrs. Clwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is the nature of the work being carried out by the United Kingdom Atomic Energy Authority's Harwell research centre for *(a)* his Department and *(b)* any other institutions or Governments; and what is the value of any contracts on which Harwell is engaged under those categories.

Mr. Sainsbury: I refer the hon. Member to the reply given to the hon. Member for Leyton (Mr. Cohen) on 14 December at column *581* by my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State for Energy regarding work undertaken at UKAEA Harwell for MoD. I am not in a position to comment upon work undertaken at Harwell for other institutions or governments. It is not our policy to provide commercial details of contracts.

Procurement

Mr. Menzies Campbell: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many people are employed in the procurement division of his Department; and at what grades and remuneration.

Mr. Sainsbury *[holding answer 6 December 1988]*: The information requested is as follows:

Grades	*Numbers employed*	*Annual salaries*
Non-Industrial Civilians		
Senior Staff		
Grade 1 (Chief of Defence Procurement)		£108,454
Grade 2	5	£45,800—£48,000
Grade 3	31	£35,800—£39,000
Grade 4	20	£32,219—£34,987
Grade 5	160	£27,087—£30,387
Grade 6	550	£19,905—£27,087
Grade 7	1,907	£16,692—£21,737
Administration Group		
Senior Executive Officer	326	
Higher Executive Officer	658	£6,134—£16,489
Executive Officer	1,243	
Administration Support Group		
Chief Typing Manager	3	
Typing Manager	35	
Typist	382	
Senior Personal Secretary	46	£3,523—£13,458
Personal Secretary	237	
Administrative Officer	2,493	
Administrative Assistant	1,027	
Scientists		
Senior Scientific Officer	1,369	
Higher Scientific Officer	1,364	
Scientific Officer	962	£4,254—£17,032
Assistant Scientific Officer	392	
Professional and Technology Officers (PTO)		
Senior PTO	1,875	
Higher PTO	2,785	
PTO	2,872	
Probationary Assistant Constructor	23	£4,254—£18,422
Technical Grade 1	164	
Technical Grade 2	19	
Process and General Supervisory Grades (P & GS)		
P & GS 'A'	10	
P & GS 'B'	35	
P & GS 'C'	144	£7,606—£17,713
P & GS 'D'	232	
P & GS 'E'	30	
Stores Officer Grades (SOG)		
SO Grade 'A'	3	
SO Grade 'B'	11	
SO Grade 'C'	30	£8,090—£17,032
SO Grade 'D'	46	
Reprographics Officers		
Reprographics Manager	3	
Assistant Chief/Chief Reprographics Officer	26	
Leading Reprographics Operator	21	£5,550—£13,650
Reprographics Operator I	105	
Reprographics Operator II	45	
Photographers		
Superintending Chief Photographer	1	
Chief Photographer	7	
Principal Photographer	40	£8,090—£19,926
Senior Photographer	105	
Photographer	19	
Telephonists		
Superintendent of Government Telephonists	4	£6,150—£9,750
Government Telephonists	83	
Retired Officers (RO)		
Retired Officer 1	9	
Retired Officer 2	52	£8,907—£16,489
Retired Officer 3	11	

Grades	Numbers employed	Annual salaries
Graphics Officers		
Senior Graphics Officer	3	£9,057—£18,422
Higher Graphics Officer	12	
Graphics Officer	46	
Librarians		
Senior Librarian	9	£8,090—£17,032
Librarian	18	
Assistant Librarian	13	
Teleprinter Operators		
Superintendent Teleprinter Operator	3	£3,609—£9,337
Specialist Teleprinter Operator	23	
Teleprinter Operator	3	
Investigating Officers		
Senior Investigating Officer	3	£10,994—£19,926
Investigating Officer I	11	
Investigating Officer II	9	
Messengers/Paperkeepers		
Senior Paperkeeper	3	£5,550—£7,630
Paperkeeper	12	
Messenger	1	
Medical and Allied Grades		
Senior Psychologist	3	£8,090—£35,500
Psychologist	4	
Sister	9	
Civilian Consultant	1	
Civilian Medical Practitioner	1	
Senior Medical Officer	3	
Medical Officer	5	
Senior Radiologist II	1	
Miscellaneous Specialists	96	£8,574—£23,534
Trainees/Students	591	£3,523—£10,994
Industrial Civilians	9,825	Craft £139·17 (per week) Non-Craft £110·42—£135·50 (per week)
Total Civilian Personnel	32,731	
Service Personnel		
Ranks		
Admiral/General/Air Chief Marshal	3	£68,500
Vice-Admiral/Lieutenant General/Air Marshal	1	£48,000
Rear-Admiral/Major General/Air-Vice Marshal	9	£39,000
Commodore/Captain (Senior)/ Brigadier/Air Commodore	29	£36,555
Captain (Junior)/Colonel/ Group Captain	67	£30,514—£33,726
Commander/Lieutenant Colonel/ Wing Commander	224	£26,459—£29,247
Lieutenant Commander/ Major/Squadron Leader	443	£19,053—£22,849
Lieutenant/Captain/Flight Lieutenant	240	£14,987—£17,418
Other Ranks	324	£7,296—£12,932
Total service personnel	1,340	
GRAND TOTAL	34,071	

Notes:

1. Salary rates shown are basic pay, excluding additions such as allowances, London Weighting, bonuses and special pay additions.
2. Under pay agreements concluded during 1988 certain grades can qualify for discretionary increments above the scale maximum on the basis of good performance and occupancy of posts requiring certain scarce specialist disciplines.
3. The numbers employed include full-time, part-time and casual staff.
4. Industrial craftsmen in research and development establishments receive a craft allowance on top of their basic pay. All industrial staff are eligible to participate in bonus scheme.

Fraud

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many suspected frauds involving £500,000 or more are currently being investigated by his Department's investigators; and what is the average time elapsing between the commencement of an investigation and the matter being brought to court.

Mr. Sainsbury: Three cases each involving more than £500,000 are currently being investigated by the Ministry of Defence police fraud squad. The time needed to complete an investigation, to the satisfaction of the Serious Fraud Office where appropriate, depends on a variety of factors, including the nature and complexity of the alleged offences.

If, on the evidence obtained, it is then considered that criminal procedures should be instituted, the case will have to come to trial—this is a matter for my right hon. and learned Friend the Attorney-General.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Farm Interpretation Project

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make it his policy to support the national farm interpretation project, based at the Open University, Milton Keynes, after its present funding ends in January 1989.

Mr. Donald Thompson: I understand that the Open university's new countryside interpretation unit will absorb the work of the farm interpretation project when that project ceases at the end of January 1989. The countryside interpretation unit will, unlike the farm interpretation project, be able to raise its own income by operating on a fully commercial basis.

EC (Breeders' Rights Registrations)

Mr. Nigel Griffiths: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what account he will take of the proposed new European Community breeders' rights registrations, when considering the recommendations of his Department's review of plant variety rights and seed certification systems in the United Kingdom; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Ryder: The EC Commission has not yet forwarded any proposal to the Council for a Community plant breeders' rights scheme. However, in anticipating such a proposal, the review report recommended that the United Kingdom should support the principle of such a scheme and ensure that the testing systems operate in a practical and efficient way.

Egg Production

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what is the total number of *(a)* breeders of laying chickens and *(b)* egg producers in England and Wales at the latest available date.

Mr. Ryder: The total number of agricultural holdings in England and Wales at June 1987 with breeding fowls was 9,877, but at least 90 per cent. of those will have breeding fowls only for meat production. The number of agricultural holdings in England and Wales with laying fowls at June 1987 was 34,200. Very small holdings, which make only occasional returns, are excluded from these figures.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what is the estimated value of the egg industry, including the breeding of laying chickens and food production in England and Wales in 1988.

Mr. Ryder: The value of United Kingdom output of eggs in 1987 is now estimated to have been £511 million. The first estimate for 1988 will be published early in the new year. The breeding of laying chickens is an input to egg production and is covered within the above valuation. Consumers' expenditure on eggs for household consumption in 1987 is estimated to have been about £660 million. However, substantial volumes of eggs are used in catering and food manufacture and the total value of the United Kingdom egg market is probably well over £1 billion.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what estimate he has as to the likely loss of egg production in England and Wales in 1988 following recent publicity about possible salmonella infection.

Mr. Ryder: It is too early to make such an estimate.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what representations he has received from the egg industry and farming unions concerning financial compensation for lost production, the destruction of laying chickens and other associated costs occasioned following recent publicity about the possibility of salmonella infection in eggs; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Fearn: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food whether he has any plans to assist the egg industry to overcome its current problems by *(a)* buying eggs off the market, *(b)* assisting in a hen culling scheme, and *(c)* providing facilities for the disposal of unwanted eggs and carcases.

Mr. Ryder: The Government have already embarked upon an advertising campaign giving clear advice to consumers and putting the salmonella problem in eggs into its proper perspective. The other requests from the egg industry are being considered.

Mr. Fearn: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food whether any regulations will be introduced to prevent the feeding of dead creatures to grain eating creatures of the same type; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Donald Thompson: The Government have no plans to introduce further legislation to prevent the feeding of animals on material derived from other animals of the same type.

Feed derived from carcases may not be fed to other animals unless the material has been processed in accordance with statutory requirements. The Diseases of Animals (Waste Food) Order 1973 requires plants which process waste material intended for use as animal feed to be licensed. Under the Diseases of Animals (Protein Processing) Order 1981 all rendering plants are subject to monitoring for salmonella contamination in processed animal protein. The correct application of heat and other treatment in the course of processing will desroy all salmonella organisms.

The feeding to ruminant animals of feed derived from the carcases of ruminant animals is statutorily forbidden in accordance with the advice of the expert working party on bovine spongiform encephalopathy under the chairmanship of Professor Southwood.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will introduce a system of random sampling of the output of each egg producer in order that where eggs are found to be free of infection the public may be so informed at the point of sale.

Mr. Ryder: The number of eggs which have been found to be contaminated with salmonella enteritidis to date is very small, particularly when compared with the large overall number of eggs consumed in this country. In these circumstances random sampling of eggs would be unlikely to produce any meaningful results. A far more fruitful use of resources is the investigations which my officials conduct into all outbreaks of salmonella food poisoning which are traceable to particular farms.

Hormone Growth Promotion

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food under the provisions of which Act he issued the Medicines (Hormones Growth Promoter) (Prohibition of Use) Regulations 1986.

Mr. Donald Thompson: The Medicines (Hormone Growth Promoters) (Prohibition of Use) Regulations 1986 were made under section 2(2) of the European Communities Act 1972.

Nephrops

Dr. Godman: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he has any plans to designate nephrops contained in ICES VIa area a pressure stock for licensing purposes; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Donald Thompson: On the basis of traditional fishing effort, I see no reason for doing so. In 1987 we caught 72 per cent. of our quota in an unrestricted fishery; so far for 1988 (3 December) we have caught 75 per cent. Looking ahead we have maintained the precautionary TAC for 1989 at the current level of 15·620 tonnes.

SCOTLAND

Health Service (Grading)

Mr. Robin Cook: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list by health board the number of midwives on each grade of the previous grading structure and the number of midwives on each grade of the new grading structure, identifying separately hospital-based midwives and community midwives.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The information requested is given in the tables. Data which would permit separate identification of hospital-based and community midwives are not held centrally.

Former midwife grades

Health Board	*Staff midwives*	*Sister II midwives*	*Sister I midwives*	*Senior nurse 8 midwives*	*Senior nurse 7 midwives*	*Tutor midwives*
Argyll and Clyde	142·06	109·44	1·00	10·00	3·00	—
Ayrshire and Arran	138·87	99·68	—	6·00	1·00	3·00
Borders	26·25	11·54	—	—	—	—
Dumfries and Galloway	39·40	30·07	28·60	22·00	—	1·00
Fife	93·27	54·17	—	2·00	—	—
Forth Valley	81·46	35·09	8·00	—	—	4·00
Grampian	153·42	83·38	1·00	—	—	4·00
Greater Glasgow	340·31	179·67	4·00	32·00	8·00	18·00
Highland	82·03	68·36	7·00	3·00	1·00	—
Lanarkshire	140·00	86·00	—	9·00	3·00	4·00
Lothian	220·23	115·85	—	16·00	3·00	12·00
Orkney	3·00	4·35	—	—	—	—
Shetland	6·00	3·80	3·80	—	—	—
Tayside	143·88	43·80	1·00	12·00	—	6·00
Western Isles	16·70	—	—	1·50	—	—
Totals	1,626·88	925·20	54·40	113·50	19·00	52·00

22

Midwives on new grades

Health Board	*A*	*B*	*C*	*D*	*E*	*F*	*G*	*H*	*I*
Argyll and Clyde	—	—	—	—	80·61	68·25	98·24	8·40	10·00
Ayrshire and Arran	—	—	—	0·56	76·01	83·71	78·27	4·00	6·00
Borders	—	—	—	—	26·25	8·54	3·00	—	—
Dumfries and Galloway	—	—	—	—	38·61	11·86	58·60	10·00	2·00
Fife	—	—	—	—	84·03	9·24	54·17	2·00	—
Forth Valley	—	—	—	—	69·55	34·17	12·83	8·00	4·00
Grampian	—	—	—	—	98·80	77·44	58·56	3·00	4·00
Greater Glasgow	—	—	—	3·06	299·93	144·96	77·03	34·00	23·00
Highland	—	—	—	—	45·55	46·24	65·60	—	4·00
Lanarkshire	—	—	—	—	65·00	94·00	68·00	9·0	6·00
Lothian	—	—	—	—	126·81	96·75	113·52	15·00	15·00
Orkney	—	—	—	—	3·00	—	4·35	—	—
Shetland	—	—	—	—	6·00	3·80	3·80	—	—
Tayside	—	—	—	—	102·54	46·34	38·80	13·00	6·00
Western Isles	—	—	—	—	10·20	6·50	—	0·50	1·00
Totals	—	—	—	3·62	1,132·89	731·80	734·77	106·90	81·00

Note: Data reflect Boards' assimilation of posts to new scales based on duties and responsibilities as at 1 April and are correct as at 31 October 1988.

Mr. Wilson: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many nursing, midwifery and health visiting staff from each of the old grades have been assimilated to each of the new grades in the recent clinical grading structure in Ayrshire and Arran health board.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The information is given in the table:

Previous grade	*Staff in post whole time equivalents*	*Percentages transferred to each new clinical grade* *A*	*B*	*C*	*D*	*E*	*F*	*G*	*H*	*I*
Nursing Auxiliary	934·57	94·30	5·70	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Hospital Staff NNEB	16·34	—	100·00	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Enrolled Nurse	457·37	—	—	65·20	34·80	—	—	—	—	—
Enrolled District Nurse	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Senior Enrolled Nurse	16·86	—	—	4·20	95·80	—	—	—	—	—
Staff Nurse	713·71	—	—	—	24·60	63·00	12·40	—	—	—
Staff Midwife	138·87	—	—	—	0·40	54·70	44·90	—	—	—
Deputy Sister	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Nursing Sister II	284·23	—	—	—	—	—	38·50	59·70	1·80	—
Midwifery Sister II	99·68	—	—	—	—	—	21·50	78·50	—	—
District Nurse (Sister II)	100·09	—	—	—	—	—	—	100·00	—	—

Previous grade	Staff in post whole time equivalents	Percentages transferred to each new clinical grade A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I
Nursing Sister I	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Midwifery Sister I	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Health Visitor	78·20	—	—	—	—	—	—	100·00	—	—
Senior Nurse 8	29·00	—	—	—	—	—	—	3·40	10·30	86·20
Senior Nurse 8 (Midwife)	6·00	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	66·70	33·30
Senior Nurse 7	10·00	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	100·00
Senior Nurse 7 (Midwife)	1·00	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	100·00
Clinical Teacher	16·00	—	—	—	—	—	—	12·50	87·50	—
Fieldwork Teacher	16·00	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	100·00	—
Practical Work Teacher	14·00	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	100·00	—
Tutor	13·00	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	100·00
Tutor Midwife	3·00	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	100·00
Post Basic Students										
Enrolled Nurse	36·00	—	—	100·00	—	—	—	—	—	—
Staff Nurse	86·00	—	—	—	94·20	5·80	—	—	—	—
Deputy Sister	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Sister II	8·00	—	—	—	—	—	37·50	62·50	—	—
Others	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
TOTALS	3,077·92	28·60	2·30	10·90	14·10	17·20	9·30	14·10	1·80	1·70

Exploration for Gold

Mr. Wilson: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will define the licensing and planning requirements associated with exploration for gold in Scotland.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Most of the gold rights in Scotland belong by ancient right to the Crown and are dealt with by the Crown Estate Commissioners in Edinburgh. There are some exceptions. Certain gold rights are owned by individual landowners.

Applicants for a Crown Estate prospecting licence must convince the Commissioners that they have the necessary financial and technical backing to carry through a comprehensive exploration and eventually an exploitation programme. The applicant will be required to obtain any other necessary consents including that of the landowners. Planning permission is required from the relevant planning authority as for any mineral working.

Mr. Wilson: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list the gold exploration work *(a)* in progress and *(b)* proposed in Scotland at present; and if he will name the companies involved.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The majority of gold prospecting licences are granted by the Crown Estate Commissioners. The information requested is commercially confidential to the companies concerned. Separate records are not kept of licences granted by private individuals who possess gold rights.

Mr. Wilson: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he has any plans to tighten up environmental controls over gold exploration; and if he will make a statement.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: My right hon. and learned Friend has no plans for special controls for gold-mining. Developments of this kind are subject to the existing controls which apply, for example, to discharges to rivers and to the disposal of waste.

Wildlife and Countryside Act

Mr. Wilson: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list the payments made to date under the Wildlife and Countryside Act in compensation for the non-planting of trees.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Details of individual payments made by the Nature Conservancy Council are confidential. Information on the numbers and costs of payments are published in the council's annual report, copies of which are in the Library.

Student Allowances

Sir Hector Monro: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement about the levels of students' allowances and parental contributions for session 1989-90.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: I propose to increase the main rates of allowances by 5 per cent. in the 1989-90 academic year, as previously indicated. In addition, I propose to increase the differential in the rate paid to students studying in London. The new rate for Scottish students will be as follows (rates for 1988-89 are shown in brackets):

	£	£
Student in the parental home	1,575	(1,500)
Student living away from home		
— outside London	2,090	(1,990)
— in London	2,585	(2,365)

Students in receipt of maintenance allowances will be eligible for reimbursement of travelling expenses in excess of the £55 included in the main rates.

The threshold for parental contributions, and the points on the contribution scales at which the rate of contribution changes will be uprated to reflect the movement of earnings. Parents whose residual income is below £10,600 will not be assessed for a contribution. The minimum contribution will be increased from £50 to £60 for parents whose contribution is assessed on scale 1 and from £37 to £45 for those assessed on scale 2. The

maximum contribution, which applies to parents with more than one award-holding child, will increase from £4,900 to £5,300.

The full contribution scales for session 1989-90 are as follows:

Residual income £	*Contribution scale* *Scale 1* £	*Scale 2* £
10,000	0	0
10,600	60	45
11,000	117	88
12,000	260	195
13,000	402	302
13,500	474	356
14,000	574	431
15,000	774	581
16,000	974	731
17,000	1,174	881
18,000	1,374	1,031
19,000	1,574	1,181
19,800	1,734	1,301
20,000	1,784	1,338
21,000	2,034	1,526
22,000	2,284	1,713
23,000	2,534	1,901
24,000	2,784	2,088
25,000	3,034	2,276
26,000	3,284	2,463
27,000	3,534	2,651
28,000	3,784	2,838
29,000	4,034	3,026
30,000	4,284	3,213
31,000	4,534	3,401
32,000	4,784	3,588
33,000	5,034	3,776
34,000	5,284	3,963
34,064	5,300	3,975
35,000	5,300	4,151
36,000	5,300	4,338
37,000	5,300	4,526
38,000	5,300	4,713
39,000	5,300	4,901
40,000	5,300	5,088
41,000	5,300	5,276
41,130	5,300	5,300

Notes:

(1) The second parental contribution scale was introduced following the announcement on 15 March 1988 that tax relief on new non-charitable deeds of covenant would cease; it applies primarily to students who first entered higher education in session 1988-89 or later. The contributions assessed on scale 2 are 25 per cent. less than those on scale 1.

(2) Contributions will rise with residual income, as follows:

Income	*Scale 1*	*Scale 2*
From £10,600 to £13,500	By £1 in £7	By £1 in £9·33
From £13,501 to £19,800	By £1 in £5	By £1 in £6·67
From £19,801	By £1 in £4	By £1 in £5·33

(3) The contribution payable may be less than the amount shown in the relevant table, particularly at the top of the scale where the contribution is in respect of one award holder only. It will depend on the level of grant against which the contribution is to be set and whether or not any of the assessed contribution is itself offset by allowances for other dependent children.

Remand

Mr. Favell: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what was the average time spent on remand in custody by those who had completed their period of remand during the three months prior to 1 April.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: This information is not available.

Woodland Grant Scheme

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what is his assessment of the achievement of the woodland grant scheme in maintaining the planting rates of *(a)* coniferous forest and *(b)* broadleaved woodland.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The woodland grant scheme has only been open to applicants since the middle of June. It is too early to say how successful it will be in terms of planting rates.

Language Teachers

Mrs. Margaret Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what plans there are to revise the draft review of secondary school staffing standards to take into account the inclusion of modern languages in the core curriculum.

Mr. Michael Forsyth *[holding answer 12 December 1988]:* The draft proposals for staffing levels in secondary schools are not affected by the precise pattern of curriculum entries, but by the breadth of the curriculum offered. In the longer term there should be no overall effect on the number of staff required by schools but rather an adjustment in the balance between teachers of modern languages and of other subjects.

INDEX TO THE

PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES

OFFICIAL REPORT

SIXTH SERIES **VOLUME 143**

SESSION 1988–89

5th December-16th December 1988

SCOPE OF THE INDEX, ARRANGEMENT AND ABBREVIATIONS

This index is derived from the House of Commons Library's Parliamentary On-Line Information System (POLIS), and the subject terms used are based on those used in POLIS. There are often changes in column numbering, etc, between the daily part or weekly Hansard (which simply collects together the daily parts without revision) and the bound volume. The index for the bound volume is revised to take account of these changes.

Scope and arrangement of the Index

Oral and Written Parliamentary Questions are indexed under subject headings and the names of Members asking and Ministers replying to them. Questions are not listed under the names of Departments replying. Departmental listings can be arrived at indirectly by looking under the names of the Minister(s) of that Department. There are, however, the headings 'Northern Ireland', 'Scotland', and 'Wales' under which one can find not only most Questions answered by the Northern Ireland Office, Scottish Office, Welsh Office but also Questions about these areas of the United Kingdom which are answered by other Departments. Ministerial statements are indexed under subject headings, under 'Ministerial statements' and the names of Ministers making them and Members speaking on them. General debates are indexed under broad subject headings and under the names of all Members and Ministers taking part. Debates on legislation (Bills, Orders, Regulations etc.) are indexed under the name of the Bill, Statutory Instrument etc, under subject headings and under the names of those taking part.

Rulings and Statements by Mr. Speaker and his deputies are brought together under the heading Speaker's rulings and statements.

Other contributions by Mr. Speaker and his deputies appear under the heading Speaker.

Opposition Day Debates, Estimates Day Debates and Standing Order No. 10 applications are listed under those respective headings and under subject headings too.

The date of each item except Parliamentary Questions is inserted immediately before the reference.

Members' names are given in the form by which they prefer to be known and are printed in bold italics. Under their names, entries are arranged under one of the two headings *Debates etc* (to include interventions on statements, points of order and so on) or *Questions*.

Abbreviations

Bills 1R = first reading, 2R = second reading, Money res = money resolution, Com = Committee stage, Rep = Report stage, 3R = third reading, amendt/amendts = amendment/amendments, * = matter taken formally, without debate.

Column numbers followed by the letter W refer to Written Questions. These appear at the end of each daily part or volume with their own sequence of column numbers printed in italics.

1992 hotline
Advisory services 306

A1
Road accidents 48w
Scotland 48w

A10 aircraft
Air accidents 468w

A27
Noise (08:12:88) 546-54

A34
Road safety barriers 3w

A52
523-4w

A74
(13:12:88) 770-86

A77
(15:12:88) 1191-8

Abbott, Ms Diane
Debates etc.
Security Service Bill, 2R & Money res (15:12:88) 1141, 1144-6
Questions
Arts Council grants, Ethnic minorities 33w
Parking Enforcement Working Party 712w

Abortion
1069
Carlisle Hospital 713w, 1066-7
Coroners 713w, 1066
Custodial treatment 505w
Drugs 599w
Private Members' motions (16:12:88) 1200-67
Prosecutions 662w

Abortion deaths
1069

ABRC
see Advisory Board for the Research Councils

ACAS
see Advisory Conciliation & Arbitration Service

Accident & emergency departments
129w
Greater Glasgow Health Board 440-1w
Lothian Health Board 48w
Scotland 440w
Southern General Hospital Glasgow 441w
Stobhill Hospital 441w
Western Infirmary 292w

Accidents
Coal mining 41w
Playgrounds 379w

Accountability
Intelligence services 33w

Accountants
Northern Ireland 746w

Acid rain
Wales 391-2w

ACPO
see Association of Chief Police Officers

Adams, Mr Allen
Questions
Regional development grants, Codes of practice 443w
Regional development grants, Employment opportunities 443w

ADC
see Association of District Councils

Additional pensions
Pensioners 753w

Additional personal allowance
53-4w, 417-8w
One parent families 55w

Addresses to the Crown
Queen's Speech (05:12:88) 1

Adjournment debates
Speaker's rulings & statements (05:12:88) 145

Adley, Mr Robert
Debates etc.
European Council (06:12:88) 180-1
Railway accidents, Clapham junction (12:12:88) 649
Questions
Buses, Motor vehicle testing 365-6w
Electricity supply industry, Privatisation 327w
Law officers, Belgium 641
Medical treatments, NHS finance 547w
Metropolitan Police, Road traffic control 459w, 507w
Palestine Liberation Organisation, Peace negotiations 644w
Pensioners, Economic situation 590w
Retirement pensions 426-7
Road accidents, NHS 520w
Road traffic, Buildings 519w
Road works, Costs 518w
Roads, Construction costs 519-20w
Town & country planning, Dorset 905
Wales Railway Centre 12

Administrative costs
Television licences 112w

Administrative delays
Attendance allowance 451w, 532-4w
Criminal Injuries Compensation Board 710w
Family credit 325w, 452w, 590-1w
Family income supplements 324-5w
Land Registry Office 569w
Medical appeal tribunals 597w
Members' correspondence 400w, 506w, 587w, 749w
Police national computer 352w
Retirement pensions 533w
Trident 158w

Advanced gas-cooled reactors
329w
Carbon dioxide 330w
Construction 374w
Hartlepool power station 371-2w

Advertising
Central Electricity Generating Board 374w
Dept of Energy 375w
Energy conservation 481w
Keeni Meeni Services 686w
Privatisation 423w

Advice & Assistance (Assistance by Way of Representation) (Scotland) Regulations 1988
Debates etc.
(14:12:88) 1057

Advice & Assistance (Scotland) (Prospective Cost) (No 3) Regulations 1988
Debates etc.
(14:12:88) 1057

Advisory Board for the Research Councils
9w, 388w, 572w, 648w

Advisory Committee on Salmon Conservation
see Salmon Advisory Committee

Advisory Conciliation & Arbitration Service
136w

Advisory services
1992 hotline 306
Children 541w
Export promotion 304-5
Family credit 124w

AERE
see Atomic Energy Research Establishment

Aerobiology
Defence research 68-9w

Aerospace industry
HOTOL 173w

Africa
Development aid 427-8w
Ministers' visits abroad 28w

Africa—continued
Overseas aid 642-3

Age
Mobility allowance 532w
Widows 694w

Age participation rates
3-4w
Higher education admission 4w

Agricultural improvement scheme
Expenditure 380-1w

Agricultural land
Bovine somatotropin 431w

Agricultural research
Animal diseases 676w
National Institute of Agricultural Botany 511-2w
Pesticides 318w
Pollen beetles 435-6w
Research finance 512w
Science & Technology Select Committee (HL) 650-1w
Seeds 511w
Wales 357-8w

Agricultural workers
Set-aside schemes 674w, 677-8w

Agriculture
Departmental publications 30w
Interest rates 637w
Open University 776w
Scilly Isles (15:12:88) 1190
Scotland 637w

Agriculture Improvement (Variation) (No 2) Scheme 1988
Debates etc.
(05:12:88) 37, (15:12:88) 1190

AIDS
450w, 600-1w
Association of London Authorities 541w
Deaf 691w
Health education 601w
Prisoners 464-6w, 706w
Prisons 108w
Queen's Own Highlanders 68w
Research finance 648w
Screening 82w, 541w

Air accidents
A10 aircraft 468w
Falkland Islands 66-7w

Air force bases
Procurement Executive 685-6w
Scotland 71-2w

Air freight transport
Plutonium 99w

Air pollution
Carbon dioxide 275w, 349-50w
Coal 480w
Forests 46w

Air pollution control
Coal fired power stations 193w
Crown immunity 106w
Drax power station 484w
Electricity generation (09:12:88) 621-6
Fiddler's Ferry power station 333w
HM Inspectorate of Pollution 730-2w
Northern Ireland Office 106w
Ozone layer 908
Privatisation 104w
Sulphur dioxide 374w

Air routes
Singapore 96w
USA 162w, (14:12:88) 1059-64

Air safety
Chinook helicopters 67w

Air traffic
London airports 524w

Air transport
Patients' transport 554w

Airbus Industrie
306-8

Airbuses
British Airways 307

Aircraft engines
Rolls-Royce Aeroengines 297

Aircraft noise
770w
Low flying 770-1w
Military aircraft 466w
Research 770-2w

Aitken, Mr Jonathan
Debates etc.
Security Service Bill, 2R & Money res (15:12:88) 1129-34

ALA
see Association of London Authorities

Alarm missiles
Defence contracts 498w

Alcoholic drinks
Beverley 579w

Aldrin
Licensing 202w

Alexander, Mr Richard
Debates etc.
European Council (06:12:88) 181
Questions
"British Tourist Authority Annual Report 1987/88" 141w
Retford Hospital, Property transfer 74w

Aliens
Voting rights 462w

Alison, Rt Hon Michael, Second Church Estates Commissioner
Debates etc.
Electricity Bill, 2R (12:12:88) 711-2
Questions
Clergy, Community charge 399w
Ministers of religion, Termination of employment 561w

Allason, Mr Rupert
Debates etc.
Security Service Bill, 2R & Money res (15:12:88) 1114, 1115, 1117, 1126, 1140, 1141, 1151-4
Questions
Business statements 1093
Cape Verde Islands, Overseas aid 497-8w
Parole Review Committee 1074
Planning permission, Torquay 153w
Security industry 718w
Video recordings, Surveillance 1071-2

Allen, Mr Graham
Debates etc.
Multifibre arrangement (09:12:88) 557
Questions
Bank loans 500-1w
Bus services, Buy outs 486w
Cash limits, Public expenditure 100w
City technology colleges, Nottingham 647w
Civil service unions 16-7
Community charge 527w
Community charge, Income tax 616w
Community charge, Nottingham 615w
Computers in Government departments, Costs 51w
Crime prevention, Inter-city rail transport 283w
Departmental forms, Dept of Social Security 322-4w
EC Environment Council 279w

Allen, Mr Graham—continued
Employment Training, Merseyside 610w
Employment Training, Nottingham 377-8w
Export rebates, EC trade 118w
Export rebates, Redundancy 29w
Family credit, Nottingham 180-1w
House of Commons chamber, Lighting 152w, 345w, 525w, 727w
House of Commons (Services) Select Committee, Members' facilities 579-80w
Housing benefits, Hospital patients 123w
Housing benefits, Nottingham 321w
Housing subsidies, Costs 152w
Income tax, Tax rates & bands 416-7w
Intelligence services 265w
Intelligence services, Appropriation accounts 52w
Intelligence services, Military intelligence 52w
Intervention Board, Computer applications 28-9w
Marcos, Ferdinand, Fraud 99w
Ministry of Agriculture, Computers in Government departments 29w
National insurance contributions 593w
Ophthalmic services, Hospital waiting lists 446w
Radiation Incident Monitoring Network, Watnall 197w
Radioactive waste disposal, Nottingham 197w
Radioactivity 727w
Radioactivity, Nottingham 198w
Rating revaluations, Nottingham 277w
Social Fund, Community care 593w, 695w, 752-3w
Social security benefits, Cash limits 381w
Social security benefits, Take-up 531-2w, 753w
Teachers, Pay settlements 7w
Unemployment 537-8w
Unemployment, Statistics 234-6w, 378w, 537w
Uniform business rate, Nottingham 272w
Water pollution, Nottingham 12w
Youth training scheme, Nottingham 538w

Alternative energy
Research finance 483w

Alternatives to prison
718w

Alton, Mr David
Debates etc.
Abortion (16:12:88) 1202, 1205, 1206-13, 1219, 1225
Midwives, Career structure (07:12:88) 409-13
Questions
Abortion, Carlisle Hospital 1066
Abortion, Prosecutions 662w
Aldrin, Licensing 202w
Business statements 1095
Casualties, Motorcycles 129w
Drugs, Abortion 599w
Employment Training, Merseyside 151
Housing Corporation, Housing & handicapped 151-2w
Inflation, Public expenditure 298w
Life insurance, Tax yields 418-9w
Life insurance, Taxation 417-8w
Mercury, Fish 365w
Midwives 86w
Midwives, Career structure 85-6w, 549w
Midwives, Mersey Regional Health Authority 86w, 130w
Motorcycles 161w
Motorcycles, Road accidents 160-1w
Nuclear power stations, Power station closures 330w
Nuclear submarines, Radioactivity 343w
Pension books, Theft 60w
Plutonium, Nuclear power stations 370-1w
Radiation 330w
Radiation Incident Monitoring Network, Equipment 197-8w
Radiation Incident Monitoring Network, Radioactivity 197w
Restrictive trade practices, Small businesses 27w

Alton, Mr David—continued
Social Fund, Loans 591w
Uranium, Electricity supply industry 680w

Ambulance Council
607w

Ambulance services
Manpower 607w

Amery, Rt Hon Julian
Questions
Business statements 1094

Amess, Mr David
Debates etc.
Abortion (16:12:88) 1243, 1258-9
Questions
Infanticide, Prison sentences 1069
National Union of Students 10w
Rate increases, Essex 614w
Student unions 10w
Student Unions Review 341-2w
Student Unions Review, Questionnaires 10w, 342w
USSR, Jews 350w
Wallenberg, Raoul 351w
Women's employment, Recruitment 140w

Amnesties
Firearms 507-8w

Amos, Mr Alan
Debates etc.
Abortion (16:12:88) 1254-5
Questions
Abortion, Carlisle Hospital 713w
Drug abuse, Death 766-7w
Electricity supply industry, Privatisation 477w
Gibraltar, National insurance 189w
Motorways, Road traffic 523w
NHS finance, Northern Regional Health Authority 546w
Road construction 521-2w
Severe weather payments, Hexham 382-3w

Anderson, Mr Donald
Debates etc.
Abortion (16:12:88) 1222
Eggs, Salmonella (16:12:88) 1275
Rate support grants, Wales (08:12:88) 454
Questions
Council housing, Swansea 2-3
Income support, Automatic credit transfer 753-4w

Anglian Water Authority
899

Angola
Eastern Europe 394-5w
Peace negotiations 395w

Animal diseases
Agricultural research 676w

Animal experiments
Cosmetics 283-4w, 465w
Labelling 284w

Animal feed
Imports 581w
Salmonella 509-10w, 580-1w
Wastes 777-8w

Animal husbandry
Poultry 432w

Animal Procedures Committee
112-3w, 283-4w

"Animal Procedures Committee Annual Report, 1987"
112-3w

Animal welfare
Bovine somatotropin 431w
Treaties 351w

Animals
Tuberculosis 676w

Annual reports
165-6w
Civil service manpower 743w

Annual reports—continued
Court of Auditors 743-4w

Antarctic
Environment protection 570w

Antidumping
EC action 172w

Appeals
District health authorities 603w
Nurses 3, 185w
Royal College of Nursing 756
School admission 245w

Apprentices
145-6w

Appropriation accounts
Intelligence services 52w

Arbuthnot, Mr James
Questions
North Atlantic Assembly 748w
Palestine Liberation Organisation, Peace negotiations 396w

Archer, Rt Hon Peter
Debates etc.
Prevention of Terrorism (Temporary Provisions) Bill, 2R & Money res (06:12:88) 233-6
Questions
Child workers, Insurance 231-2w
Rented housing 908
Ryan, Patrick, Extradition 914-5
Terrorism, European Court of Human Rights 711w

Ards Hospital
Nurses 360w

Argentina
Defence contracts 157w

Arkwright colliery
Methane 50w

Armagh
Educational visits 264w

Armed forces
Motor vehicle registration 686w
Schools 344w
Travel restrictions 771-2w

Armed forces casualties
Dependants 66-8w
NHS 73-4w

Armed forces deployment
14 Intelligence Company 686-7w
Hong Kong 773w

Armed forces education allowances
105-6w
School holidays 106w

Armed forces retirement
Army 688w

Armed forces strength
Army in Northern Ireland 687w

Armenia
Disaster relief 434

Armley Prison
Death 286w
Fine defaulters 285-6w
Prison education services 286w
Prison population 286w
Prisoners on remand 755-6w
Remand in custody 285w

Arms control
Conferences 316-7w
USSR 431-4

Arms embargoes
Coventry four 587-8w
South Africa 395w

Arms exports
344w
Employment 685w

Arms trade
South Africa 397w

Armstrong, Ms Hilary
Debates etc.
North East Shipbuilders, Factory closures (07:12:88) 328-9
Questions
Agricultural research, National Institute of Agricultural Botany 511-2w
Agricultural research, Research finance 512w
Agricultural research, Seeds 511w
Electricity supply industry, Privatisation 477w
Employment Training, Child care 540w
Grant maintained schools, Educational finance 101w
Inner city school compacts 150w
Interest rates, Exchange rates 299w
Overseas aid, Africa 642-3
Personal income 150w
Regional aid 299-300
School buildings, Building repairs 101-2w
Teacher training 102w
Youth training scheme, Ethnic minorities 144w
Youth training scheme, Industrial health & safety 143w
Youth training scheme, Northern region 149-50w
Youth training scheme, Take-up of employment 145-60w
Youth training scheme, Vacancies 144w
Youth training scheme, Women 144-5w

Army
Armed forces retirement 688w
Scholarships 105w

Army bases
Scotland 69-71w

Army in Northern Ireland
687-8w
Armed forces strength 687w
Firearms 773w
Sub-machine guns 686w

Arnold, Mr Jacques
Debates etc.
Channel tunnel, Public petitions (14:12:88) 1058
Compulsory purchase, Compensation (06:12:88) 285
Questions
1992 hotline, Advisory services 306
Africa, Overseas aid 643
Privatisation, Shares 301w

Arnold, Mr Tom
Questions
M66 657w

Arrests
206w
Clifford, Peter 196w
Football 17w, 620w, 629w
Police & Criminal Evidence Act 1984 289w
Terrorism 287-8w

Art works
Export controls 14-5
Export licensing 36w, 497w
Kampuchea 350w
Objects in lieu of tax 113w
Property transfer 254w

Artificial fertilisers
Wales 357w

Arts
Employment Training 470w
Ethnic minorities 33w
Inner London boroughs 388w
Schools 489w

Arts centres
Rural areas 36w

Arts Council
12-3, 37w, 255-6w
Regional arts associations 35w

Arts Council grants
Ethnic minorities 12-3, 33w

Arts Council of Great Britain
see Arts Council

Arts finance
33-5w, 37w, 255-6w
Drama 36w
Ethnic minorities 13
Private sector 37w

Arts Support Review Group
255-6w

Ashby, Mr David
Debates etc.
Members' interests (15:12:88) 1099, 1102
Prevention of Terrorism (Temporary Provisions) Bill, 2R & Money res (06:12:88) 276
Water Bill, 2R (07:12:88) 359, 390, 395-6
Questions
Council housing, Leicester 902
Unemployment, East Midlands 135w

Ashdown, Mr Paddy
Debates etc.
Elected Authorities (Northern Ireland) Bill, 2R & Money res (05:12:88) 38, 69-73, 97-8, 101
Questions
Arms control, USSR 433-4
Greenhouse effect 1079-80

Ashford Remand Centre
Libraries 755w

Ashley, Rt Hon Jack
Questions
Air pollution control, Northern Ireland Office 106w
Animal feed, Salmonella 581w
Blindness 80w
Business statements 1089
Computer privacy, Disclosure of information 108-9w
Doctors, Medical education 78w
Eggs, Salmonella 602w
Eye disorders, Diagnosis 78w
Eye tests 80w
Eye tests, Optical charges 79-80w
Food hygiene, Training 602-3w
Food inspection, Civil service manpower 689w
Food poisoning 548w, 602w, 646w
Food poisoning, Campylobacter 603w
Food poisoning, Listeria monocytogenes 603w
Forensic science 1070
General Medical Council 75w
General Medical Council, Professional misconduct 75-8w
General Medical Council, Professional qualifications 77-8w
Glaucoma 79w
Glaucoma, Blind 79w
Glaucoma, Eye tests 79w
Handicapped workers 140w
Heart pacemakers, Surgery 606w
Hip replacements, Costs 605w
Prisons, Food hygiene 706w
Radiotherapy, Pay 689w
Resource Allocation Working Party, Stoke-on-Trent 755
Salmonella 602w
Wheelchairs 605-6w
Wheelchairs, Disablement Services Authority 605w
Wheelchairs, Expenditure 605w
Wheelchairs, Muscular dystrophy 605w

Ashton, Mr Joseph
Questions
Abortion deaths 1069
Coal fired power stations, West Burton 50w
Health, Pensioners 547-8w
Profits 430

Ashwell Prison
109w

Aspinwall, Mr Jack
Questions
Severn bridge, Contracts 3-4w

Assisted places scheme
245-50w
Scotland 486-7w

Associated British Ports (No 2) Bill 1987/88
Debates etc.
(15:12:88) 1065

Association of Chief Police Officers
704w, 709-10w

Association of District Councils
908

Association of London Authorities
AIDS 541w

Association of Mortgage Lenders
465w

***Atkins, Mr Robert**, Under-Secretary of State for Trade and Industry*
Debates etc.
British Shipbuilders, Privatisation (14:12:88) 947
Questions
Airbus Industrie 306-8
British Airways, Airbuses 307
British Steel Corporation, Privatisation 94w
British Steel Corporation, Shares 263w
Car industry, Market share 175-6w
Communication, Electronics industry 568-9w
Companies, Offices 169w
Dixon's, Government assistance to industry 497w
EH 101 helicopters 312
Elstree Studios, Film industry 93w
HOTOL, Aerospace industry 173w
HOTOL, International cooperation 304
Industrial investment 93w, 311-2
Iron & steel industry 174w
Iron & steel industry, EC grants & loans 494w
Pirate radio stations, Radio frequencies 180w
Private investment, EC countries 493w
Rolls-Royce Aeroengines, Aircraft engines 297
Rolls-Royce Aeroengines, Government assistance to industry 297
Shipbuilding, EC grants & loans 645-6w
Short Brothers, Government shareholding 310
Short Brothers, Privatisation 310-1
Small businesses, Ealing 175w
Society of British Aerospace Companies 93w
Textiles, Turkey 493w
Woollen industry, Export promotion 262-3w

Atkinson, Mr David
Debates etc.
Railway accidents, Clapham junction (12:12:88) 651-2
Questions
District councils, Local government elections 891

Atomic Energy Research Establishment
Defence contracts 582w, 773w
Nuclear safeguards 332w

Atomic Weapons Research Establishment
268w, 688w

Attendance allowance
Administrative delays 451w, 532-4w
Children 123-4w
Social security appeals 124w

Audit
Defence research establishments 158w, 688w

Audit Commission
see Audit Commission for Local Authorities in England & Wales

Audit Commission for Local Authorities in England & Wales
64w

Automatic credit transfer
Income support 753-4w
Social security payments 62w

Autumn Statement
National income 305w

Availability for work
Medical certificates 456w
Unemployment benefits 121w

Average earnings
421-2
Council house rents 291-3w
Greater Manchester 233-4w
Married personal allowance 53w
Non-metropolitan districts 743w
Pensions 612w
Retirement pensions 383-4w
Rural areas 743w
Take-home pay 304w

Avon Light Rail Transit Bill (HL) 1987/88
Debates etc.
2R order read (07:12:88) 291, (08:12:88) 419, (15:12:88) 1065

AWACS
467-8w

AWE Aldermaston
158w, 688w

AWE Burghfield
158w, 688w
Emergency services 285w
Explosions 106w, 252-3w, 584-5w
Road closures 245w

AWRE
see Atomic Weapons Research Establishment

Ayr
Social Fund 697w

Ayr road route
(15:12:88) 1191-8

Ayrshire
Youth training scheme 43-4w

Ayrshire & Arran Health Board
Nurses 779-82w

BAA
see British Airports Authority

Babies
Congenital abnormalities 184w
Medical examinations 364w

Badgers
Bovine tuberculosis 239-40w

Bail
1077
Coventry four 588w

***Baker, Rt Hon Kenneth**, Secretary of State for Education and Science*
Questions
Agricultural research, Science & Technology Select Committee (HL) 650-1w
CERN, UK contributions 647w
Education support grants 652-4w
GCE A level 756w
Grant maintained schools 9-10w
Industrial training, EC grants & loans 758-9w
Local government staff, Employment protection 574w
"Medical Research Council Annual Report, 1987/88" 574w
School leaving certificates, Educational qualifications 573w

***Baker, Rt Hon Kenneth**—continued*
Schools, Capital investment 388w
Schools, Departmental correspondence 9w
"Science & Engineering Research Council Annual Report 1987/88" 165-6w
Science & technology policy 388w
Student loans 489w

Baker, Mr Nicholas
Debates etc.
Water Bill, 2R (07:12:88) 352
Water Bill, 2R, Money res & Ways & means res (08:12:88) 477-9
Questions
Barnsley 117w
Community work, National service 149w
HMSO, Civil service agencies 586w
Nature conservation, Voluntary organisations 13w
Public statues, Inner city areas 36w
Taxation, Social security benefits 699-700w
Town & country planning, Planning authorities 905
Vacant land, Inner city areas 623w

Balance of payments
298-9w
Tourism 155

Balance of trade
Manufactured goods 176w
National income 420w
UK trade with EC 169w

Baldry, Mr Tony
Debates etc.
Eggs, Salmonella (16:12:88) 1275
Employment opportunities (05:12:88) 34
Prevention of Terrorism (Temporary Provisions) Bill, 2R & Money res (06:12:88) 242-4
Questions
Arts finance 255-6w
Corporation tax, Tax yields 301w
Ethiopia, Ministers' visits abroad 427w
House of Commons divisions, Terrorism 170
Non-departmental public bodies 180w
Oxford Regional Health Authority 760-1
Ozone layer, International conferences 619w
Ryan, Patrick, Extradition 385w

Bangladesh
Overseas aid 429w
Visas 394w

Bank loans
500-1w

Banks, Mr Robert
Questions
Goods vehicles, Refrigeration 563w

Banks, Mr Tony
Debates etc.
Eggs, Salmonella (16:12:88) 1277
European Council (06:12:88) 182, 186
Prevention of Terrorism (Temporary Provisions) Bill, 2R & Money res (06:12:88) 209
Private notice question point of order (05:12:88) 24
Railway accidents, Clapham junction (12:12:88) 654
Questions
AIDS, Association of London Authorities 541w
Arts Council, Regional arts associations 35w
Assisted places scheme 245-50w
AWE Burghfield, Emergency services 285w
AWE Burghfield, Explosions 252-3w
Business statements 444, 1095
Central Policy Review Staff, Costs 390w
Civil service, Foreign & Commonwealth Office 414w
Clifford, Peter, Arrests 196w
Diplomatic service, Civil proceedings 316w
"East Thames-side Housing Study Report" 270-1w

Banks, Mr Tony—continued
Emergency planning, Satellites 284w
European Social Fund 146w
Family benefits, Costs 324w
Family benefits, Publicity 325w
Family credit, Administrative delays 325w
Family income supplements, Administrative delays 324-5w
House of Commons questions, Costs 268w
House prices, Personal income 627w
London assessment studies, Road construction 367-8w
Ministers' visits abroad, Mass media 267w
Nature conservation, EC action 270w
Official cars, Dept of the Environment 407w
Official engagements 656w
Official gifts, Expenditure 267-8w 390w
Offshore safety 475w
Parking, Greater London 352w
Prime Minister, Ministerial policy advisors 267w
Prime Minister's Policy Unit 268w
Private education, Local education authorities 250-2w
Road closures, AWE Burghfield 245w
Road tax, Greater London 464w
Road tax, Tax evasion 524w
Road traffic, Greater London 244w
Roads, Greater London 243-4w
Tax avoidance, Platinum 359w
10 Downing Street, Contracts for services 391w
10 Downing Street, Expenditure 267w, 391w
Tidy Britain Group, Motorway service areas 407-8w
Vocational guidance, Inner London Boroughs 473-4w
Voluntary schools, Private education 252w
Water supply, EC law 408w
Water supply, Greater London 408w

Barlow Clowes
169-70w
Parliamentary Commissioner for Administration 19w

Barnes, Mr Harry
Debates etc.
Elected Authorities (Northern Ireland) Bill, 2R & Money res (05:12:88) 85, 116-7
Electricity Bill, 2R, Money res & Ways & means res (13:12:88) 841-3
Water Bill, 2R, Money res & Ways & means res (08:12:88) 488-90
Questions
British Coal Corporation, Monopolies & Mergers Commission 172w
Business statements 1096
Civil service unions 16
Coal mining, Subsidence 480w
Community care 545w
Council house waiting lists, Derbyshire 527-8w
Dept of Social Security, Departmental publications 452w
Education Reform Act 1988, Publicity 571w
Environment protection, International cooperation 198w
Occupational pensions, Derbyshire 753w
Overseas aid, Ecology 430w
Pensioners, Derbyshire 695w
Power stations, Malta 483w, 629-30w
Privatisation 425
Probation & aftercare 505w
Small businesses, Derbyshire 647w
Standard of living, Community charge 586w
Student loans, Higher education admission 489w
Teachers' pensions, Widowers' benefits 341w
Unemployment, Statistics 135w
Unemployment benefits, Social security benefits disqualification 533w
Youth training scheme, Derbyshire 151w, 471w

Barnes, Mrs Rosie
Questions
Dreadnought Seamen's Hospital, Property transfer 585w
Eggs, Salmonella 23-4

Barnet Health Authority
447w

Barnsley
117w

Barnsley Football Club
612w

Barnsley Health Authority
Nurses 543w

Barron, Mr Kevin
Debates etc.
Abortion (16:12:88) 1220-1, 1225, 1228
Eggs, Salmonella (16:12:88) 1275
Electricity Bill, 2R, Money res & Ways & means res (13:12:88) 852-8, 861, 863
Questions
British Coal Corporation, Coinpower 484w
Coal, Air pollution 480w
Coal mining, Redundancy 629-30
Drax power station, Air pollution control 484w
Power stations, Licensing 371w

Batiste, Mr Spencer
Debates etc.
European Council (06:12:88) 182-3
Questions
Regional planning & development, Contracts for services 301
Unemployment, Yorkshire & Humberside 134w

Baton rounds
Northern Ireland 195w
Police firearms 679w

Battersea bridge
2w

Battery hens
Salmonella 29w

Battle, Mr John
Questions
Armley Prison, Death 286w
Armley Prison, Fine defaulters 285-6w
Armley Prison, Prison education services 286w
Armley Prison, Prison population 286w
Armley Prison, Prisoners on remand 755-6w
Armley Prison, Remand in custody 285w
Attendance allowance, Administrative delays 532w
Business sponsorship incentive scheme, Leeds 34w
Challenger tanks, Defence procurement 431
Child benefit, Social security recipients 381w
Cookridge Hospital, Radiographers 363w
Income support 452w
Rate support grants, Leeds City Council 272w, 412-3w
Social Fund, Loans 382w
Tax allowances, Children 303w
Unemployment benefits, Hard core unemployed 452-3w
Youth training scheme, Industrial health & safety 143w

BBC
111-2w, 444w
Broadcasting 713w

BCIRA
see British Cast Iron Research Association

Beaches
EC law 906

Beaumont-Dark, Mr Anthony
Debates etc.
Employment opportunities (05:12:88) 33
Questions
International trade, Sterling 303

Beckett, Mrs Margaret
Questions
Family credit, Expenditure 535w
Housing benefits, Social security reform 536-7w
Income support 700w
Income support, Social security recipients 536w
Income tax, Pensioners 422w
Invalidity benefits, Social security benefits uprating 326w
National insurance fund, Personal pensions 535w
Occupational pensions 534-6w
Social Fund 536w
Social security reform 535-6w
Unemployment benefits, Social security benefits disqualification 121-2w
Widows' benefits, Social security claims 181-4w

Bed & breakfast accommodation
656w, 729w

Beggs, Mr Roy
Debates etc.
Employment opportunities (05:12:88) 33
North East Shipbuilders, Factory closures (07:12:88) 324
Questions
Business statements 1093
Driving offences 1-2w
Eggs, Salmonella 22
Nurses, Career structure 361w, 399w
Nurses, East Antrim 361w, 399w
Nurses, Pay settlements 360w
Regional planning & development, Northern Ireland 196w, 746w

Beith, Mr A J
Debates etc.
British Shipbuilders, Privatisation (14:12:88) 919-20, 950-2
Electricity Bill, 2R (12:12:88) 705, 706
Electricity Bill, 2R, Money res & Ways & means res (13:12:88) 790, 798, 809, 834-7, 881
Questions
Interest rates 422-3
Personal taxation, Tax reform 302w
Prison Officers' Association, Trade union membership 207w
Unemployment benefits, Share fishermen 121w

Belgium
Extradition 209-10w, 641
Law officers 641

Bell, Mr Stuart
Questions
Metropolitan Police, Fingerprints 715-6w
Ryan, Patrick, Extradition 916

Bellingham, Mr Henry
Debates etc.
Water Bill, 2R (07:12:88) 390-2
Questions
Barlow Clowes 170w
Gun sports, Land use 905-6
Inflation 298w
Ryan, Patrick, Extradition 916
Small businesses, Institute of Directors 138w

Belvoir Hospital
Nurses 360w

Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Debates etc.
Elected Authorities (Northern Ireland) Bill, 2R & Money res (05:12:88) 48, 82-5, 105

Bennett, Mr Andrew F
Debates etc.
Consolidated Fund debates, House of Commons procedure (15:12:88) 1101
Security Service Bill, 2R & Money res (15:12:88) 1113, 1123, 1148, 1157-9
Water Bill, 2R (07:12:88) 343, 385-8
Water Bill, 2R, Money res & Ways & means res (08:12:88) 459, 462, 464, 473

Bennett, Mr Andrew F—continued
Questions
Business statements 1090
Cambridge University, Higher education admission 3-8w
Electricity generation, Tidal power 49w
Health service ancillary staff, Pay 555w
Higher education admission, Age participation rates 4w
House prices, Repossession orders 309
Mature students 3-4w
Police interrogation, Tape recorders 717w
Social security benefits, Students 123w
Training, Young people 145w

Bennett, Mr Nicholas
Debates etc.
Abortion (16:12:88) 1211, 1218, 1223, 1238-40, 1242, 1256-8
Eggs, Salmonella (16:12:88) 1273
Public expenditure, Scotland (13:12:88) 781
Transport (Scotland) Bill, 2R & Money res (14:12:88) 977, 981-2, 989, 999-1005, 1019
Questions
Breathalysers, Christmas 352-3w
Cervical cancer, Screening 164w
Disposable income 423w
Eggs, Production 777w
Eggs, Salmonella 187-8w, 777-8w
Extradition, Belgium 209-10w
Extradition, Republic of Ireland 209-11w
Hard core unemployed, Greater London 138-9w
Haverfordwest bypass, Road construction 738w
Housing, Wales 5
Identity cards 352w
Motor vehicle safety, Transport & Road Research Laboratory 661w
National insurance contributions, Post Office 754w
National Museum of Wales, Objects in lieu of tax 491w
Oil pollution, Milford Haven 168
Primary health care 550w
Railway closures 741w
Unemployment, Wales 1081
VAT zero rated goods, Village halls 59w
Welsh language, Curriculum 739w

Benzodiazepines
Prescriptions 551w

Berkeley power station
Nuclear fuels 49w, 103w

Berlin
Security 644w

Bermingham, Mr Gerald
Questions
AIDS 450w
AIDS, Screening 82w
Ashford Remand Centre, Libraries 755w
Crown prosecutors 334-5w
Crown prosecutors, London allowance 335w
Crown prosecutors, Pay 335w
Fiddler's Ferry power station, Air pollution control 333w
Justices' clerks 286w
Justices' clerks, London allowance 286-7w
Justices' clerks, Pay 286w
Magistrates, Manpower 334w
Magistrates' courts, Manpower 287w
Natural Environment Research Council, Voluntary work 11w
Nature reserves, Government grants to voluntary organisations 751w
Prisoners, AIDS 464-6w

Bestwood Property
414-5w

Betting
Horse racing 717w

Bevan, Mr David Gilroy
Questions
Tourism 148w

Beverley
Alcoholic drinks 579w

Bidwell, Mr Sydney
Questions
Dept of Health, Offices 547w

Birds
Fish farming 367w

Birds of prey
Prices 12w

Birmingham
Social Fund 455w
Social security recipients 326w

BL
see British Library

Blair, Mr Tony
Debates etc.
Electricity Bill, 2R (12:12:88) 671, 675, 679-89
Questions
Advanced gas-cooled reactors, Construction 374w
Central Electricity Generating Board, Advertising 374w
Coal fired power stations, West Burton 375-6w
Contracts, EC law 424w
Dept of Energy, Advertising 375w
Electricity disconnections 375w
Electricity distribution, France 376w
Electricity generation 371w
Electricity generation, Competition 373w
Electricity generation, Costs 371w
Electricity generation, Energy costs 373w
Electricity generation, Nuclear power stations 371w
Electricity supply industry, Contracts 371w
Electricity supply industry, Insolvency 372w
Electricity supply industry, Manpower 374-5w
Electricity supply industry, Pay 483w
Electricity supply industry, Privatisation 372-3w
Electricity supply industry, Shareholders 373w
Electricity supply industry, Takeovers 372w
Electricity tariffs, Price controls 373w
Energy Efficiency Office, Expenditure 373-4w
Energy prices, EC action 372w
Nuclear power, Research finance 372w
Nuclear power stations, Power station closures 376w
Office of Electricity Regulation, Manpower 372w
Power station closures, Costs 628
Power stations, Competition 372w
Power stations, Construction 376w
Pressurised water reactors, Construction costs 376w
Social security benefits uprating 454w
Sulphur dioxide, Air pollution control 374w
Supplementary benefits, Northern region 453-4w

Blind
Glaucoma 79w

Blindness
80w

Block grant
Clwyd 25w

Blood transfusion services
Oxford 761

Blunkett, Mr David
Questions
Chemicals, Safety measures 92-3w
Community charge 892
Community charge, Government grants to local authorities 401-2w
Community charge, Publicity 401w
Consultation papers, Dept of the Environment 408-12w
Council house rents 401w
Dept of Health, Water Bill 1988/89 555w
Government grants to local authorities 526-8w
Industrial training 213w
Iron & steel industry, EC grants & loans 494w
Iron & steel industry, Employment opportunities 528w
Local authorities, EC internal trade 198w
Mortgage interest rates 423-4
Public libraries, Part-time education 36w
"Punishment Custody & the Community" 714w
Rate support grants, Local authorities 732-4w
Working hours, Youth employment 139w

Blyth valley
Employment Training 610w
Handicapped workers 610-1w

BNFL
see British Nuclear Fuels

Board & lodging charges
Social security reform 698-9w
Youth training scheme 472w

Board of Inland Revenue
see Inland Revenue

Boateng, Mr Paul
Debates etc.
Water Bill, 2R (07:12:88) 391, 396-8
Water Bill, 2R, Money res & Ways & means res (08:12:88) 527
Questions
Bombings, Guildford 707-8w
Business statements 442
Music, Ethnic minorities 33w
Prescriptions, NHS complaints 606w
Severe weather payments 451w

Body, Sir Richard
Debates etc.
EC budget (05:12:88) 134-6
Multifibre arrangement (09:12:88) 580-2

Body searches
Scotland 441w

Boeing
Defence contracts 467-8w

Bolton
Medical treatments 340w

Bolton General Hospital
Urinary system disorders 546w

Bombings
Guildford 113w, 707-8w
Woolwich 113w, 708w

Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Questions
Gun sports, Land use 199w

Borders region
296-7w

Boscawen, Mr Robert
Debates etc.
Security Service Bill, 2R & Money res (15:12:88) 1122-4

Boscombe Down
685-6w

Boswell, Mr Tim
Questions
Agriculture, Departmental publications 30w
Food hygiene, Publicity 120w
General Practice Finance Corporation 188w
Imports, Personal income 502w
Small businesses, VAT registration 137-8w

BOTB
see British Overseas Trade Board

Bottesford bypass
Road construction 523-4w

***Bottomley, Mr Peter**, Under-Secretary of State for Transport*
Debates etc.
A27, Noise (08:12:88) 550-4
Questions
Air freight transport, Plutonium 99w
Air routes, Singapore 96w
Air routes, USA 162w
Air traffic, London airports 524w
Bottesford bypass, Road construction 523-4w
Buses, Motor vehicle testing 365-6w
Driver & Vehicle Licensing Centre 518w
Driver & Vehicle Licensing Centre, Community charge 97w
Driver & Vehicle Licensing Centre, Security vetting 524w
Driver Testing & Training Division 660w
Goods vehicles, Refrigeration 563w
Hammersmith Broadway, Road traffic 366w
Handicapped drivers, Orange badge scheme 564w
Handicapped workers, Dept of Transport 365w
Lancaster canal, Repairs & maintenance 99w
London assessment studies 243w
London assessment studies, Road construction 367-8w
Lorries, EC action 520w
Lorries, Road safety 159w
M1 657-8w
M1, Road accidents 244w
M1, Road signs 658w
M1, Road traffic 1w
M1, Road works 658w
M4, Road safety barriers 97w
M20, Road construction 97w
M20, Road traffic 96w
M25, Road traffic 98-9w
M66 657w
M69, Road works 95-6w
Minibuses, Driving licences 740w
Minibuses, EC action 566w
Motor vehicle safety, Transport & Road Research Laboratory 661w
Motor vehicles, Road accidents 661w
Motorcycles 161w
Motorcycles, Road accidents 160-1w
Motorways, Road traffic 523w
Motorways, Road works 95w
North Devon link road, Speed limits 524w
Road accidents, Children 160w
Road accidents, Lorries 366-7w, 521w
Road accidents, NHS 520w
Road closures, AWE Burghfield 245w
Road construction 521-2w
Road safety barriers, A34 3w
Road signs 161w

Bottomley, Mr Peter*—*continued
Road tax, Expenditure 518w
Road tax, Tax evasion 524w
Road traffic, Buildings 519w
Road traffic, Greater London 244w
Road traffic, Inner London boroughs 1-2w
Road works, Costs 518w
Road works, Public utilities 161-2w
Road works, Road mileage 243w
Roads, Construction costs 519-20w
Roads, East Anglia 522w
Roads, Expenditure 2w, 365w
Roads, Greater London 243-4w
Severn bridge, Contracts 3-4w
VAT, Dept of Transport 243w

***Bottomley, Mrs Virginia**, Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Dept of the Environment*
Questions
Birds of prey, Prices 12w
Bracken, Weedkillers 630w
Carbon dioxide, Air pollution 349-50w
Carbon dioxide, Energy consumption 275w
Chlorofluorocarbons, Dry cleaning 626w
Chlorofluorocarbons, Electronics industry 726w
Chlorofluorocarbons, Japan 630w
Chlorofluorocarbons, Ozone layer 346-7w
Chlorofluorocarbons, Refrigeration 156w
Chlorofluorocarbons, Waste disposal 727w
Commissions for Local Administration 406w
Commissions for Local Administration, Ministerial powers 413w
Community charge, Government grants to local authorities 401-2w
Croxteth Hall 14w
Dept of the Environment, Holidays abroad 725w
District councils, Local government elections 891
Driving offences 1-2w
Environment, Research finance 729w
Environment protection 908
Environment protection, International cooperation 198w
Environment protection, Ministerial statements 729w
Exhaust emissions, Standards specifications 623w
"Green Gauntlet" 624w
Greenhouse effect, European Commission 750w
Greenhouse effect, Research 726w
Hazardous wastes, Imports 12w
Hazardous wastes, Waste disposal 12w, 614w
HM Inspectorate of Pollution, Air pollution control 730-2w
HM Inspectorate of Pollution, Manpower 618w
International Fund for Animal Welfare 730w
Lead, Gun sports 14w
Lead free petrol 902-4
Listed buildings 402w
Local authorities, Companies 404w
Local authorities, EC internal trade 198w
Local government pensions, Death 278w
Local government services, Lancashire County Council 614w
Nature conservation, EC action 270w, 347w
Nature conservation, Voluntary organisations 13w
Nature reserves, Government grants to voluntary organisations 751w
Nature reserves, Land acquisition 347-8w
North Sea, Pollution control 898
North Sea, Sea pollution 896-8
Nuclear Industry Radioactive Waste Executive 614w
Nuclear Industry Radioactive Waste Executive, Radioactive waste disposal 906-7
Old Perry bridge 751w
Ozone layer 622w

Bottomley, Mrs Virginia*—*continued
Ozone layer, International conferences 619w
Pollution control, Industry 197w
Polychlorinated biphenyl, HM Inspectorate of Pollution 13w
Polychlorinated biphenyl, North Sea 633-4w
Power stations, Malta 629-30w
Radiation Incident Monitoring Network, Equipment 197-8w
Radiation Incident Monitoring Network, Radioactivity 197w
Radiation Incident Monitoring Network, Watnall 197w
Radioactive waste disposal 630w, 907
Radioactive waste disposal, Computer applications 724-5w
Radioactive waste disposal, Costs 403w, 725w
Radioactive waste disposal, Magnox reactors 403w
Radioactive waste disposal, Nottingham 197w
Radioactive waste disposal, Radiation hazards 750w
Radioactive waste disposal, Research 725w
Radioactive waste disposal, Scotland 907-8
Radioactive waste disposal, South Yorkshire 13w
Radioactivity 727w
Radioactivity, Nottingham 198w
Radon gas 406w
Radon gas, Yorkshire & Humberside 197w
Rate increases 624w
Rate increases, Essex 614w
Rate support grants 619w
Rate support grants, Brent 618w
Rate support grants, Leeds City Council 272w, 412-3w
Rate support grants, Westminster City Council 347w
Rating revaluations, Nottingham 277w
River Thames, Pollution control 897
Seals, Viruses 725-6w
Sports facilities, Community charge 345w
Stonehenge, Tourism 614w
Tidy Britain Group, Motorway service areas 407-8w
Tied housing, Domestic rates 726w
Uniform business rate, Nottingham 272w
Waste disposal, Electrical technology 405w
Water authorities, Land ownership & tenure 348w
Wildlife & Countryside Act 1981, Judgments 11-2w

Boundary Commission for England
Buckingham 289w
Milton Keynes 289w

Bovine somatotropin
120w
Agricultural land 431w
Animal welfare 431w
Wales 357w

Bovine spongiform encephalopathy
EC countries 119w

Bovine tuberculosis
Badgers 239-40w

Bowden, Mr Andrew
Questions
Additional pensions, Pensioners 753w
Breast cancer, Elderly 553w
Christmas bonus, Pensioners 124w
Departmental publications, Dept of Social Security 322w
Elderly, Death 184-6w
Elderly, Hypothermia 183w
Elderly, Personal income 320w
Pensioners 589w
Pensioners, British residents abroad 319-20w
Pensioners, Housing benefits 590w, 753w
Pensioners, Income support 589w
Pensioners, Occupational pensions 589-90w
Retirement pensions, British residents abroad 182w

Bowden, Mr Andrew—continued
Retirement pensions, Earnings rules 181w, 320-2w

Bowden, Mr Gerald
Questions
Piper Alpha platform, Salvage 333-4w
Postal services, Monopoly 176w
Tourism, Urban areas 147w

Bowe Systems
485w, 524w

Bowis, Mr John
Debates etc.
Employment opportunities (05:12:88) 30
Railway accidents, Clapham junction (12:12:88) 652-3
Questions
Abortion, Custodial treatment 503w
Community charge, Tax evasion 616w
Drama, Arts finance 36w
Driving offences, Motor vehicle safety 284-5w
Engineering industries, Young people 302
Horticulture, Government grants 187w
Legal aid 640
Overseas aid, Forestry 428w
Prisoners, Repatriation 208-9w
Railway accidents 660-2w
Railway accidents, Clapham junction 659w, 740-1w, 1080
Retirement pensions, EC countries 182w
River Thames, Pollution control 897
Road traffic, Inner London boroughs 1-2w
Road works, Public utilities 161-2w
Unemployment, Greater London 134w
Wandsworth Health Authority 552w

Boyes, Mr Roland
Debates etc.
British Shipbuilders, Privatisation (14:12:88) 922-3
North East Shipbuilders, Factory closures (07:12:88) 330
Questions
Business sponsorship incentive scheme, Photography 34w
Parole Review Committee, Prison population 709w

BP
see British Petroleum

BR
see British Rail

Bracken
Health hazards 582w
Weedkillers 630w

Bradford
City technology colleges 389w
Legal aid 639-40
Social Fund 64-5w

Bradford City Council
Rate support grants 412-3w

Bradley, Mr Keith
Questions
Average earnings, Greater Manchester 233-4w
British residents abroad, Homicide 37-8w
Children in care, Supplementary benefits 167-8
Criminal Injuries Compensation Board, Administrative delays 710w
Housing investment programmes, Government grants to local authorities 625w
Hypothermia, Elderly 546-7w
Nurses, Career structure 759-60w
Vacancies, Greater Manchester 216-32w

Braine, Rt Hon Sir Bernard
Debates etc.
Abortion (16:12:88) 1201, 1202, 1213-9
Questions
Abortion, Carlisle Hospital 1066-7
Babies, Medical examinations 364w
Business statements 436-7

Braine, Rt Hon Sir Bernard—continued
Child health, Child Health Surveillance Joint Working Party 364-5w
Infant Life (Preservation) Act 1929, Prison sentences 709w
Unemployment, Castle Point 160

Brandon-Bravo, Mr Martin M
Debates etc.
Members' interests (15:12:88) 1101
Water Bill, 2R (07:12:88) 370-2
Questions
Agricultural research, Science & Technology Select Committee (HL) 650-1w
Foreign tourists, Invisible exports 141-2w
Heart diseases, Health education 554w
Water supply industry, Capital investment 619w

Bray, Dr Jeremy
Questions
Industrial research, Contracts 170w
National income, Autumn Statement 305w

Brazier, Mr Julian
Debates etc.
British Shipbuilders, Privatisation (14:12:88) 952-3
Elected Authorities (Northern Ireland) Bill, 2R & Money res (05:12:88) 45, 48
European Council (06:12:88) 184
Questions
Armed forces retirement, Army 688w
Cruelty to children, Sexual offences 351-2w
Infant Life (Preservation) Act 1929, Convictions 712w
Legal aid 639
Public expenditure 426
Training Commission 142w

Brazil
Overseas aid 657w

Breast cancer
Elderly 553w
Scotland 639w
Screening 130-1w, 607w, 639w

Breathalysers
Christmas 352-3w
Police powers 461w
Rugby 461w

Brent
Rate support grants 618w

Bridging allowances
(05:12:88) 142-50, 325w, 539-40w
Youth training scheme 609w

Bright, Mr Graham
Questions
Capital investment 302w
"Employment for the 1990s White Paper" 137w
Industrial training schemes 644-5w

Bristol Channel
29-30w
Petroleum exploration 50w
Pollution control 627w
Sewage 238w

British Aerospace
498w

British Airports Authority
524w

British Airways
538w
Airbuses 307

British Antarctic Survey
Research finance 648w

British Board of Film Classification
577-8w

British Broadcasting Corporation
see BBC

British Cast Iron Research Association
(13:12:88) 884

British Coal
see British Coal Corporation

British Coal Corporation
41w, 49-50w, 104w, 232w, 310w, 479w, 482w, 538w, 629-30
Coinpower 484w
Monopolies & Mergers Commission 172w

British dependent territories
Health services 570w

British embassies
Export promotion 305

British Gas
375w, 481w, 538w, 632

British Gas Corporation
see British Gas

British Library
254w
Business 254w
Construction costs 254w, 598w
Offices 254w
Science & technology 255w

British Nuclear Fuels
99w, 330w, 503w, 681w, 688w, 749w, 771-2w

British Overseas Trade Board
Civil service manpower 258w
Export promotion 344w

British Petroleum
Shareholders 177w

British Rail
244-5w, 563-6w, 741w

British residents abroad
Homicide 37-8w
Pensioners 319-20w
Retirement pensions 182w

British Shipbuilders
(07:12:88) 315-30
Privatisation (14:12:88) 918-67

British Steel Corporation
Engineering industries 302
Privatisation 94w
Shares 263w

"British Tourist Authority Annual Report 1987/88"
141w

British Transport Police
661w

British Venture Capital Association
Small businesses 137w

Brittan, Leon
116w, 266w

Brixham
Coastguard 658w

Broadcasting
BBC 713w
Employment Training 470w
Scotland 707w, 1075

Broadcasting controls
Cable television 463w
Satellite broadcasting 463w, 706w
Terrorism 209w

"Broadcasting in the 90s White Paper"
209w, 707w, 1075

Broadcasting licences
Religious broadcasting 111w

Broads Authority
16-8w

Broadwater Farm estate
Complaints against police 704w
Convictions 1068-9

***Broadwater Farm estate**—continued*
Metropolitan Police 1068

***Brooke, Rt Hon Peter**, Paymaster General*
Debates etc.
EC budget (05:12:88) 121-4, 140-2
Questions
EC budget 57w, 421w, 643w
EC budget, Loans 56w
EC budget, UK contributions 56-7w, 305w
EC budget contributions 56w
Civil servants, Career structure 421-2w
Civil service recruitment 51w
Computers in Government departments, Costs 51w
Court of Auditors, Annual reports 743-4w
Government data network 502w
Handicapped workers, Treasury 203w
Procurement, Government departments 100w
Treasury, Financial management initiative 50-1w

Brooks, Tony
Subversion 663-4w

Brown, Mr Gordon
Questions
AIDS, Research finance 648w
Bus services, Competition 659w
Company registration 670w
Environment, Research finance 729w
Heating, Costs 682w
Inflation, Mortgage interest rates 429
Public transport, Research finance 658-9w
Science & technology research, Research finance 648w

Brown, Mr Michael
Questions
Commissions for Local Administration 406w
Commissions for Local Administration, Ministerial powers 413w
Food standards, Organic farming 675w
Tobacco duties, Tax harmonisation 58-9w

Brown, Mr Nicholas
Questions
Mortgage interest rates 423

Brown, Mr Ron
Questions
Business statements 442
Prisoners, Solitary confinement 712w
Retirement pensions 427
UK trade with EC, EC internal trade 167-8w
Youth training scheme, Lothian 487w

Bruce, Mr Ian
Debates etc.
Electricity Bill, 2R, Money res & Ways & means res (13:12:88) 833-4
European Council (06:12:88) 184
Transport (Scotland) Bill, 2R & Money res (14:12:88) 1024
Questions
Coastal erosion, Planning permission 622w
Employment Service 165
Export promotion, British embassies 305
Heating, Pensioners 763
Information technology, Science & technology research 168w
Inland Revenue, Tax evasion 55-6w
NHS finance, Dorset 540-1w
Prisons, Construction 719-20w
Radioactive waste disposal 907

Bruce, Mr Malcolm
Debates etc.
Electricity Bill, 2R (12:12:88) 673, 702-5
Electricity Bill, 2R, Money res & Ways & means res (13:12:88) 810, 878-80
Questions
Gas tariffs, Industrial energy prices 632-3
"Green Gauntlet" 624w
Hedges & ditches 118w
North Sea, Sea pollution 897
"Scottish Health Service" 634-5w

***Bruce, Mr Malcolm**—continued*
Taxation, Environmental policy 301w

BSC
see British Steel Corporation

BTEC
see Business & Technician Education Council

Buchan, Mr Norman
Debates etc.
Security Service Bill, 2R & Money res (15:12:88) 1107
Transport (Scotland) Bill, 2R & Money res (14:12:88) 1054
Questions
British Library 254w
British Library, Business 254w
British Library, Construction costs 254w, 598w
British Library, Offices 254w
British Library, Science & technology 255w
Conventional weapons, USSR 1081-2
Ryan, Patrick, Extradition 915
Television, Scotland 1076

Buckingham
Boundary Commission for England 289w

Buckley, Mr George J
Debates etc.
Electricity Bill, 2R, Money res & Ways & means res (13:12:88) 845-7
Questions
Confederation of British Industry, Interest rates 430-1
Health, Pensioners 547-8w

Budgen, Mr Nicholas
Debates etc.
European Council (06:12:88) 17
Questions
Inflation 428-9

Building alterations
Maxwell House 531w

Building regulations
Energy conservation 270w

Building repairs
Floods 265w
Salt House Port Eynon 392w
School buildings 101-2w

Building societies
588w

Building Societies Act 1986
Questions
644w

Building Societies' Association
465w

Buildings
Health services 557w
Road traffic 519w

Burglary
Crime prevention 713w

Burns, Mr Simon
Debates etc.
Elected Authorities (Northern Ireland) Bill, 2R & Money res (05:12:88) 85-7, 90
Questions
Hospitals, Construction 554w

Burt, Mr Alistair
Questions
Community charge, Government grants to local authorities 752w
Enterprise allowance scheme, North West region 166
Fires, Casualties 577w
Fires, Housing 577w
Hospital waiting lists, North Western Regional Health Authority 540w
Privatisation 425-6
Ryan, Patrick, Extradition 913
Smoke detection, Council housing 576w

***Burt, Mr Alistair**—continued*
Smoke detection, Domestic safety 577w
Smoke detection, Fire services 576w
Smoke detection, Local authorities 577w

Bury
Empty housing 628-9w

Bus crews
Greater London 2w

Bus services
Buy outs 486w
Competition 659w
Fares 659w
London Regional Transport 517w

Buses
Motor vehicle testing 365-6w
Sri Lanka 28w

Business
British Library 254w
Government assistance 311-4w

Business & Technician Education Council
649w

Business expansion scheme
311-4w
Private rented housing 307w

Business motions
(09:12:88) 620, (16:12:88) 1267

Business sponsorship incentive scheme
Leeds 34w
Liverpool 34w
Northern region 34-5w
Oxford 34w
Photography 34w
Wales 34w
West Midlands 34w

Business statements
435-47, 1085-96
Speaker's rulings & statements (08:12:88) 448

***Butcher, Mr John**, Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Dept of Education and Science*
Questions
Assisted places scheme 245-50w
Computers in schools 758-9w
Educational visits, Education Reform Act 1988 7w
Enthorpe Lodge Special School Newbury 342-3w
Glue sniffing, Health education 102w
Grant maintained schools, Educational finance 101w
Grant maintained schools, Preparatory schools 7w
Headteachers, Primary education 571-2w
Languages education, Teachers 490w
Private education, Local education authorities 250-2w
Racial harassment, Schools 756-7w
School admission, Appeals 245w
School buildings, Building repairs 101-2w
School transport 164w
School violence, Research 103w
Schools, Arts 489w
Science education, Teachers 572-4w
Special education, Departmental publications 252w
Teacher training 102w
Teachers, Educational exchanges 387w
Teachers, Ethnic monitoring 388w
Teachers, Recruitment 102-3w
Voluntary schools, Private education 252w

Butler, Mr Chris
Debates etc.
Water Bill, 2R, Money res & Ways & means res (08:12:88) 473-5
Questions
Cable television, Film censorship 577-8w
Coal mining, Privately owned mines 478-9w
Eggs, Salmonella 239w

Butler, Mr Chris—continued
General Certificate of Secondary Education, Universities 572w
India, Overseas aid 427w
Leasehold housing, North West region 621w
NHS, Land registration 365w
Postal services, Monopoly 766
Prisoners, AIDS 706w
Radioactive wastes, Sellafield 49-50w
Youth employment 159

Butter
Intervention stocks 582w

Butterfill, Mr John
Debates etc.
Railway accidents, Clapham junction (12:12:88) 650
Questions
England for Excellence award scheme, English Tourist Board 471w
Land use, Waste disposal 263-4w
Price increases 423
Private investment, EC countries 493w
Public expenditure, National income 99-100w
Public sector debt 304w
Public sector debt, National income 586w
Takeovers 167w
Tourism, Capital investment 236w
Tourism, Invisible exports 154-5
Tourist industry, Manpower 236w
Tourist industry, Private investment 471w

Buy outs
Bus services 486w

BVCA
see British Venture Capital Association

Cabinet Office
729w

Cable Authority
577-8w

Cable television
Broadcasting controls 463w
Film censorship 577-8w

Caborn, Mr Richard
Questions
Balance of payments 298w
Business statements 442-3
Nurses, Career structure 763-4w
Regional planning & development, EC internal trade 301

Calder Hall
330w
Nuclear reactors 771-2w
Power station closures 681w

Calderdale
Homelessness 154w

Caledonian MacBrayne
(14:12:88) 968-1057, (15:12:88) 1191-8

Callaghan, Mr Jim
Questions
Owner occupied housing, South East region 623w

Calling of Members
Speaker's rulings & statements (06:12:88) 183, 196, 203, 204, (14:12:88) 916, 955, (15:12:88) 1108, (16:12:88) 1274

CalMac
see Caledonian MacBrayne

Camberwell Health Authority
450w

Cambridge University
Higher education admission 3-8w

Camden
Rates & rating 893
Right to buy 528-9w

Camdessus, Michel
297w

Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament
583w

Campbell, Mr Menzies
Questions
Air force bases, Scotland 71-2w
Army bases, Scotland 69-71w
Defence contracts 159w
Defence expenditure, Scotland 73w
Defence procurement, Defence expenditure 105w
Defence procurement, Legal profession 157w
Defence procurement, Scotland 72w
Football, Identity cards 612w
Naval bases, Scotland 72w
Procurators fiscal 638w
Procurement Executive, Civil service manpower 773-6w
Tanks, Defence contracts 69w
Trials, Scotland 638-9w

Campbell, Mr Ronnie
Questions
Community care 545w
Employment Training, Blyth valley 610w
Handicapped workers, Blyth valley 610-1w
Pensions, Finance 426

Campbell-Savours, Mr D N
Debates etc.
European Council (06:12:88) 184
Members' interests (15:12:88) 1100-1
Oral question time intervention (13:12:88) 753
Security Service Bill, 2R & Money res (15:12:88) 1110-1, 1112, 1141, 1149-51
Questions
Arms trade, South Africa 397w
Business statements 445
Company investigations 178-9w
Company investigations, Cemetery Assets United Kingdom 178w
Company investigations, Fraud 396-7w
Councillors' interests, Prosecutions 18w
Coventry four, Arms embargoes 588w
Coventry four, Bail 588w
Coventry four, Criminal proceedings 386w
Coventry four, Inquiries 588w
Coventry four, Passports 588w
Growish, Company investigations 27w, 422w
Haseldine, Patrick, Newspaper press 488w
HM Coastguard, Hartland Point 517-8w
Identity cards 1073
Rate support grants, Westminster City Council 347w
Resource Allocation Working Party 755
Sea pollution, Cumbria 281w
South Africa, Diplomatic relations 395w
Tax evasion, Company investigations 414-5w
Unemployment, Workington 160

Campylobacter
Food poisoning 603w

Canavan, Mr Dennis
Debates etc.
Oral questions, Calling of Members (06:12:88) 205
Public expenditure, Scotland (13:12:88) 777-8
Scottish Enterprise (06:12:88) 197
Transport (Scotland) Bill, 2R & Money res (14:12:88) 1004, 1031-8
Questions
Dept of the Registers of Scotland, Members' correspondence 638w
Football, Identity cards 612-3w
Historic Buildings & Monuments Directorate, Members' correspondence 638w
Nurses, Career structure 542w
Oil revenues, North Sea oil 299w

Cancer
Hospital patients 363w

Candidates
Terrorism (05:12:88) 38-120

Cape Verde Islands
Overseas aid 497-8w

Capital allowances
Hotels 51w

Capital gains tax
Shares 55w

Capital investment
302w, 306w, 424-5w
Drug industry 183w
Housing associations 107w
Local government finance 272-3w
Offshore suppliers 503-4w
Oldham Health Authority 74w
Schools 388w
Tourism 147w, 236w
Water supply industry 619w

Car industry
Market share 175-6w

Car tax
306w

Carbon dioxide
Advanced gas-cooled reactors 330w
Air pollution 275w, 349-50w
Energy consumption 275w
Nuclear power stations 330w

Cardiff City Council
Rate support grants 393w

Career development loan scheme
Handicapped 742w

Career structure
Civil servants 421-2w
Health visitors 187w, 746w
Midwives 85-6w, 130w, 187w, 336w, (07:12:88) 409-18, 542-3w, 549w, 779-80w
Nurses 3-4, 80-2w, 107w, 127w, 164w, 169, 172, 185w, 187w, 212w, 360-1w, 399w, 542-6w, 576w, 598w, 692-4w, 756, 758-9, 759w, 760, 760-6w, 768, 779-82w

Caribbean
Health services 89-90w
Overseas trade 174-5w

Carlile, Mr Alex
Debates etc.
EC budget (05:12:88) 130-2
Questions
Debts 430w

Carlisle, Mr John
Questions
Football, Identity cards 612w

Carlisle Committee
see Parole Review Committee

Carlisle Hospital
Abortion 713w, 1066-7

Carmarthen
Council house waiting lists 1-2

Carrington, Mr Matthew
Questions
Pensioners 1081
Rates & rating, Nurses 615w
Small businesses, British Venture Capital Association 137w

Carttiss, Mr Michael
Questions
East Anglian Regional Health Authority, Expenditure 598-9w

Cartwright, Mr John
Debates etc.
Water Bill, 2R, Money res & Ways & means res (08:12:88) 479-81
Questions
Armed forces, Schools 344w

***Cartwright, Mr John**—continued*
Right to buy, London boroughs 154-6w
Teachers, Educational exchanges 387w

Casfikis, Angelo
192-3w

Cash, Mr William
Debates etc.
Abortion (16:12:88) 1231, 1235, 1240-1
Prevention of Terrorism (Temporary Provisions) Bill, 2R & Money res (06:12:88) 241-2
Questions
Industry, Productivity 137w
Neighbourhood watch schemes 702w
Ryan, Patrick, Extradition 915-6
Short Brothers, Government shareholding 310
Tenants' choice 274w

Cash limits
Public expenditure 100w
Scottish Office 639w
Social security benefits 381w

Cassel, Harold
18-9w

Castle Point
Unemployment 160

Casualties
Cycling 129w
Fires 577w
Motorcycles 129w

Catton, Matthew
340w

CBI
see Confederation of British Industry

CEGB
see Central Electricity Generating Board

Cemetery Assets United Kingdom
414-5w
Company investigations 178w

Central African Federation
Public service pensions 428w

Central Electricity Generating Board
49w, 192-5w, 329w, 331w, 349-50w, 376w, 403w, 478w, 582-3w
Advertising 374w
Plutonium 328-9w
Radioactive waste disposal 376w

Central Fire Brigades Advisory Council for England & Wales
576w

Central-local government relations
Inner city areas 298

Central Nottinghamshire Health Authority
557w
Performance related pay 556-7w

Central Policy Review Staff
Costs 390w

Central Unit on Purchasing
100w

Centrepoint Soho
324w
Government grants 324w

Cereals
EC external trade 117-8w

CERN
UK contributions 647w

Certification testing
Seeds 776w

Cervical cancer
North Staffordshire Health Authority 336w
Screening 164w, 447w, 552-3w

CFGAC
see Central Fire Brigades Advisory Council for England & Wales

Chairman of Committee of the Whole House
Debates etc.
Scope of debate (15:12:88) 1188

***Chalker, Rt Hon Lynda**, Minister of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs*
Questions
Angola, Eastern Europe 394-5w
Angola, Peace negotiations 395w
Berlin, Security 644w
China, Human rights 89w
Ethiopia, Peace negotiations 39w
Gibraltar, National insurance 189w
Handicapped workers, Foreign & Commonwealth Office 188w
Namibia, Ethnic groups 39w
South Africa 395-6w
South Africa, Diplomatic relations 395w
South Africa, Mgedezi, Tjeluvyo 315-6w
USSR, Uspensky, Viacheslav 188-9w
VAT, Foreign & Commonwealth Office 189w
Zimbabwe, Exchange control 40w

Challenger tanks
66w
Defence procurement 431

Chancellor of the Exchequer
see Treasury

Change of use
Hospitals 557w

Channel tunnel
Public petitions (14:12:88) 1058
Railway network 169, (14:12:88) 1058
Railway transport 244w, 563w
Safety 657w

***Channon, Rt Hon Paul**, Secretary of State for Transport*
Debates etc.
Railway accidents, Ministerial statements (12:12:88) 647-55
Questions
European Clearway, Ferries 564w
Falderntor, Fires 564w
Ferries, Fires 566w
Railway accidents 564-6w, 660-2w
Railway accidents, Clapham junction 659w, 740-1w

Chapelcross power station
330w
Nuclear reactors 771-2w
Power station closures 377w, 681w

Chapman, Mr Sydney
Questions
Civil servants' secondment 15-6
Crown Estate Commissioners, Financial targets 502-3w
Energy consumption 478w
HM Inspectorate of Pollution, Air pollution control 730-2w
Local plans 900-1
National debt, Interest charges 305-6w
Overseas trade, USSR 173w
Social Fund, Northern Ireland 106w
UNICEF, Vaccination 641-2

Charitable donations
303-4w
Payroll deduction scheme 421w

Charities
Housing associations 151w
Payroll deduction scheme 421w
Tax evasion 428
VAT 427-8

Charity Commission
151w

Charter 88
Democracy 505-6w
Electoral reform 506w
Judiciary 506w

Chelwood Holdings
Chelwood Holdings—continued
414-5w

Chemical & biological warfare
Defence research 344w

Chemical weapons
685w
USA 157w

Chemicals
Safety measures 92-3w

Chemists' shops
Family practitioner committees 450w

Chesterfield
Unemployment benefits 533w

Chieftain tanks
69w

Child benefit
382w, 457w, 1067
Personal income 59-60w
School leaving 537w, 539-40w
Social security recipients 381w
Tax burden 308w
Tax thresholds 418w

Child care
Employment Training 469w, 538-40w
Police records 284w

Child dependency additions
359-60w

Child health
Child Health Surveillance Joint Working Party 364-5w
Children's rights 73w
United Nations 73w

Child Health Surveillance Joint Working Party
Child health 364-5w

Child minding
Training 689-90w

Child Poverty Action Group
20w

Child support
One parent families 359-60w

Child workers
Insurance 231-2w

Children
Advisory services 541w
Attendance allowance 123-4w
Literature 35w
Pornography 1068
Poverty 20w
Road accidents 160w
Tax allowances 303w
Tobacco 721w
Vaccination 450w
Wales 20w

Children in care
Supplementary benefits 167-8

Children's rights
Child health 73w
Immigration rules 708w

China
Human rights 89w
Multifibre arrangement 179w, 646-7w
Overseas aid 429w

Chinook helicopters
66-7w
Air safety 67w

Chlorofluorocarbons
726w, 908
Dry cleaning 626w
Electronics industry 726w
Japan 630w
Ozone layer 346-7w
Refrigeration 156w
Waste disposal 727w

Chope, Mr Christopher, *Under-Secretary of State for the Environment*
Debates etc.
Compulsory purchase, Compensation (06:12:88) 285-90
Questions
Clay Pigeon Shooting Association, Town & Country Planning General Development Order 1988 617w
Coastal erosion, Planning permission 622w
Crown Suppliers, Privatisation 273w
Football, Arrests 17w
Government buildings, Greater London 348-9w, 624w
Greenbelt 628w
Gun sports 728w
Gun sports, Land use 199w
Gun sports, Town & Country Planning General Development Order 1988 729w
House of Commons chamber, Lighting 152w, 345w, 525w, 727w
Iron & steel industry, Employment opportunities 528w
Land acquisition, Government departments 402w
Land use, Property transfer 621w
Local plans 900-1
Official cars, Dept of the Environment 407w
Parliamentary Press Gallery, Parliamentary building maintenance & repair 733-4w
Planning appeals 17-8w, 626w
Planning appeals, Greenbelt 17w
Planning appeals, Legal costs 626w
Planning appeals, National parks 16-8w
Planning inquiries 627w
Planning inquiries, Planning appeals 413w
Planning inquiries, Public participation in planning 613w
Planning permission, Croydon 15w
Planning permission, Farm buildings 751w
Planning permission, London boroughs 278-9w
Planning permission, Torquay 153w
Property development, Outer London boroughs 628w
Property development, Vacant land 282w
Structure plans, Wiltshire 406w
Town & country planning, Dorset 905
Town & country planning, Planning authorities 905
Town & Country Planning General Development Order 1988 622w
Water authorities, Town & country planning 16w, 412w
Westminster Hall, Monuments 530w
Wood, Rain forests 350w

Christmas
Breathalysers 352-3w
Road accidents 352-3w

Christmas bonus
Pensioners 124w

Churchill, Mr Winston
Debates etc.
Oral question time point of order (08:12:88) 419
Questions
Disaster relief, Armenia 434

Cimini, Albino
394w

City of Glasgow District Council Order Confirmation Bill 1988/89
Debates etc.
Rep* (07:12:88) 291
3R* (08:12:88) 419

City of London (Spitalfields Market) Bill 1987/88
Debates etc.
3R order read (08:12:88) 419, (15:12:88) 1065

City technology colleges
574w, 650w
Bradford 389w

City technology colleges—continued
Nottingham 647w

Civil defence
Defence research 204w
Expenditure 204w
Government grants to local authorities 204-5w
Water authorities 11w

Civil proceedings
Diplomatic service 316w

Civil servants
17
Career structure 421-2w
Eastern Europe 268w, 680w
Emigration 389w, 680w
Opposition parties 492w
Travel restrictions 268w

Civil servants' political activities
434

Civil servants' secondment
15-6

Civil service
Foreign & Commonwealth Office 414w

Civil service agencies
18, 88w, 165
Defence research establishments 159w
HMSO 586w
Management 18

Civil service dispersal
17
Dept of Social Security 597w
Dept of the Environment 620w
Dept of Trade & Industry 173-4w
Procurement Executive 157-8w

Civil service foreign service allowance
253w

Civil service manpower
Annual reports 743w
British Overseas Trade Board 258w
Design initiative 94w
Food inspection 689w
Forensic science 703-4w, 1070
Handicapped workers 164w, 177w, 188w, 203w, 240w, 277w, 308-9w, 317w, 321-2w, 331w, 338w, 362w, 365w, 437w, 458w, 466w
Ministry of Defence 687w
Passport Office 714-5w
Procurement Executive 773-6w
Royal Aircraft Establishment 772w
Social Fund 181w
Water pollution 621w

Civil service pensions
Diplomatic service 498w

Civil service recruitment
51w

Civil service unions
16-7

Clapham junction
Railway accidents (12:12:88) 647-55, 659w, 740-1w, 764, 1080

Clark, Mr Alan, *Minister of State for Trade and Industry*
Debates etc.
Multifibre arrangement (09:12:88) 555-63, 565, 568, 575, 582-3, 592, 602, 603, 607, 617-20
Oral question time point of order (07:12:88) 303
Questions
Antidumping, EC action 172w
Arms exports 344w
Arms trade, South Africa 397w
British Overseas Trade Board, Civil service manpower 258w
British Overseas Trade Board, Export promotion 344w
Export licensing, Art works 497w

Clark, Mr Alan—continued
Export promotion, Advisory services 304-5
Export promotion, British embassies 305
Export promotion, Interest rates 305-6
Exports 345w, 397w
Foreign companies in UK 176-7w
Foreign investment in UK, North West region 176w
GATT 398w
International trade 302-3
International trade, Interest rates 303-4
International trade, Sterling 303
Manufactured goods, Balance of trade 176w
Multifibre arrangement, China 179w, 646-7w
Nissan, Exports 179w
Overseas trade, Caribbean 174-5w
Overseas trade, International trade 26w
Overseas trade, Japan 645w
Overseas trade, USSR 173w
Textiles, Exports 398-9w
UK trade with EC 311
UK trade with EC, Balance of trade 169w
UK trade with EC, EC internal trade 167-8w
UK trade with EC, Exports 344-6w
UK trade with EC, Languages 311
UK trade with EC, Whisky 311
Whisky, Japan 173w

Clark, Dr David
Debates etc.
Abortion (16:12:88) 1219-20
Eggs, Salmonella (16:12:88) 1268-9
Questions
Animal feed, Salmonella 581w
Animals, Tuberculosis 676w
Cereals, EC external trade 117-8w
Deer, Tuberculosis 676-7w
Environmentally sensitive areas 433w
Food contamination, Cumbria 431w
Forestry Commission, Privatisation 444w
Fruit, Farm capital grant scheme 433w
Ministry of Agriculture, Food Safety (Radiation) Unit 677w
Ministry of Agriculture, Radiation hazards 379w
National Farmers' Union, Ministry of Agriculture 675w
Radioactivity, Cumbria 379-80w, 676w
Radioactivity, Nuclear accidents 675w
Radioactivity, Pollution monitoring 675-6w
Radioactivity, Surveying 676w

Clark, Dr Michael
Debates etc.
Electricity Bill, 2R (12:12:88) 688, 693, 724-6
Electricity Bill, 2R, Money res & Ways & means res (13:12:88) 854
Questions
Electricity supply industry, Privatisation 628
Offshore suppliers, Capital investment 503-4w
Offshore suppliers, Statistics 503w

Clarke, Rt Hon Kenneth, *Secretary of State for Health*
Questions
AIDS, Deaf 691w
Career structure, Nurses 759-60
Chemists' shops, Family practitioner committees 450w
Child minding, Training 689-90w
Community care 545w
Community Care Review 763-4
Dept of Health, Offices 547w
District health authorities, Education Act 1981 690w
Drug abuse, Medical treatments 691-2w
Food hygiene, Eggs 549w
Food poisoning, Campylobacter 603w
Handicapped workers, Dept of Health 338w
Health services, Government grants to voluntary organisations 692w
Health warnings, Eggs 548-9w
Heart diseases, Transplant surgery 604w

Clarke, Rt Hon Kenneth—continued
"Law on Child Care & Family Services White Paper" 690w
Midwives, Career structure 85-6w, 130w, 336w, 542-3w
Midwives, Conditions of employment 549w
Midwives, Mersey Regional Health Authority 86w, 130w
NHS Review 555w
North Middlesex Hospital, Midwives 760
Nurses, Career structure 81-2w, 185w, 187w, 542-4w, 598w, 692-4w, 756, 758-9
Nurses, Industrial disputes 756-7
Nurses, Pay settlements 449w, 551-2w, 757
Nurses, Rotherham Health Authority 757
Operating department assistants, Pay 690w
Primary health care 550w
Radiotherapy, Pay 689w
Resource Allocation Working Party 755-6
Resource Allocation Working Party, Elderly 754-5
Resource Allocation Working Party, Nottingham Health Authority 755
Resource Allocation Working Party, Regional health authorities 754
Resource Allocation Working Party, Stoke-on-Trent 755
Royal College of Nursing 550w
Salmonella 602w
Salmonella, Eggs 19-24, 187-8w, 449w, 602w, 689w, 768-9w

Clarke, Mr Tom
Debates etc.
Public expenditure, Scotland (13:12:88) 783
Transport (Scotland) Bill, 2R & Money res (14:12:88) 1048-9
Questions
Brazil, Overseas aid 657w
Community care 545w
Community Care Review 763-4
Community Care Review, Departmental correspondence 492w
District health authorities, Education Act 1981 690w
House of Commons procedure, Scotland 434
Iron & steel industry 174w
Public expenditure, Retirement pensions 302-3w
Textile industry, Industrial production 673w
UNICEF 425w

Clay, Mr Bob
Debates etc.
British Shipbuilders, Privatisation (14:12:88) 920, 930-8, 939, 959
North East Shipbuilders, Factory closures (07:12:88) 315, 316, 320
North East Shipbuilders, Standing Order No 20 applications (07:12:88) 331-2

Clay Pigeon Shooting Association
Town & Country Planning General Development Order 1988 617w

Clelland, Mr David
Questions
Balance of payments 299w
Coal mining, North East region 481w
Forensic science, Finance 716-7w
Rate increases 624w

Clergy
Community charge 399w

Clifford, Peter
Arrests 196w

Clinical trials
607w

Closed shop
Youth employment 158-9

Closure of debate
(07:12:88) 292

Clothing
Exports 398-9w
Labelling 345w

Clwyd
Block grant 25w
Roads 7

Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Debates etc.
Water Bill, 2R, Money res & Ways & means res (08:12:88) 462
Questions
Acid rain, Wales 391-2w
Animal experiments, Cosmetics 283-4w, 465w
Animal experiments, Labelling 284w
Atomic Energy Research Establishment, Defence contracts 773w
Business sponsorship incentive scheme, Wales 34w
Driver & Vehicle Licensing Centre 518w
EC grants & loans, Wales 739w
Elderly, Diseases 663-6w
Environment, Wales 10
European Agricultural Guidance & Guarantee Fund, Wales 738w
European Investment Bank, Wales 739w
European Regional Development Fund, Wales 737-8w
Hospital waiting lists, NHS finance 561w
Insolvency Service 397w
Iraq, Diplomatic service 570w
Mortgage defaulters 626-7w
Nurses, Wales 391w
Nursing homes, Wales 664w
Official engagements 266-7w
Passport Office, Members' correspondence 722w
Public order policing, Students 32-3w
River Clyst, River pollution 526w
Sewage, Pollution control 665-70w
Warren Spring Laboratory, Members' correspondence 493w
Women's employment, Recruitment 140w

CND
see Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament

Coal
Air pollution 480w
Scotland 480w

Coal fired power stations
192w
Air pollution control 193w
Kingsnorth 375-6w, 684-5w
Scotland 49w
West Burton 50w, 375-6w, 684-5w

Coal mining
Accidents 41w
Death 41w
Dismissals 79-80w
Government assistance 482w
Government assistance to nationalised industries 629
Lothian 49w
Manpower 104w, 475w, 482w, 629
Mine accidents 232-3w, 310w
Mine safety 231w
North East region 481w
Privately owned mines 478-9w
Redundancy 629-31
Science & technology research 630
Subsidence 480w
Termination of employment 478w
Working hours 629

Coastal areas
Greenhouse effect 237-8w
Sea pollution 630-1w

Coastal erosion
Planning permission 622w
Seas & oceans 238w

Coastal protection
Expenditure 237w

Coastguard
Brixham 658w

Cockenzie power station
49w

Codes of practice
Financial Intermediaries' Managers' & Brokers' Association 567w

Codes of practice—continued
Regional development grants 443w

Cohen, Mr Harry
Debates etc.
Eggs, Salmonella (16:12:88) 1276
Prevention of Terrorism (Temporary Provisions) Bill, 2R & Money res (06:12:88) 278
Railway accidents, Clapham junction (12:12:88) 653-4
Security Service Bill, 2R & Money res (15:12:88) 1109, 1165-7
Questions
AIDS 600-1w
AIDS, Health education 601w
Alarm missiles, Defence contracts 498w
Armed forces education allowances 105-6w
Armed forces education allowances, School holidays 106w
Army, Scholarships 105w
Atomic Energy Research Establishment, Defence contracts 582w
AWE Burghfield, Explosions 106w, 584-5w
Bangladesh, Visas 394w
Berkeley power station, Nuclear fuels 49w, 103w
Data Protection Act 1984 289w
Data Protection Act 1984, Dept of Employment 309w
Data Protection Act 1984, Dept of Trade & Industry 177-8w
Data Protection Act 1984, Intelligence services 31w
Defence contracts 498w
Defence contracts, Argentina 157w
Defence contracts, International cooperation 585w
Defence expenditure 252w
Eggs, Salmonella 29w
Electricity distribution, Greater London 505w
Forensic science, Civil service manpower 1070
Headteachers, Primary education 571-2w
Hospital patients, Waltham Forest Health Authority 557-8w
Housing benefits, Social security reform 695w
Lorries, Road safety 159w
Magistrates, Waltham Forest 664w
Military aircraft, Defence equipment 685w
Military aircraft, RAF Upper Heyford 343w
Ministry of Defence, Fraud 776w
Ministry of Defence, Security industry 585w
Nuclear fuels, Exports 103w
Nuclear power stations, USA 679-80w
Nuclear weapons tests 157w
Official engagements 266-7w
One parent families, Social security benefits 592w
Plutonium, Power station closures 252w
Police national computer, Computer privacy 458w
Police national computer, Emergency planning 506-7w
Political refugees, Sri Lanka 207-8w
Prescriptions, Misuse of Drugs Act 1971 722w
Racial harassment, Schools 756-7w
Radioactive waste disposal, Magnox reactors 403w
Security, Leader of the Opposition 343w
Social security benefits, Publicity 123w
Students, NHS charges exemptions 122w
Water authorities, Public sector assets 628w

Coinpower
British Coal Corporation 484w

Coleman, Mr Donald
Debates etc.
Rate support grants, Wales (08:12:88) 453
Water Bill, 2R, Money res & Ways & means res (08:12:88) 459

Colvin, Mr Michael
Debates etc.
Electricity Bill, 2R, Money res & Ways & means res (13:12:88) 819-22
Railway accidents, Clapham junction (12:12:88) 653
Questions
Immigration, EC action 576-7w
Negative income tax, Costs 306w
South of Scotland Electricity Board 481w
Terrorism, EC countries 711w
Town & Country Planning General Development Order 1988 622w

Comber
Police stations 263-4w

COMETT
758-9w

Commencement orders
285w

Commission of the European Communities
see European Commission

Commissions for Local Administration
406w
Ministerial powers 413w

Committee on Safety of Medicines
82-4w, 129-30w
Expenditure 82-3w
Finance 84w
Public appointments 83w, 130w
Women 83-4w

Common agricultural policy
EC budget 430-1w
Expenditure 240-2w

Common customs tariffs
Yugoslavia (15:12:88) 1190

Common sheep meat regime
Wales 7-9

Communication
Electronics industry 568-9w

Community care
447w, 545w
Scottish health boards 673w
Social Fund 63-5w, 593w, 695w, 752-3w
Wales 356w

Community Care Review
126w, 545w, 763-4
Departmental correspondence 432w

Community charge
154w, 199w, 527w, 616w, 728w, 892
Clergy 399w
Driver & Vehicle Licensing Centre 97w, 485w
Government grants to local authorities 401-2w, 752w
Income support 728w
Income tax 616w
Local authorities 615-6w
Local government expenditure 891-2
Millport 444w
Nottingham 615w
Personal income 727-8w
Publicity 401w, 616-7w
Scotland 485w, 616-7w
Sports facilities 345w
Standard of living 586w
Students 122w
Tax evasion 616w

Community charge rebates
727-8w

Community charges register
401-2w, 616-7w

Community opportunities
635-6w
Further education 636w
Glasgow 636w
Scotland 636w

Community policing
Newtownards 263w

Community programme
Employment Training 150-1w

Community relations
North Peckham task force 262w

Community work
National service 149w
Training Agency 610w

Companies
Local authorities 404w
Offices 169w
Training 152

Companies Act 1985
Questions
27w, 178-9w

Company finance
Takeovers 167w

Company investigations
178-9w
Cemetery Assets United Kingdom 178w
Financial services 259w
Fraud 396-7w
Growish 27w, 422w
Tax evasion 414-5w

Company pensions
National insurance contributions 597w

Company registration
670w

Compensation
Compulsory purchase (06:12:88) 283-90
Local government land 276-7w
Low flying 499w
Medical malpractice 80w
Shipping accidents 97w
Training Commission 149w

Competition
Bus services 659w
Electricity generation 193w, 373w
Power stations 372w

Complaints against police
Broadwater Farm estate 704w

Comptroller & Auditor General
see National Audit Office

Compulsory purchase
Compensation (06:12:88) 283-90

Computer applications
Intervention Board 16-7, 28-9w
Radioactive waste disposal 724-5w

Computer privacy
Defence 498-9w
Dept of Social Security 695-6w
Disclosure of information 108-9w
Police national computer 158w

Computer software
259w

Computers in Government departments
Costs 51w
Dept of Social Security 60-2w
Dept of Social Security local offices 61-2w
Ministry of Agriculture 29w

Computers in schools
758-9w

Concessionary television licences
Pensioners 712w

Conditions of employment
Midwives 549w
Youth employment 158-9, 165-6

Confederation of British Industry
169w, 302w
Interest rates 430-1

Conferences
Conferences—continued
Arms control 316-7w
Greenhouse effect 504w

Conflict of interests
Medicines Commission 558-9w

Congenital abnormalities
Babies 184w

Conseil Europeene de Recherche Nucleaire
see CERN

Conservation of Seals Act 1970
Questions
368w
Law reform 369w

Conservative Party
159-60

Consolidated Fund Bill 1988/89
Debates etc.
1R (13:12:88) 874-5

Consolidated Fund debates
Speaker's rulings & statements (08:12:88) 448, (15:12:88) 1101

Construction
Advanced gas-cooled reactors 374w
Hospitals 554w
Power stations 376w
Prisons 719-20w
VAT 587w

Construction costs
British Library 254w, 598w
Heysham power station 104-5w
Pressurised water reactors 376w
Railway network 519-20w
Roads 519-20w

Consultants
Enterprise initiative 312
National Engineering Laboratory 26w

Consultation papers
Dept of the Environment 408-12w

Consumer protection
175w
Electricity supply industry 638

Continental shelf
(15:12:88) 1188-90

Contraceptives
Prisoners 106w

Contracts
EC law 424w
Electricity supply industry 371w
Industrial research 170w
London Regional Transport 517w
Severn bridge 3-4w
Speech therapy 600w

Contracts for services
NHS 73w, 587w
Regional planning & development 301
Scottish health boards 634w
10 Downing Street 391w

Contracts of employment
Health service staff 127w

Control of Pollution Act 1974
Questions
River pollution 276w

Conventional weapons
Military balance 570w
USSR 1081-2

Convictions
Broadwater Farm estate 1068-9
Infant Life (Preservation) Act 1929 712w
Police & Criminal Evidence Act 1984 289w

Conway, Mr Derek
Debates etc.
Prevention of Terrorism (Temporary Provisions) Bill, 2R & Money res (06:12:88) 216, 220

Conway, Mr Derek—continued
Water Bill, 2R, Money res & Ways & means res (08:12:88) 493-6
Questions
Armed forces casualties, Dependants 66-8w
Career structure, Nurses 759-60
Falkland Islands, Air accidents 66-7w
Regional aid 300

Cook, Mr Frank
Debates etc.
Ministerial statements, North East Shipbuilders (07:12:88) 333
North East Shipbuilders, Factory closures (07:12:88) 326-7
Questions
Advanced gas-cooled reactors, Hartlepool power station 371-2w
Council house sales 424
Environment protection, Ministerial statements 729w
Heysham power station, Nuclear fuels 329-30w
Hypothermia, Elderly 546-7w
Nuclear fuel reprocessing, Radioactive waste disposal 503w
Radioactive waste disposal, Costs 403w
Radioactive waste disposal, Sellafield 504-5w
Sellafield, Nuclear weapons 331w

Cook, Mr Robin
Questions
Dental services 132w
Dept of Social Security, Computers in Government departments 60-2w
Eggs, Salmonella 20
Eye tests 132w
Housing benefits, Social security recipients 121-2w
Housing benefits, Social security reform 456w
Midwives, Career structure 779-80w
Midwives, Vocational education 603-4w
North Middlesex Hospital, Midwives 760
Nurses, Manpower 131-2w
Nurses, Recruitment 132w
Resource Allocation Working Party 755-6
VAT, Medical equipment 586-7w
VAT, NHS 587w

Cook-chill catering
82w, 603w
Hospital catering 129w, 553w
Wakefield Health Authority 82w

Cookridge Hospital
Radiographers 363w

Coombs, Mr Anthony
Debates etc.
Elected Authorities (Northern Ireland) Bill, 2R & Money res (05:12:88) 79-82
Questions
Cruelty to children, Punishment 1067
EC Finance Council 743w
Education (No 2) Act 1986 653-5w
Land Registry Office, Administrative delays 569w
Official engagements 266-7w
Tax allowances, Training 54w

Coombs, Mr Simon
Debates etc.
Employment opportunities (05:12:88) 31
Questions
M4, Road safety barriers 97w
Neighbourhood watch schemes, Households 702w
Redundancy pay, Insolvency 148w

Cope, Rt Hon John, Minister of State for Employment
Questions
Apprentices 145-6w
Business, Government assistance 311-4w
Community work, National service 149w
Company registration 670w
Data Protection Act 1984, Dept of Employment 309w
EC grants & loans, Scotland 296-7w

Cope, Rt Hon John—continued
"Employment for the 1990s White Paper" 137w
Employment Training, Child care 540w
Enterprise allowance scheme 166
Enterprise allowance scheme, North West region 166
European Social Fund 146w
Industrial democracy, EC action 40w
Industrial health & safety, International Labour Organisation 42w
Industrial training 213w
Industrial training, Textile industry 142w
Industrial training, Women 146-7w
Industry, Productivity 137w
Inner city school compacts 150w
Labour market, School leaving 214w
Loan guarantee scheme 137w
Local enterprise agencies 138w
Redundancy pay, Women 41w
School leaving 539w
School leaving, Child benefit 539-40w
School leaving, Youth training scheme 308w
Self-employed 133w, 140w
Skill shortages 142w, 378w
Skill shortages, South East region 213w
Small businesses 141w
Small businesses, British Venture Capital Association 137w
Small businesses, Derbyshire 647w
Small businesses, Government contracts 153-4
Small businesses, Institute of Directors 138w
Small businesses, VAT registration 137-8w
Technical & vocational education initiative 142-3w
Trade union elections, Secret ballot 671w
Training, Young people 145w
Training Commission 142w
Unemployment, EC countries 145w
VAT, Dept of Employment 236w
VAT registration 133w
Vocational guidance, Inner London Boroughs 473-4w
Vocational guidance, Local education authorities 214-6w
Youth Training Board 671w
Youth training scheme 143w, 472w, 609w
Youth training scheme, Board & lodging charges 472w
Youth training scheme, Bridging allowances 609w
Youth training scheme, Death 472-3w
Youth training scheme, Derbyshire 151w, 471w
Youth training scheme, Ethnic minorities 144w, 608-9w, 669-70w, 741w
Youth training scheme, Expenditure 609w
Youth training scheme, Industrial health & safety 143w
Youth training scheme, Northern region 149-50w
Youth training scheme, Nottingham 538w
Youth training scheme, Publicity 609w
Youth training scheme, Take-up 143w
Youth training scheme, Take-up of employment 145-60w
Youth training scheme, Training allowances 148w
Youth training scheme, Vacancies 144w, 472w
Youth training scheme, Women 144-5w
Youth unemployment, School leaving 142w

Corbett, Mr Robin
Questions
Forensic science 1070-1
Social Fund, Birmingham 455w
Social Fund, Fuel bills 455w

Corbyn, Mr Jeremy
Questions
Complaints against police, Broadwater Farm estate 704w
Diplomatic service, Education allowances 315w
Diplomatic service, School fees 314-5w
Export licensing, Art works 497w

Corbyn, Mr Jeremy—continued
Housing investment programmes, Islington 404w
London assessment studies 243w
Metropolitan Police, Public relations 284w
Military aircraft, Aircraft noise 466w
Nurses, Career structure 164w, 187w, 212w
Nurses, Pay settlements 390w, 449w
Overseas Development Administration, School holidays 253w
Poultry, Animal husbandry 432w
Poultry, Salmonella 432-3w
Public libraries, Finance 414w
Thames Water Authority 898-9
Turkey, Prisoners 394w
Wood, Rain forests 350w

Cormack, Mr Patrick
Debates etc.
Eggs, Salmonella (16:12:88) 1274
Questions
Hereford Cathedral, Mappa mundi 15
Local government expenditure, Eggs 892

Corneal grafts
86-7w

Coroners
Abortion 713w, 1066

Corporation tax
Tax yields 301w

Cosmetics
Animal experiments 283-4w, 465w

Cost of living
Economic regions 149w

Couchman, Mr James
Debates etc.
European Council (06:12:88) 183
Oral questions, Calling of Members (06:12:88) 206
Questions
Community charge, Personal income 727-8w
Community charge, Publicity 616-7w
New businesses, VAT registration 306w
Older workers, Recruitment 138w
Training 152

Council house rents
200-1w, 401w
Average earnings 291-3w
Rent arrears 12
Scotland 291-4w
Wales 9-10, 12
Wrexham Maelor Borough Council 9-10

Council house sales
424-5, 625w
Devon 151w
Tenants' choice 169
Wales 21w

Council house waiting lists
Carmarthen 1-2
Derbyshire 527-8w
Leicester 901-2
Private rented housing 729w

Council housing
894-6
Empty housing 153w, 628-9w
Housing associations 151w
Housing stock 273w
Leicester 901-2
Local government functions 529w
Local government property 730w
Property transfer 894, 899-900
Scotland 295w
Smoke detection 576w
Swansea 2-3
Tenants' choice 894
Tenants' rights 895

Council tenants
895
Newport 319-20w
Social security recipients 319-20w

Councillors' interests
Prosecutions 18w

Counter culture
Public order 1072

Court of Auditors
Annual reports 743-4w

Cousins, Mr Jim
Debates etc.
North East Shipbuilders, Factory closures (07:12:88) 327
Questions
Dept of Trade & Industry, Further education 493w
Employment Training, Child care 538-9w
Income support, Young people 595-6w
Local plans 901
Nurses, Career structure 763-6w
Prescriptions, Costs 126-8w
Trauma centres 555w

Coventry
Unemployment benefits 326w

Coventry four
Arms embargoes 587-8w
Bail 588w
Criminal proceedings 386w
Inquiries 588w
Passports 588w
South Africa 391w

Cox, Mr Tom
Debates etc.
Railway accidents, Clapham junction (12:12:88) 649-50
Questions
Air traffic, London airports 524w
Central Electricity Generating Board 478w
Chlorofluorocarbons, Waste disposal 727w
Farm incomes 581-2w
Milk, Production quotas 510w
Milk, Retail prices 581w
NHS, Contracts for services 73w
Nurses, Career structure 758-9
Planning permission, Farm buildings 751w
Prisoners, Rule 43 722w
Tanzania, Overseas aid 27-8w
Unemployment, Greater London 136w
Wandsworth Prison, Prison visits 721w

Cox Committee
see National Curriculum English Working Group

CPAG
see Child Poverty Action Group

CPRS
see Central Policy Review Staff

Cran, Mr James
Debates etc.
British Shipbuilders, Privatisation (14:12:88) 948-50
Employment opportunities (05:12:88) 36
North East Shipbuilders, Factory closures (07:12:88) 326
Questions
Alcoholic drinks, Beverley 579w
Babies, Congenital abnormalities 184w
Capital investment 306w
Export promotion, Advisory services 304-5
Government buildings, Greater London 624w
Leukaemia, Humberside 552w
North Sea, Pollution control 898
Occupational pensions 593w
Official engagements 266-7w, 492w
Radiation Protection Working Party 378w
Shares, Disclosure of information 179-80w

Credit
203w

Credit licensing
Graham, Morton 25-6w

Crewe Health Authority
Hospital waiting lists 128w

Crichel Down
402w

Crime
South Yorkshire 703w

Crime prevention
Burglary 713w
Drunkenness 717w
Inter-city rail transport 283w
Offences against children 714w

Crimes of violence
1072
Rural areas 713w, 1071
Sentencing 711w

Criminal Injuries Compensation Board
Administrative delays 710w

Criminal Justice Act 1988
Questions
Sentencing 285w

Criminal proceedings
Coventry four 386w

Criminal statistics
Domestic violence 212w, 355w

Crohn's disease
Prescription charges exemptions 447-8w

Crown Agents
562-3w

Crown Estate Commissioners
Financial targets 502-3w

Crown immunity
Air pollution control 106w

Crown prosecutors
334-5w
London allowance 335w
Pay 335w

Crown Suppliers
Privatisation 273w

Crowther, Mr Stan
Questions
Nurses, Rotherham Health Authority 757

Croxteth Hall
14w

Croydon
Planning permission 15w

Cruelty to children
1067-8
Punishment 1067
Sexual offences 351-2w

Cryer, Mr Bob
Debates etc.
Abortion (16:12:88) 1200, 1203, 1220, 1223-4
Elected Authorities (Northern Ireland) Bill, 2R & Money res (05:12:88) 86, 114-5
Haseldine, PJ, Newspaper press (07:12:88) 334, 335
Multifibre arrangement (09:12:88) 557, 560, 566, 589, 602-5, 617
Oral question time intervention (07:12:88) 305
Prevention of Terrorism (Temporary Provisions) Bill, 2R & Money res (06:12:88) 275-9
Railway accidents, Clapham junction (12:12:88) 653
Security Service Bill, 2R & Money res (15:12:88) 1182-6
Water Bill, 2R (07:12:88) 338
Water Bill, 2R, Money res & Ways & means res (08:12:88) 533, 537-40

Cryer, Mr Bob—continued
Questions
Business statements 447
Export promotion, Advisory services 305
Protection of Animals (Amendment) Act 1988, Dog fighting 354w
Protection of Animals (Amendment) Act 1988, Law enforcement 354w
Salmonella, Research finance 238-9w
Short Brothers, Privatisation 310-1
Small businesses, Government contracts 153-4

CSM
see Committee on Safety of Medicines

Cumbria
Food contamination 431w
Power stations 482w
Radioactivity 379-80w, 676w
Sea pollution 281w

Cummings, Mr John
Questions
Appeals, District health authorities 603w
British Coal Corporation 630
Nurses, Career structure 598w
Nurses, Northern region 759-60w
Palestine Liberation Organisation, Peace negotiations 39w
School leaving, Youth training scheme 308w
Tax rates & bands, Mortgage interest rates 420-1
Vocational guidance, Local education authorities 214-6w

Cunliffe, Mr Lawrence
Questions
Hypothermia, Elderly 546-7w

Cunningham, Dr John
Debates etc.
Water Bill, 2R (07:12:88) 337, 339, 340, 344-53, 354, 356
Water Bill, 2R, Money res & Ways & means res (08:12:88) 523, 527
Questions
Bracken, Health hazards 582w
Bracken, Weedkillers 630w
Detergents, Environment protection 270w
Local government finance, Capital investment 272-3w
Local government finance, Rates & rating 272w
Maxwell House, Building alterations 531w
Radioactive waste disposal 907
Rates & rating, Camden 893
Science & technology research, Shetland 573w

Curriculum
Primary education 47w
Scotland 47w
Teacher training 573w
Welsh language 739w

"Curriculum & Assessment in Scotland Consultation Paper"
113-4w

Currie, Mrs Edwina, Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Dept of Health
Questions
Babies, Congenital abnormalities 184w
Babies, Medical examinations 364w
Breast cancer, Elderly 553w
Breast cancer, Screening 130-1w, 607w
Casualties, Motorcycles 129w
Central Nottinghamshire Health Authority 557w
Central Nottinghamshire Health Authority, Performance related pay 556-7w
Cervical cancer, North Staffordshire Health Authority 336w
Cervical cancer, Screening 447w, 552-3w
Child health, Child Health Surveillance Joint Working Party 364-5w
Children, Advisory services 541w
Cook-chill catering, Wakefield Health Authority 82w

Currie, Mrs Edwina—continued
Cookridge Hospital, Radiographers 363w
Dental services 132w
Dentists, Surgical gloves 338-9w
Dept of Health, Water Bill 1988/89 555w
Diagnosis 548w
District health authorities, Lead free petrol 129w
Drug abuse, Death 766-7w
Elderly, Death 184-6w
Elderly, Hypothermia 183w
Food hygiene, Training 602-3w
Food inspection, Civil service manpower 689w
Food packaging, Listeria monocytogenes 339w
Food poisoning 548w
Glaucoma 79w
Glaucoma, Blind 79w
Glaucoma, Eye tests 79w
Health, Pensioners 547-8w
Health, Women 757-8
Health education 758
Health education, Pensioners 761-2
Health services, Buildings 557w
Heart diseases, Health education 554w
Heart diseases, North Western Regional Health Authority 555w
Heart pacemakers, Surgery 606w
Heating, Pensioners 762-3
Hip replacements, Costs 605w
Horticulture, Government grants 187w
Hospital beds 132-3w
Hospital beds, Oldham Health Authority 362-3w
Hospital catering, Cook-chill catering 129w, 553w
Hospital patients 556w
Hospital patients, Waltham Forest Health Authority 557-8w
Hospitals 131w, 448w
Hospitals, Construction 554w
Hospitals, Epping 363-4w
Hospitals, Yorkshire Regional Health Authority 554w
Hypothermia, Death 85w
Hypothermia, Elderly 546-7w
Hypothermia, Publicity 449-50w
Incontinence aids, Residential care 336w
Infant mortality 448w
Leukaemia, Humberside 552w
Listeria monocytogenes, International conferences 82w
Maternity services, Leicestershire Health Authority 551w
Maternity services, Southport 339w
Medical equipment, Emergency planning 125-6w
Medical treatments, Bolton 340w
Mental health, Women 555w
Mental hospitals 88w
Mentally handicapped 542w
Mercury, Fish 365w
NHS, Armed forces casualties 73-4w
NHS, Land registration 365w
Oldham Health Authority, Capital investment 74w
Organ donor cards 549-50w
Organ donors, Departmental circulars 556w
Paramedical staff, Pay 753-4
Patients' transport, Air transport 554w
Play groups 336-8w
Pregnancy, Young people 131w
Preventive medicine 364w
Radiotherapy, Medical equipment 339w
Residential care 74w
Residential care, Fees & charges 604w
Retford Hospital, Property transfer 74w
Royal Devon & Exeter Hospital, Radiotherapy 752-3
Salmonella, Eggs 449w, 758
Salmonella, Game 448w
Salmonella, Poultry meat 449w
Severe weather payments 762-3
Speech therapy, Contracts 600w
Transplant surgery 86-7w
Trauma centres 555w

Currie, Mrs Edwina—continued
Urinary system disorders, Bolton General Hospital 546w
Vaccination, Children 450w
VAT, Dept of Health 185w
Wandsworth Health Authority 552w

Curry, Mr David
Debates etc.
EC budget (05:12:88) 132-4
Eggs, Salmonella (16:12:88) 1271
European Council (06:12:88) 177
Questions
EC Research Council 94-5w

Custodial treatment
Abortion 505w

Customs & Excise
588w

Customs Duties (ECSC) (Amendment No 3) Order 1988
Debates etc.
(15:12:88) 1190

Cycling
Casualties 129w

Cynon valley
Pollution 10

Dairy farming
Production quotas 119w

Dairy products
New Zealand 430w

Dalyell, Mr Tam
Debates etc.
Consolidated Fund debates, House of Commons division of time (08:12:88) 448
Haseldine, PJ, Newspaper press (07:12:88) 334
Transport (Scotland) Bill, 2R & Money res (14:12:88) 1011
Questions
Antarctic, Environment protection 570w
Business statements 439-40
Dept of Trade & Industry, History 169w
European Commission, Public appointments 116w, 266w, 491w
Haseldine, Patrick, Newspaper press 492w
Journalists, Press conferences 297w
Ministerial changes, Departmental correspondence 655w
NATO, "Spycatcher" 466w
Police right of search, Scotland 444w

Dareth Park Hospital
413w

Darling, Mr Alistair
Debates etc.
Electricity Bill, 2R, Money res & Ways & means res (13:12:88) 796
Transport (Scotland) Bill, 2R & Money res (14:12:88) 971, 1010-6, 1026, 1048, 1050, 1053
Questions
Defence, Computer privacy 498-9w
Health education, Pensioners 761-2
Identity cards 1072-3
Immigration appeals, Costs 386w
Immigration controls, Genetics 460-1w
Interest rates 299w
Licensing laws, Scotland 444w

Data banks
Royal Society for the Protection of Birds 206-7w

Data Protection Act 1984
Questions
289w
Dept of Employment 309w
Dept of Trade & Industry 177-8w
Intelligence services 31w

Data Protection Act Interdepartmental Review Committee
177-8w, 289w, 309w

Data Protection Registrar
289w

Davies, Rt Hon Denzil
Questions
Nurses, Wales 737w
Oil exports 744-5w
UK trade with EC, Exports 344-6w

Davies, Mr Quentin
Debates etc.
Electricity Bill, 2R, Money res & Ways & means res (13:12:88) 847-9
Questions
Museums & galleries 35w

Davies, Mr Ron
Debates etc.
Rate supoport grants, Wales (08:12:88) 455
Rate support grants, Wales (08:12:88) 451
Water Bill, 2R, Money res & Ways & means res (08:12:88) 469
Questions
Agricultural improvement scheme, Expenditure 380-1w
Bovine spongiform encephalopathy, EC countries 119w
Confederation of British Industry 302w
Dairy farming, Production quotas 119w
EC free food scheme 118-20w
EC free food scheme, Costs 118w
EC free food scheme, Intervention stocks 119-20w
EC free food scheme, Voluntary organisations 120w
EC free food scheme, Wales 92w
Eggs, Salmonella 449w
Forestry, Employment opportunities 669w, 672w, 678w
Forestry Commission, Land acquisition 369-70w
Forestry Commission, Land values 370w
Forestry Commission, Scotland 672w
Forestry Commission, Tied housing 46-7w
Gun sports, Town & Country Planning General Development Order 1988 729w
Interest rates, Wales 8
Lead, Gun sports 14w
Medicines (Hormone Growth Promoters) (Prohibition of Use) Regulations 1986 778w
Milk, Production quotas 510-1w
Nature reserves, Land acquisition 348w
Planning appeals 17-8w
Planning appeals, Greenbelt 17w
Planning appeals, National parks 16-8w
Planning appeals, Wales 24w, 393w
Planning permission, National parks 393w
Pollen beetles, Agricultural research 435-6w
Pollen beetles, Pest control 380w
Salmonella, Game 448w
Salmonella, Poultry meat 449w
Training, Voluntary organisations 671w
Tree felling, Licensing 678w
Veterinary services 380w
Water authorities, Land acquisition 413w
Water supply industry, Land ownership & tenure 22w
Welsh agricultural & food products marketing initiative 392-3w
Welsh agricultural & food products marketing initiative, Costs 392w
Welsh Water Authority, Environment protection 19w
Welsh Water Authority, Land acquisition 22w, 358w
Welsh Water Authority, Land ownership & tenure 21-2w
Welsh Water Authority, Vacant land 22w
Woodland grant scheme, Scotland 784w

Davis, Mr David
Questions
Electricity generation, Radioactive wastes 479w
Hospitals, Yorkshire Regional Health Authority 554w
Offenders, Electronic surveillance 1077
Water pollution, Nitrates 751w

Day, Mr Stephen
Debates etc.
Elected Authorities (Northern Ireland) Bill, 2R & Money res (05:12:88) 84, 90-1
Questions
Extradition, Republic of Ireland 1078

Day care of children
Employment Training 133w

Day nurseries
[illegible]6w
Employment 611w

Deaf
AIDS 691w

Death
Armley Prison 286w
Coal mining 41w
Drug abuse 766-7w
Elderly 183-6w
Hypothermia 85w
Local government pensions 278w
Nuclear power 634
Patients' transport 440w
Railway transport 98w
Smoking 766-7w
Youth training scheme 472-3w

Death grants
Social security claims 182w

"Death on the Rock"
704w

Debts
430w
Rain forests 429w

Deer
Tuberculosis 676-7w

Defective housing
Estate agents 645w
Government grants to local authorities 904
House renovation grants 271w, 411-2w
Housing Defects Act 1984 411-2w
Mortgage relief 152w
Mundic blocks 271w

Defence
Computer privacy 498-9w
France 771-2w

Defence contracts
159w, 498w
Alarm missiles 498w
Argentina 157w
Atomic Energy Research Establishment 582w, 773w
Boeing 467-8w
International cooperation 585w
Offset arrangements 468w
Tanks 69w

Defence equipment
Military aircraft 685w

Defence expenditure
252w
Defence procurement 105w
Scotland 73w
USSR 433

Defence land
Royal Aircraft Establishment 772w

Defence procurement
157w
Challenger tanks 431
Defence expenditure 105w
Legal profession 157w
Scotland 72w

Defence research
Aerobiology 68-9w
Chemical & biological warfare 344w
Civil defence 204w
Emigration 585w
Research finance 69w
Universities 68-9w
Veterinary medicine 68w

Defence research establishments
Audit 158w, 688w
Civil service agencies 159w

Defence Select Committee
158w

Defence Statistical Organisation
Privatisation 159w

Degrees
Scotland 487w

Democracy
Charter 88 505-6w

Demolition
Offshore structures 684w

Demonstrations
Injuries 32-3w
Socialist Workers' Party 32w

Denis-Wild houses
Mortgages 624w

Dental services
132w

Dentists
Family practitioner committees 186-7w
Private health services 186-7w
Surgical gloves 338-9w

Dept of Education & Science
Handicapped workers 164w
VAT 164-5w

Dept of Employment
Data Protection Act 1984 309w
Handicapped workers 308-9w
VAT 236w

Dept of Energy
583w
Advertising 375w
Handicapped workers 331w
Holidays abroad 680w
Offices 482w
USSR 680w
VAT 329w

Dept of Health
163w
Handicapped workers 338w
Offices 547w
VAT 185w
Water Bill 1988/89 555w

Dept of Social Security
Civil service dispersal 597w
Computer privacy 695-6w
Computers in Government departments 60-2w
Departmental forms 322-4w
Departmental publications 322w, 452w
Handicapped workers 321-2w
VAT 321w

Dept of Social Security local offices
Computers in Government departments 61-2w
Greater London 455-6w
Training 124w

Dept of the Environment
Civil service dispersal 620w
Consultation papers 408-12w
Handicapped workers 277w
Holidays abroad 725w
Official cars 407w
VAT 153-4w

Dept of the Registers of Scotland
Members' correspondence 638w

Dept of Trade & Industry
19w, 25w, 304-6
Civil service dispersal 173-4w
Data Protection Act 1984 177-8w
Further education 493w
Handicapped workers 177w
History 169w
VAT 93w

Dept of Transport
660w
Handicapped workers 365w

Dept of Transport*—*continued
VAT 243w

Departmental circulars
Organ donors 556w

Departmental correspondence
Community Care Review 492w
Electricity generation 192-3w
Hinkley Point C 583w
Ministerial changes 655w
National insurance credits 588w
Schools 9w

Departmental forms
Dept of Social Security 322-4w
Family credit 593w

Departmental leaflets
Social security benefits 451-2w

Departmental publications
Agriculture 30w
Dept of Social Security 322w, 452w
Languages 322w
Potato Marketing Board 201w
Special education 252w

Departmental responsibilities
Ministers 163w
Offshore safety 631-2

Dependants
Armed forces casualties 66-8w

Deportation
459-60w

Deposit taking institutions
55w

Derbyshire
Council house waiting lists 527-8w
Eggs 678w
Occupational pensions 753w
Owner occupied housing 269w
Pensioners 695w
Small businesses 647w
Youth training scheme 151w, 471w

Derbyshire County Council
Ethnic minorities 109w
Government grants to local authorities 109w

DES
see Dept of Education & Science

Design initiative
Civil service manpower 94w
Government assistance to industry 93-4w

Detergents
Environment protection 270w

Developing countries
643w
EC internal trade 428w
Exchange control 643w
Forest protection 644-6

Development aid
Africa 427-8w

Development Assistance Committee
27w, 642-3

Devlin, Mr Tim
Debates etc.
Ministerial statements, North East Shipbuilders (07:12:88) 333
Water Bill, 2R (07:12:88) 338, 343
Water Bill, 2R, Money res & Ways & means res (08:12:88) 470-1, 508-10
Questions
Attendance allowance, Administrative delays 451w
Business statements 1095
Drunkenness, Crime prevention 717w
Employment opportunities, Northern region 491w
Hazardous wastes, Imports 12w
Hazardous wastes, Waste disposal 12w
Mentally handicapped 542w

Devlin, Mr Tim—continued
Nurses, Career structure 127w
Ports, EC internal trade 97-8w

Devon
Council house sales 151w

Devonport Nurses' Home
585w

Dewar, Mr Donald
Debates etc.
Electricity Bill, 2R, Money res & Ways & means res (13:12:88) 797-806
Public expenditure, Scotland (13:12:88) 772-4
Scottish Enterprise (06:12:88) 189-91
Transport (Scotland) Bill, 2R & Money res (14:12:88) 985

Diagnosis
548w
Eye disorders 78w

Dickens, Mr Geoffrey
Questions
Child health, Children's rights 73w
Coal mining, Government assistance 482w
Industrial training 301-2
"Science & Engineering Research Council Annual Report 1987/88" 165-6w

Dietary allowances
Social security recipients 592w

Dioxins
92-3w

Diplomatic relations
South Africa 395w

Diplomatic service
Civil proceedings 316w
Civil service pensions 498w
Education allowances 314-5w
Iraq 38w, 570w
School fees 314-5w
Travel allowances 315w

DIR80/778/EEC
408w

DIR86/378/EEC
754w

Direct labour departments
Local authorities 200w

Director General of Electricity Supply
(12:12:88) 669-745, (13:12:88) 787-884

Director General of Water Services
(07:12:88) 336-408, (08:12:88) 459-544

Director of Public Prosecutions
640

Disabled Persons (Employment) Act 1944
Questions
475w

Disabled Persons (Services Consultation & Representation) Act 1986
Questions
Mental health community care 453w
Mentally handicapped 453w

Disablement Services Authority
556w, 605-6w
Wheelchairs 605w

Disaster relief
Armenia 434

Disasters
Emergency planning 702w

Disclosure of information
Computer privacy 108-9w
Drug side effects 82w
Electricity Bill 1988/89 583w
Employee reports 539w
Shares 179-80w
Student loans 388w

Diseases
Elderly 663-6w

Diseases of Animals (Protein Processing) Order 1981
Questions
777-8w

Diseases of Animals (Waste Food) Order 1973
Questions
777-8w

Dismissal
Coal mining 479-80w

Dispensing doctors
126-8w

Disposable income
306w, 423w, 700w
Housing finance 627w

Disposable nappies
92-3w

Disqualifications
Driving offences 208w

District councils
Local government elections 891

District health authorities
Appeals 603w
Education Act 1981 690w
Lead free petrol 129w

Dixon's
Government assistance to industry 497w

Dobson, Mr Frank
Debates etc.
Abortion (16:12:88) 1221-2, 1228, 1229
Oral question time point of order (15:12:88) 1083
Water Bill, 2R (07:12:88) 349
Questions
Breast cancer, Screening 130-1w, 607w, 639w
Business statements 435-6, 1085-7
Hospital beds 132-3w
Infant mortality 448w

Dock labour scheme
143w

Doctors
Medical education 78w
Pay 607w

DOE
see Dept of the Environment

Dog fighting
Protection of Animals (Amendment) Act 1988 354w

Dogs
Liability for animals 724w

Domestic electrical appliances
Domestic safety 296

Domestic rates
Tied housing 726w

Domestic safety
Domestic electrical appliances 296
Smoke detection 577w

Domestic violence
Criminal statistics 212w, 355w
Scotland 212w

Doran, Mr Frank
Debates etc.
EC Fisheries Council (12:12:88) 666
North East Shipbuilders, Factory closures (07:12:88) 325-6
Petroleum Royalties (Relief) & Continental Shelf Bill, Rem stages (15:12:88) 1188-90
Questions
Balance of payments 298-9w
Chapelcross power station, Power station closures 377w
Offshore safety 631-2
Passport Office, Civil service manpower 715w

Dorset
NHS finance 540-1w
Town & country planning 905

Double glazing
480w

Douglas, Mr Dick
Debates etc.
Electricity Bill, 2R (12:12:88) 677
Electricity Bill, 2R, Money res & Ways & means res (13:12:88) 794, 817-9, 861
Public expenditure, Scotland (13:12:88) 779
Scottish Enterprise (06:12:88) 195-6
Transport (Scotland) Bill, 2R & Money res (14:12:88) 1052
Questions
Business statements 442
Coal, Scotland 480w
Longannet coal complex 631

Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James,
Under-Secretary of State for Scotland
Debates etc.
Transport, Scotland (15:12:88) 1194-8
Transport (Scotland) Bill, 2R & Money res (14:12:88) 1025-31, 1055
Questions
A1, Road accidents 48w
Body searches, Scotland 441w
Council house rents, Average earnings 291-3w
Council house rents, Scotland 293-4w
Council housing, Scotland 295w
Dept of the Registers of Scotland, Members' correspondence 638w
Domestic violence, Criminal statistics 212w
Emergency planning, Manpower 43w
Extradition, Republic of Ireland 296w
Forest protection, Reg(EEC)3528/86 46w
Forestry, Employment opportunities 672w
Forestry, Environment protection 46w
Forestry, Scotland 43-5w, 116w
Forestry, Tax allowances 45w
Forestry, Woodland grant scheme 45-6w
Forestry Commission, Land acquisition 369-70w
Forestry Commission, Land values 370w
Forestry Commission, Privatisation 444w
Forestry Commission, Scotland 672w
Forestry Commission, Tied housing 46-7w
Forests, Air pollution 46w
Gold, Mining 781w
Heart pacemakers, Greater Glasgow Health Board 44w
Historic Buildings & Monuments Directorate, Members' correspondence 638w
Housing stock, Scotland 295w
Housing support grants, Scotland 295w
Legal aid, Scotland 440w
Licensing laws, Scotland 444w
Loch Sunart, Pollution 674w
PIEDA 291w
Police right of search, Scotland 444w
Pollution monitoring, North Sea 441w
Procurators fiscal 638w
Remand in custody, Scotland 784w
Roads, Scotland 48w
Set-aside schemes, Agricultural workers 674w
Tobacco, Prosecutions 635w
Trials, Scotland 638-9w
Water Research Centre, Scotland 212w
Wildlife & Countryside Act 1981, Tree planting 782w
Woodland grant scheme, Scotland 784w

Dounreay
292w

Dover, Mr Den
Debates etc.
Eggs, Salmonella (16:12:88) 1275
Questions
Building regulations, Energy conservation 270w

DPP
see Director of Public Prosecutions

Drama
Arts finance 36w

Drax power station
Air pollution control 484w

Dreadnought Seamen's Hospital
Property transfer 585w

Driver & Vehicle Licensing Centre
518w
Community charge 97w, 485w
Security vetting 524w

Driver & Vehicle Licensing Directorate
see Driver & Vehicle Licensing Centre

Driver Testing & Training Division
660w

Driving licences
Minibuses 740w

Driving offences
1-2w
Disqualifications 208w
Motor vehicle safety 284-5w

Dromara
Police stations 747-8w

Drug abuse
716w
Death 766-7w
Medical treatments 691-2w
Prisons 108w
Publicity 552w
Tranquillisers 84-5w

Drug crimes
Music 283w

Drug industry
Capital investment 183w

Drug side effects
Disclosure of information 82w

Drugs
Abortion 599w
Parallel imports 767w

Drunkenness
Crime prevention 717w

Dry cleaning
Chlorofluorocarbons 626w

DSO
see Defence Statistical Organisation

DTI
see Dept of Trade & Industry

DTp
see Dept of Transport

Duffy, Mr A E P
Debates etc.
Water Bill, 2R (07:12:88) 341
Water Bill, 2R, Money res & Ways & means res (08:12:88) 484-6
Questions
Horse racing, Betting 717w
NHS Review 555w

Dumfries & Galloway
Youth training scheme 43-4w

Dunn, Mr Bob
Debates etc.
Compulsory purchase, Compensation (06:12:88) 283-5
Questions
Channel tunnel, Railway network 169
Employment 135w
Planning inquiries, Planning appeals 413w
Unemployment benefits, Social security benefits rules 754-5w

Dunnachie, Mr Jimmy
Debates etc.
Transport (Scotland) Bill, 2R & Money res (14:12:88) 1002, 1003, 1004
Questions
Accident & emergency departments, Southern General Hospital Glasgow 441w

Dunnachie, Mr Jimmy—continued
Barlow Clowes 170w
Regional development grants, Fraud 443-4w

Dunnet Committee
see Salmon Advisory Committee

Dunstaffnage Marine Research Laboratory
Manpower 44w

Dunwoody, Mrs Gwyneth
Questions
Health service staff, Contracts of employment 127w
Hospital waiting lists, Crewe Health Authority 128w
Iraq, Diplomatic service 38w

Durham
592w
Empty property 721w
Handicap benefits 592w
Social Fund 591-2w

Durham Health Authority
603w
Nurses 761-4w

DVLC
see Driver & Vehicle Licensing Centre

Dykes, Mr Hugh
Debates etc.
EC budget (05:12:88) 130, 136-9
Electricity Bill, 2R (12:12:88) 676
European Council (06:12:88) 176
Members' interests (15:12:88) 1102
Questions
Electricity generation, Severn barrage 476w
Electricity supply industry, Consumer protection 638
Kindertransport Group 1077
Nissan, Exports 179w
Owner occupied housing 424
Planning appeals 626w
Unit trusts, EC internal trade 298-9

Eadie, Mr Alexander
Debates etc.
Electricity Bill, 2R (12:12:88) 693-7, 741
Electricity Bill, 2R, Money res & Ways & means res (13:12:88) 788
Scottish Enterprise (06:12:88) 196
Questions
Coal mining, Manpower 629
Industrial research, Research finance 168w

EAEC
see Euratom

EAGGF
see European Agricultural Guidance & Guarantee Fund

Ealing
Small businesses 175w

Early day motions
(07:12:88) 291-2

Early retirement
Teachers 290w

Earned income
Women 415w

Earnings rules
One parent families 454w
Retirement pensions 181w, 320-2w

East Anglia
Housing market 623-4w
Roads 522w

East Anglian Regional Health Authority
Expenditure 598-9w

East Antrim
Nurses 361w, 399w

East London river crossing
(06:12:88) 283-90

East Midlands

East Midlands—continued
Unemployment 135w

"East Thames-side Housing Study Report"
270-1w

Eastern Europe
Angola 394-5w
Civil servants 268w, 680w

Eastern Health & Social Services Board
361w

Eastham, Mr Ken
Debates etc.
Employment opportunities (05:12:88) 29
Questions
Homelessness, Local authorities 618w
Lead free petrol 903
NHS Review 555w
Youth employment, Conditions of employment 158

EC action
Antidumping 172w
EC internal trade 189-92w
Energy prices 372w
Financial services 397w
Immigration 576-7w
Industrial democracy 40w
Insurance 745w
Lorries 520w
Mergers 176-7w
Minibuses 566w
Nature conservation 270w, 347w
Science & technology research 169w

EC Agriculture Council
357w, 675w

EC budget
57w, (05:12:88) 121-42, 421w, 643w
Common agricultural policy 430-1w
Loans 56w
UK contributions 56-7w, 305w

EC budget contributions
56w

EC Commission
see European Commission

EC Cons Doc 7271/88
(05:12:88) 121-42

EC Cons Doc 7758/88
(05:12:88) 121-42

EC Cons Doc 7908/88
(05:12:88) 121-42

EC Cons Doc 8996/88
(05:12:88) 121-42

EC Cons Doc 9286/88
(05:12:88) 121-42

EC countries
Bovine spongiform encephalopathy 119w
Employment 134-5w
Private investment 493w
Retirement pensions 182w
Teachers 165w
Television channels 707w
Terrorism 711w
Unemployment 145w

EC Development Council
426w

EC Draft 8149/88
270w

EC Economic & Finance Council
see EC Finance Council

EC energy policy
Electricity supply industry 682-3w

EC Environment Council
153w, 279w

EC external trade
Cereals 117-8w

EC Finance Council
743w
European monetary system 304w

EC Fisheries Council
433w, (12:12:88) 656-67

EC free food scheme
118-20w
Costs 118w
Intervention stocks 119-20w
Voluntary organisations 120w
Wales 92w

EC grants & loans
Fishing vessels 201-2w
Fruit juices 743-4w
Industrial training 758-9w
Iron & steel industry 494w
Rathlin Island 265w
Scotland 296-7w
Shipbuilding 645-6w
Wales 739w
Water supply industry 280w

EC internal trade
Developing countries 428w
EC action 189-92w
Engineering industries 301
Foreign companies in UK 306
Frontiers 708w
Local authorities 198w
Ports 97-8w, 563w
Publicity 171-2w
Regional planning & development 301
South Yorkshire 172w
Taxation 417w
UK trade with EC 167-8w
Unit trusts 298-9

EC Labour & Social Affairs Council
145w

EC law
Beaches 906
Contracts 424w
Water supply 408w

EC Research Council
94-5w

EC trade
Export rebates 118w

Eccles
Youth unemployment 134w

ECOFIN
see EC Finance Council

Ecology
Overseas aid 430w

Economic growth
300w
Productivity 300w
Profitability 301-2w
Unemployment 304w

Economic League
Recruitment 539w

Economic regions
Cost of living 149w
Unemployment 134w

Economic situation
Pensioners 590w

EDF
see Electricite de France

Education Act 1981
Questions
District health authorities 690w

Education allowances
Diplomatic service 314-5w

Education (No 2) Act 1986
Questions
653-5w

Education Reform Act 1988
Questions
Educational visits 7w
Publicity 571w

Education support grants
652-4w

Educational administration
Further education colleges 648w
Scotland 637w

Educational exchanges
Teachers 387w

Educational finance
Grant maintained schools 101w
Public expenditure 302-3w
Technical education 47-8w
Universities 649w

Educational qualifications
School leaving certificates 573w
Vocational education 290w

Educational standards
Teachers 648-9w

Educational visits
Armagh 264w
Education Reform Act 1988 7w

Efficiency scrutinies
Police 715w

***Eggar, Mr Tim**, Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Foreign & Commonwealth Affairs*
Questions
Antarctic, Environment protection 570w
Haseldine, Patrick, Newspaper press 488w
Immigration appeals, Genetics 579w
Iran, Visas 748-9w
Kampuchea, Peace negotiations 748w
Members' correspondence, Administrative delays 749w
Montserrat, Medical treatments 570w
North Atlantic Assembly 748w
Official secrets, International organisations 487-8w
Palestine Liberation Organisation, Peace negotiations 644w

Eggs
Derbyshire 678w
Food hygiene 549w
Food poisoning 548-9w
Health warnings 548-9w
Local government expenditure 892
Ministerial statements (16:12:88) 1268-78
Production 777w
Salmonella 19-24, 29w, 168-9, 187-8w, 239w, 449w, 510w, 602w, 640-2w, 678w, 689w, 758, 767-8, 768-9w, 777-8w, 1078-9

EH 101 helicopters
312

EIB
see European Investment Bank

Elderly
Breast cancer 553w
Death 183-6w
Diseases 663-6w
Heating 637
Hypothermia 183w, 546-7w
Medical treatments 317w
Personal income 320w
Resource Allocation Working Party 754-5
Smoke detection 33w
Standing charges 637-8
Wales 90-1w, 317w

Elders IXL
565-7w

Elected Authorities (Northern Ireland) Bill 1988/89
Debates etc.
2R & Money res (05:12:88) 38-120
Questions
361-2w

Electoral reform
Charter 88 506w

Electorate
Northern Ireland 361-2w

Electrical safety
Plugs & sockets 297

Electrical technology
Professional qualifications 296-7
Waste disposal 405w

Electricite de France
376w

Electricity area boards
Energy conservation 330w

Electricity Bill 1988/89
Debates etc.
2R (12:12:88) 669-745
2R, Money res & Ways & means res (13:12:88) 787-884
Questions
Disclosure of information 583w

Electricity Council
374w, 633

Electricity disconnections
375w

Electricity distribution
194-5w
France 376w
Greater London 505w
Rathlin Island 195w, 265w

Electricity generation
193-4w, 371w, 477w, 681-2w
Air pollution control (09:12:88) 621-6
Competition 193w, 373w
Costs 371w, 477w, 483-4w, 682w
Departmental correspondence 192-3w
Energy costs 373w
National grid 327w
Natural gas 584w
Nuclear power stations 371w, 476w
Official engagements 633
Plutonium 328-9w
Radioactive wastes 479w
Scotland 292w
Severn barrage 476w
Tidal power 49w, 634
Trawsfynydd power station 582-3w

Electricity supply industry
Consumer protection 638
Contracts 371w
EC energy policy 682-3w
Insolvency 372w
Manpower 374-5w
Nuclear power 328w
Pay 483w
Privatisation 327-8w, 372-3w, 476-7w, 628, (12:12:88) 669-745, (13:12:88) 787-884
Shareholders 373w
Takeovers 372w
Uranium 680w
Vacant land 403w

Electricity tariffs
331-2w
Industrial energy prices 330-1w, 635-6
Price controls 373w, 635
Price increases 636
Tax rates & bands 420-1
West Germany 330-1w

Electronic surveillance
Offenders 506w, 1077
Urban areas 701w

Electronics industry
Chlorofluorocarbons 726w
Communication 568-9w

Elstree Studios
Film industry 93w

Elton Committee
see School Discipline Inquiry

Emergency planning
Disasters 702w
Government grants to local authorities 203-4w
Local government staff 204-5w
Manpower 43w, 205-6w
Medical equipment 125-6w
Nuclear accidents 389w
Police national computer 506-7w
Satellites 284w
Scotland 43w

Emergency services
AWE Burghfield 285w
Hammersmith Broadway 366w

Emery, Sir Peter
Debates etc.
Eggs, Salmonella (16:12:88) 1272
Private notice question intervention (05:12:88) 24
Questions
Charities, VAT 427-8
Eggs, Salmonella 20-1
Inflation 422
Royal Devon & Exeter Hospital, Radiotherapy 753

Emigration
Civil servants 389w, 680w
Defence research 585w

Employee reports
Disclosure of information 539w

Employees' contributions
National insurance contributions 54-5w

Employment
134-5w
Arms exports 685w
Day nurseries 611w
EC countries 134-5w
Non-metropolitan districts 742w
Rural areas 742w

Employment discrimination
Northern Ireland (15:12:88) 1102

"Employment for the 1990s White Paper"
(05:12:88) 25-37, 137w, 671w

Employment opportunities
(05:12:88) 25-37
Forestry 669w, 672w, 678w
Handicapped workers 140-1w, 149w
Iron & steel industry 528w
North Peckham task force 494-5w
Northern region 491w
Regional development grants 442-3w

Employment protection
Local government staff 574w

Employment schemes
(13:12:88) 884
Gwent 319w
Newport 319w
Wales 20w

Employment Service
165

Employment Subsidies Act 1978 (Renewal) (Great Britain) Order 1988
Debates etc.
(13:12:88) 884

Employment Training
136-7w, 152-3, 159, 319w, 538w
Arts 470w
Blyth valley 610w
Broadcasting 470w
Child care 469w, 538-40w
Community programme 150-1w
Day care of children 133w
Finance 307-8w
Liverpool City Council 213-4w
Local authorities 741-2w
Manpower 469-70w, 538w
Merseyside 151, 610w
Mid Glamorgan 23-4w
Nottingham 377-8w
Redundancy pay 468-9w
Scotland 485w
Take-up 136w
Trade unions 136w
Trades Union Congress 166-7
Transport & General Workers' Union 166-7
Wales 23w, 561w
Wandsworth 538w

Empty housing
Bury 628-9w
Council housing 153w, 628-9w

Empty property
Durham 721w

Empty property—continued
Home Office 721w

Energy Act 1983
Questions
192-4w

Energy conservation
Advertising 481w
Building regulations 270w
Electricity area boards 330w
Expenditure 327w
Finance 327w

Energy consumption
478w
Carbon dioxide 275w
Property transfer 684w

Energy costs
Electricity generation 373w

Energy Efficiency Office
482w
Expenditure 373-4w

Energy prices
EC action 372w

Energy research
Fast reactors 583w
Nuclear reactors 332w
Wind power 481w

Energy supply
Private sector 478w

Engineering industries
British Steel Corporation 302
EC internal trade 301
Skill shortages 302
UK trade with EC 302
Young people 302

England for Excellence award scheme
English Tourist Board 471w

English Channel
Shellfish 240w

English education
National Curriculum English Working Group 341w

English Heritage
see Historic Buildings & Monuments Commission for England

English Tourist Board
147w, 213w
England for Excellence award scheme 471w

English Working Group
see National Curriculum English Working Group

Enterprise allowance scheme
166
North West region 166

Enterprise initiative
Consultants 312

Enthorpe Lodge Special School Newbury
342-3w

Environment
Research finance 729w
Wales 10

Environment protection
908
Antarctic 570w
Detergents 270w
Forestry 46w
International cooperation 198w
Ministerial statements 729w
Water supply industry 279-80w
Welsh Water Authority 19w

Environmental Assessment (Afforestation) Regulations 1988
Questions
45-6w

Environmental impact assessment
45-6w, 432w
Overseas aid 427w

Environmental policy
266w
Taxation 301w

Environmentally sensitive areas
433w

Epping
Hospitals 363-4w

Equal opportunities
Women 107w

Equal pay
Youth employment 158

Equipment
Radiation Incident Monitoring Network 197-8w
Science & technology research 9w

Eritrea
39w

Erythropoietin
607w

Essex
Rate increases 614w

Estate Action
Expenditure 613w, 625-6w

Estate agents
Defective housing 645w

Ethiopia
Ministers' visits abroad 427w
Peace negotiations 39w

Ethnic groups
Judiciary 662-3w
Namibia 39w

Ethnic minorities
Arts 33w
Arts Council grants 12-3, 33w
Arts finance 13
Derbyshire County Council 109w
Music 33w
Youth training scheme 144w, 608-9w, 669-70w, 741w

Ethnic monitoring
Teachers 388w

Euratom
328-9w, 332w, 643w, 749w
Sellafield 329w

Europassport
Ministers 207w

Europe Open for Business
171-2w

European Agricultural Guidance & Guarantee Fund
739w
Wales 738w

European Atomic Energy Community
see Euratom

European Clearway
Ferries 564w

European Coal & Steel Community Budget
643w

European Commission
59w
Greenhouse effect 750w
Public appointments 116w, 266w, 491w

European Communities Act 1972
Questions
778w

European Council
Ministerial statements (06:12:88) 173-86
Terrorism 655w

European Court of Human Rights
(06:12:88) 207-82
Terrorism 711w

European Court of Justice
383w, 437w, 510w
Sunday trading 266w
VAT 93w, 153-4w, 158w, 164-5w, 185w, 189w, 206w, 236w, 243w, 318w, 321w, 329w, 437w, 516w

European Investment Bank
739w
Wales 739w

European monetary system
EC Finance Council 304w

European Organisation for Nuclear Research
see CERN

European Regional Development Fund
265w, 280w, 528w, 739w
Wales 737-8w

European Social Fund
146w, 296-7w, 739w

Evans, Mr David
Questions
Airbus Industrie 306-7
Football, Arrests 620w
Offensive weapons 705w

Evans, Mr John
Questions
Heart diseases, North Western Regional Health Authority 555w
Police national computer, Administrative delays 352w
Probation, Expenditure 721w
Water pollution, Pollution control 413-4w

Evennett, Mr David
Questions
Abortion, Coroners 713w
Bovine somatotropin 120w
Metropolitan Police 107w
Midwives, Career structure 542-3w
Nurses, Pay settlements 129w
Pirate radio stations, Radio frequencies 180w
Pregnancy, Young people 131w
School violence, Research 103w
Vacancies, Greater London 148w

Ewing, Mr Harry
Debates etc.
Public expenditure, Scotland (13:12:88) 781
Transport (Scotland) Bill, 2R & Money res (14:12:88) 970
Questions
Business statements 444, 1094
Football, Police 709w
Grangemouth 1080

Ewing, Mrs Margaret
Debates etc.
EC Fisheries Council (12:12:88) 665
Transport (Scotland) Bill, 2R & Money res (14:12:88) 1007-8
Questions
Broadcasting, Scotland 707w
Business statements 1091
Community care, Scottish health boards 673w
"Curriculum & Assessment in Scotland Consultation Paper" 113-4w
Forest protection, Reg(EEC)3528/86 46w
Forestry, Environment protection 46w
Forestry, Scotland 43-5w, 116w
Forestry, Tax allowances 45w
Forestry, Woodland grant scheme 45-6w
Forests, Air pollution 46w
Government, Scotland 171
Handicapped pupils, Scotland 368w
Languages education, Scotland 438-9w
Languages education, Teachers 784w
Legal aid, Scotland 440w
Local government staff, Scotland 640w
Mental hospitals, Property transfer 674w
NHS finance, Scotland 439w
Nuclear Industry Radioactive Waste Executive, Radioactive waste disposal 906-7
Offshore safety 632

Ewing, Mrs Margaret—continued
Offshore suppliers, North Sea oil 481w
Patients' transport, Death 440w
School population, Scotland 290-1w
Schools, Technical & vocational education initiative 114-6w
Scottish health boards, Expenditure 673w
Severe weather payments 762-3
Special education, Scotland 437-8w
Special schools, Headteachers 114w
Teacher training, Languages education 640w
Teachers, Early retirement 290w
Teachers, Languages education 640w
Whisky, Japan 173w

Examinations
Primary education 47w

Exchange control
Developing countries 643w
Zimbabwe 40w

Exchange rates
Interest rates 299-300w
Sterling 101w

Excise duties
Lead free petrol 300w

Exhaust emissions
Standards specifications 623w

Explosions
AWE Burghfield 106w, 252-3w, 584-5w
Hong Kong 253w

Export controls
Art works 14-5

Export licensing
Art works 36w, 497w

"Export of Works of Art Annual Report 1987/88"
255w

Export promotion
Advisory services 304-5
British embassies 305
British Overseas Trade Board 344w
Interest rates 305-6
Woollen industry 262-3w

Export rebates
EC trade 118w
Redundancy 29w

Exports
345w, 397w
Clothing 398-9w
Nissan 179w
Nuclear fuels 103w
Plutonium 328w
Radioactive wastes 725w
Textiles 398-9w
UK trade with EC 344-6w

Extradition
385w
Belgium 209-10w, 641
Fiore, Roberto 640-1, 723w, 1077
International cooperation 641
Italy 722-3w
Republic of Ireland 209-11w, 288w, 296w, 385w, 458w, 513-5w, 569w, 767, 1078
Ryan, Patrick 162-3w, 385w, 764-6, 909-16
Scotland 296w
South Africa 724w

Eye disorders
Diagnosis 78w
Glasgow 442w
Scotland 442w

Eye tests
78-80w, 132w
Glaucoma 79w
Optical charges 79-80w

Facilities agreements
Trade union officials 139w

Factory closures
North East Shipbuilders (14:12:88) 918-67

Fair Employment (Northern Ireland) Bill 1988/89
Debates etc.
1R (15:12:88) 1102

Fairbairn, Sir Nicholas
Questions
Salmonella, Eggs 640-2w
Scottish & Newcastle Breweries, Takeovers 565-7w

Falderntor
Fires 564w

Falkland Islands
Air accidents 66-7w

Family benefits
Costs 324w
Publicity 325w

Family credit
122w
Administrative delays 325w, 452w, 590-1w
Advisory services 124w
Departmental forms 593w
Expenditure 319w, 535w
Northern Ireland 362w
Nottingham 180-1w
Self-employed 63w, 181w
Social security claims 124w, 180w
Social security recipients 697w

Family income
Interest rates 744w

Family income supplements
Administrative delays 324-5w

Family practitioner committees
Chemists' shops 450w
Dentists 186-7w

Far East
Foreign tourists 139w

Fares
Bus services 659w

Farm Animal Welfare Council
431w

Farm buildings
Planning permission 751w

Farm capital grant scheme
Fruit 433w

Farm incomes
581-2w

Farm woodland scheme
678w

Farmers' Union of Wales
675w

Fast reactors
Energy research 583w

Fatchett, Mr Derek
Debates etc.
Employment opportunities (05:12:88) 37
Questions
Curriculum, Teacher training 573w
Languages education, Teachers 490w
Leeds Western Health Authority, Public appointments 339w
Nurses' training, Project 2000 608w
Pay, Teachers 309w
Public order policing, Students 461w
Social security benefits uprating, Mortgage interest rates 384w, 698w
Special education, Departmental publications 252w
Teachers, Pay 165w
Youth employment, Conditions of employment 159

Favell, Mr Tony
Debates etc.
Public expenditure, Scotland (13:12:88) 782
Scottish Enterprise (06:12:88) 195
Transport (Scotland) Bill, 2R & Money res (14:12:88) 1050
Questions
Central African Federation, Public service pensions 428w
Inner cities initiative, North West region 166-7w

Favell, Mr Tony—continued
Land use, Property transfer 621w
Local government staff, Employment protection 574w
Nurses, Pay settlements 757
Offshore structures, Demolition 684w
Oil rigs, Costs 480w
Prisoners on remand 640
Remand in custody 755w
Remand in custody, Scotland 784w
Training & enterprise councils, Industrial training 151-2

FCO
see Foreign & Commonwealth Office

Fearn, Mr Ronnie
Questions
Animal feed, Wastes 777-8w
Beaches, EC law 906
Business & Technician Education Council 649w
Diplomatic service, Civil service pensions 498w
Educational visits, Education Reform Act 1988 7w
Eggs, Salmonella 510w, 768w, 777w
Eggs, Food hygiene 549w
Foreign tourists, Transport 742w
Health service staff, Manpower 768w
Mentally disturbed offenders, Schizophrenia 32w
MV Ardlough, Shipping accidents 662w
Nurses, Career structure 80-1w, 542w
Nurses, Industrial disputes 756-7
Operating department assistants, Pay 690w
Radiographers, Manpower 769w
Rain forests, Overseas aid 644
Sports centres, Government grants to local authorities 734-6w
Tourism, Government grants 41-2w
Tourist industry 41w
Tourist information, Tourist boards 154
Wave power, Research finance 476w

Fees & charges
Hotel & catering industry 568w
Nurses' training 132w
Residential care 604w

FEOGA
see European Agricultural Guidance & Guarantee Fund

Ferries
European Clearway 564w
Fires 566w

Fiddler's Ferry power station
Air pollution control 333w

Field, Mr Barry
Debates etc.
North East Shipbuilders, Factory closures (07:12:88) 325
Questions
Capital allowances, Hotels 51w
Common agricultural policy, Expenditure 240-1w
Employment Training, Liverpool City Council 213-4w
Offenders, Electronic surveillance 506w
Official engagements 267w, 656w
"Residence in the United Kingdom" 300-1w

Field, Mr Frank
Debates etc.
Employment opportunities (05:12:88) 32
Questions
Earnings rules, One parent families 454w
Employment Training, Local authorities 741-2w
Gas supply industry 477w
Income tax, Tax rates & bands 500w
Ministers of religion, Termination of employment 561w
Residential care, Social Services Inspectorate 185-6w

Film censorship
Cable television 577-8w

Film industry
Elstree Studios 93w

FIMBRA
see Financial Intermediaries' Managers' & Brokers' Association

Financial institutions
Financial Intermediaries' Managers' & Brokers' Association 299

Financial Intermediaries' Managers' & Brokers' Association
26w, 259w, 397w, 567w
Codes of practice 567w
Financial institutions 299
Legal remedies 567w

Financial management initiative
Treasury 50-1w

Financial services
Company investigations 259w
EC action 397w
Investment 397w
Licensing 260w
Self-regulating organisations 259-60w, 567w
Training 259w

Financial targets
Crown Estate Commissioners 502-3w

Fine defaulters
Armley Prison 285-6w

Fingerprints
Metropolitan Police 715-6w

Finsberg, Sir Geoffrey
Questions
Rates & rating, Nurses 893
Right to buy, Camden 528-9w

Fiore, Roberto
Extradition 640-1, 723w, 1077

Fire services
Metropolitan counties 705w
Smoke detection 576w
South Yorkshire 705w
West Yorkshire 705w
West Yorkshire Fire & Civil Defence Authority 351w

Firearms
Amnesties 507-8w
Army in Northern Ireland 773w
Northern Ireland 679w

Fires
Casualties 577w
Falderntor 564w
Ferries 566w
Housing 577w

First time buyers
627w

Firth of Clyde
29-30w

Firth of Forth
29-30w

Fish
Mercury 365w
Pollution monitoring 201w

Fish conservation
Prawns 778w
Scotland 672-3w

Fish farming
Birds 367w
Fishery protection 367w
Scotland 367w, 511w
Seals 368w
White fish 511w

Fishburn, Mr Dudley
Debates etc.
Water Bill, 2R (07:12:88) 388-9
Questions
Charitable donations 303-4w

Fishburn, Mr Dudley—continued
Rates & rating, Nurses 614-5w
VAT registration 133w

Fisher, Mr Mark
Questions
Art works, Property transfer 254w
Arts, Inner London boroughs 388w
British Steel Corporation, Privatisation 94w
Broadcasting controls, Terrorism 209w
"Broadcasting in the 90s White Paper" 209w
Broadcasting licences, Religious broadcasting 111w
Design initiative, Civil service manpower 94w
Design initiative, Government assistance to industry 93-4w
Employment Training, Arts 470w
Employment Training, Broadcasting 470w
Kampuchea, Art works 350w
Local radio, Public bodies 463w
Local radio, Radio broadcasting licences 462-3w
Local radio, Radio frequencies 463w
Mappa mundi 15
Pay television, Television engineering 111w
Payroll deduction scheme, Charitable donations 421w
Payroll deduction scheme, Charities 421w
Public libraries, Finance 256w
Satellite broadcasting, Broadcasting controls 463w
Social security benefits, Departmental leaflets 451-2w
Television licences 111-2w
Television licences, Administrative costs 112w
Television licences, Manpower 112w
Television licences, Prosecutions 112w
Television programmes, Production costs 111w
Video recordings, Expenditure 111w

Fisheries
Northern Ireland 512-4w

Fishery protection
Fish farming 367w
Fishing vessels 202w

Fishing
River pollution 276w

Fishing catches
Northern Ireland 512-4w
Salmon 445-6w
Shetland 672w

Fishing vessels
EC grants & loans 201-2w
Fishery protection 202w
Spain 202w

FJX jet
264w

Flannery, Mr Martin
Debates etc.
Elected Authorities (Northern Ireland) Bill, 2R & Money res (05:12:88) 43, 44, 92
Prevention of Terrorism (Temporary Provisions) Bill, 2R & Money res (06:12:88) 255-6
Questions
Council housing, Property transfer 894
Housing benefits, Private rented housing 60w
Midwives, Conditions of employment 549w
Training, Unemployment 156-7

Floods
Building repairs 265w
Northern Ireland 515-6w
Northern Ireland Housing Executive 265w
Repairs & maintenance 515-6w

Fluidised bed combustion
630

Flynn, Mr Paul
Debates etc.
Electricity generation, Air pollution control (09:12:88) 621-3, 625
SS Mediterran Frigo, Standing Order No 20 applications (07:12:88) 332-3
Questions
Arms control, Conferences 316-7w
Atomic Energy Research Establishment, Nuclear safeguards 332w
Availability for work, Medical certificates 456w
Carbon dioxide, Advanced gas-cooled reactors 330w
Civil servants, Travel restrictions 268w
Coal fired power stations 192w
Coal fired power stations, Air pollution control 193w
Confederation of British Industry 302w
Electricity Council 633
Electricity generation 193-4w
Electricity generation, Competition 193w
Electricity generation, Departmental correspondence 192-3w
Housing, Wales 11
Nuclear disarmament, Nuclear Non Proliferation Treaty 316w
Nuclear fusion, Nuclear weapons 332-3w
Nuclear reactors, Energy research 332w
Nuclear test ban 317w
Plutonium, Central Electricity Generating Board 328-9w
Plutonium, Electricity generation 328-9w
Plutonium, Sellafield 329w
Power station closures 331w
Rental purchase, Housing benefits 456w
Severe weather payments, Income support 451w
Severe weather payments, Press advertising 451w
Severe weather payments, Social security recipients 537w
Social Fund, Civil service manpower 181w

FOE
see Friends of the Earth

Food additives
239w

Food aid from EC
Food contamination 431w

Food contamination
Cumbria 431w
Food aid from EC 431w
Radioactivity 431w

Food hygiene
Eggs 549w
Food poisoning 602w
Ministers 163w
Prisons 706w
Publicity 120w
Training 602-3w

Food industry
Milk 679w
Northern Ireland 679w

Food inspection
Civil service manpower 689w

Food packaging
Listeria monocytogenes 339w

Food poisoning
548w, 601-2w, 646w, 689w
Campylobacter 603w
Eggs 548-9w
Food hygiene 602w
Listeria monocytogenes 603w
Scotland 640-2w

Food Safety (Radiation) Unit
Ministry of Agriculture 677w

Food standards
Organic farming 675w

Foot, Rt Hon Michael
Debates etc.
Security Service Bill, 2R & Money res (15:12:88) 1124-9, 1140
Questions
Business statements 438

Football
Arrests 17w, 620w, 629w
Hooliganism 714w
Identity cards 14w, 612-3w
Police 709w

Football League
613w
Identity cards 728w

Ford Motor Company
538w

Foreign & Commonwealth Office
314-7w, 488w
Civil service 414w
Handicapped workers 188w
VAT 189w

Foreign companies in UK
176-7w
EC internal trade 306

Foreign exchange
Foreign tourists 155

Foreign investment in UK
North West region 176w
Water supply industry 525w

Foreign patients
NHS 87-9w

Foreign tourists
142w
Far East 139w
Foreign exchange 155
Invisible exports 141-2w
Transport 742w

Forensic science
1070-1
Civil service manpower 703-4w, 1070
Finance 716-7w

Forest protection
Developing countries 644-6
Reg(EEC)3528/86 46w
Scotland 46w

Forestry
Employment opportunities 669w, 672w, 678w
Environment protection 46w
Overseas aid 428w
Scotland 43-6w, 116w, 672w
Tax allowances 45w
Wales 669w
Woodland grant scheme 45-6w

Forestry Commission
45-6w
Land acquisition 369-70w
Land values 370w
Privatisation 444w
Scotland 370w, 672w
Tied housing 46-7w

Forests
Air pollution 46w

Forman, Mr Nigel
Questions
Business statements 1089

Forster Green Hospital
Nurses 360w

Forsyth, Mr Michael, Under-Secretary of State for Scotland
Questions
Accident & emergency departments, Greater Glasgow Health Board 440-1w

Forsyth, Mr Michael—continued
Accident & emergency departments, Lothian Health Board 48w
Accident & emergency departments, Southern General Hospital Glasgow 441w
Accident & emergency departments, Stobhill Hospital 441w
Accident & emergency departments, Western Infirmary 292w
Agriculture, Interest rates 637w
Assisted places scheme, Scotland 486-7w
Ayrshire & Arran Health Board, Nurses 779-82w
Breast cancer, Screening 639w
Community care, Scottish health boards 673w
Conservation of Seals Act 1970, Law reform 369w
Curriculum, Primary education 47w
"Curriculum & Assessment in Scotland Consultation Paper" 113-4w
Degrees, Scotland 487w
Educational administration, Scotland 637w
Examinations, Primary education 47w
Eye disorders, Glasgow 442w
Fish conservation, Scotland 672-3w
Fish farming, Birds 367w
Fish farming, Fishery protection 367w
Fish farming, Seals 368w
Fishing catches, Shetland 672w
Greater Glasgow Health Board 211w
Handicapped, Scotland 441w
Handicapped pupils, Scotland 368w
Health services, Scotland 634w
Heart pacemakers, Greater Glasgow Health Board 211-2w, 369-70w
Higher education, Scotland 48w
Hospital waiting lists, Scotland 442w
Hypothermia, Scotland 444-5w
Languages education, Scotland 438-9w
Languages education, Teachers 784w
Local government staff, Scotland 640w
Mental hospitals, Property transfer 674w
Mental illness, Research finance 42w
Mentally ill, Hospital length of stay 42w
Midwives, Career structure 779-80w
NHS finance, Scotland 439w
Nuclear accidents, Pollution monitoring 289-90w
Nurses, Career structure 212w
Orthopaedics, Scotland 486w
Patients' transport, Death 440w
Pesticides, Scotland 369-70w
Prosthetics, Scotland 486w
Psychiatric nurses, Scotland 42w
Research, North Sea 44w
Residential care, Licensing 672w
Salmon, Fishing catches 445-6w
Salmonella, Eggs 640-2w
Salmonella, Scotland 442w
School administration, Scotland 47w, 212-3w
School leaving, Scotland 487w
School population, Scotland 290-1w
Schools, Technical & vocational education initiative 114-6w
Scottish health boards, Contracts for services 634w
Scottish health boards, Expenditure 673w
Scottish health boards, Public appointments 671w
"Scottish Health Service" 634-5w
Seals, Nature conservation 368w
Special education, Scotland 437-8w
Special schools, Headteachers 114w
Student grants, Scotland 439-40w, 782-4w
Teacher training, Languages education 640w
Teachers, Early retirement 290w
Teachers, Languages education 640w
Technical education, Educational finance 47-8w
VAT, Government grants 437w

Forsythe, Mr Clifford
Debates etc.
Elected Authorities (Northern Ireland) Bill, 2R & Money res (05:12:88) 62-5
Water Bill, 2R (07:12:88) 389-90

***Forth, Mr Eric**, Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Industry and Consumer Affairs*
Questions
Chemicals, Safety measures 92-3w
Clothing, Labelling 345w
Computer software 259w
Consumer protection 175w
Data Protection Act 1984, Dept of Trade & Industry 177-8w
Dept of Trade & Industry, Further education 493w
Design initiative, Civil service manpower 94w
Design initiative, Government assistance to industry 93-4w
Domestic electrical appliances, Domestic safety 296
Electrical safety, Plugs & sockets 297
Electrical technology, Professional qualifications 296-7
Enterprise initiative, Consultants 312
Estate agents, Defective housing 645w
Food poisoning 646w
Handicapped workers, Dept of Trade & Industry 177w
Hotel & catering industry, Fees & charges 568w
Hotel & catering industry, Trading standards departments 568w
House prices, Housing market 308
House prices, Location of industry 308-9
House prices, Repossession orders 309
Industrial research, Contracts 170w
Industrial research, Research finance 168w
Information technology, Science & technology research 168w
Inner cities initiative, North West region 166-7w
Maude, Francis, Official stationery 25w
National Engineering Laboratory, Consultants 26w
North Peckham task force, Employment opportunities 494-5w
Paper, Recycling 495-6w
Post Office Counters, Monopolies & Mergers Commission 497w
Sales methods, Hearing aids 493-4w
Science & technology research, EC action 169w
VAT, Dept of Trade & Industry 93w
Warren Spring Laboratory, Members' correspondence 493w

Fossil fuelled power stations
Pollution control 628
Power station closures 683w

Foulkes, Mr George
Debates etc.
EC Fisheries Council (12:12:88) 664
Electricity Bill, 2R (12:12:88) 674, 676-7
Electricity Bill, 2R, Money res & Ways & means res (13:12:88) 788, 793
European Council (06:12:88) 176, 185
Public expenditure, Scotland (13:12:88) 784-5
Questions
Air freight transport, Plutonium 99w
Social Fund, Ayr 697w
Social Fund, Expenditure 696w
UN Convention on Torture 40w
Vietnamese refugees, Hong Kong 38w
Vietnamese refugees, Resettlement 208w

14 Intelligence Company
Armed forces deployment 686-7w

***Fowler, Rt Hon Norman**, Secretary of State for Employment*
Debates etc.
Employment opportunities (05:12:88) 25-37
Questions
Employment 134w
Employment Service 165
Employment Training 152-3
Employment Training, Merseyside 151
Employment Training, Trades Union Congress 166-7
Employment Training, Transport & General Workers' Union 166-7

***Fowler, Rt Hon Norman**—continued*
Portsmouth 139w
Training 152
Training, Companies 152
Training & enterprise councils, Industrial training 151-2
Unemployment 134w
Youth employment 159
Youth employment, Closed shop 158-9
Youth employment, Conditions of employment 158-9, 165-6
Youth employment, Equal pay 158

Fox, Sir Marcus
Debates etc.
Multifibre arrangement (09:12:88) 581

Fox hunting
Railway property 661w
Railway safety 566w

France
Defence 771-2w
Electricity distribution 376w

Franchising
Television 712w

Franks, Mr Cecil
Questions
Africa, Ministers' visits abroad 28w
Further education colleges, Educational administration 648w
Power stations, Cumbria 482w
Youth employment, Conditions of employment 158

Fraser, Mr John
Questions
Extradition, Belgium 641
Housing associations, Charities 151w
Restart programme, Lambeth 148w
Ryan, Patrick, Extradition 909-10

Fraud
Company investigations 396-7w
Marcos, Ferdinand 99w
Ministry of Defence 776w
Mortgages 283w, 386w, 465-6w
Regional development grants 442-4w

Freedom of expression
Higher education 653-5w

***Freeman, Mr Roger**, Under-Secretary of State for the Armed Forces*
Questions
A10 aircraft, Air accidents 468w
Air force bases, Scotland 71-2w
Aircraft noise 770w
Aircraft noise, Low flying 770-1w
Aircraft noise, Research 771-2w
Armed forces, Schools 344w
Armed forces, Travel restrictions 771-2w
Armed forces casualties, Dependants 66-8w
Armed forces education allowances 105-6w
Armed forces education allowances, School holidays 106w
Armed forces retirement, Army 688w
Army, Scholarships 105w
Army bases, Scotland 69-71w
Chemical weapons, USA 157w
Defence expenditure 252w
Defence expenditure, Scotland 73w
Dreadnought Seamen's Hospital, Property transfer 585w
Explosions, Hong Kong 253w
Falkland Islands, Air accidents 66-7w
Lance missiles 73w
Low flying, Compensation 499w
Low flying, Costs 499w
Low flying, Public meetings 772w
Military aircraft, Defence equipment 685w
Military aircraft, Low flying 769-70w
Military aircraft, RAF Upper Heyford 343w
Military exercises, Nuclear power stations 770w
Naval bases, Scotland 72w
Navy, Tobacco 68w
Queen's Own Highlanders, AIDS 68w

***Freeman, Mr Roger**—continued*
Seaton Barracks, Land acquisition 466-7w
VAT, Ministry of Defence 158w

French, Mr Douglas
Questions
Chemists' shops, Family practitioner committees 450w
Civil service agencies, Management 18
Family credit, Self-employed 63w, 181w
Small businesses, VAT registration 138w

Fresh Start
109w

Friends of the Earth
266w

Frontiers
EC internal trade 708w

Fruit
Farm capital grant scheme 433w

Fruit juices
EC grants & loans 743-4w

Fuel bills
Social Fund 455w
Supplementary benefits 755w

Funerals
VAT 501w

Further education
Community opportunities 636w
Dept of Trade & Industry 493w

Further education colleges
Educational administration 648w

FUW
see Farmers' Union of Wales

Fyfe, Mrs Maria
Debates etc.
Abortion (16:12:88) 1214, 1244-7
Public expenditure, Scotland (13:12:88) 780
Transport (Scotland) Bill, 2R & Money res (14:12:88) 1024-5
Questions
Business statements 441
Community charge, Scotland 616-7w
Electricity tariffs, Price controls 635
Frontiers, EC internal trade 708w

Fylde
155-6

G7
see Group of Seven

Gaelic language
Television 710w

Galbraith, Mr Sam
Debates etc.
Transport (Scotland) Bill, 2R & Money res (14:12:88) 986
Questions
Accident & emergency departments, Greater Glasgow Health Board 440-1w
Business statements 446
Greater Glasgow Health Board 211w
Health services, Scotland 634w
Heart pacemakers, Greater Glasgow Health Board 44w, 211-2w
Paramedical staff, Pay 753-4
Scottish health boards, Contracts for services 634w
VAT, NHS 502w

Galloway, Mr George
Debates etc.
Elected Authorities (Northern Ireland) Bill, 2R & Money res (05:12:88) 97-9, 101
Questions
Accident & emergency departments, Western Infirmary 292w
Car industry, Market share 175-6w
Electricity supply industry, Privatisation 477w

Game
Radioactivity 575-6w
Salmonella 448w

Garrett, Mr John
Debates etc.
British Shipbuilders, Privatisation (14:12:88) 955-7
North East Shipbuilders, Factory closures (07:12:88) 317
Questions
International trade, Interest rates 303-4
UK trade with EC, Balance of trade 169w

Garrett, Mr Ted
Debates etc.
British Shipbuilders, Privatisation (14:12:88) 928
EC Fisheries Council (12:12:88) 661
Questions
Balance of payments 299w

Gas supply industry
477w

Gas tariffs
331-2w
Industrial energy prices 632-3

GATT
398w

GCE A level
756w

GCHQ
see Government Communications Headquarters

General Agreement on Tariffs & Trade
see GATT

General Certificate of Secondary Education
Universities 572w

General Dynamics
Tanks 467w

General Medical Council
75w
Professional misconduct 75-8w
Professional qualifications 77-8w

General Practice Finance Corporation
188w

Generators
Wind power 326-7w

Genetics
Immigration appeals 579w
Immigration controls 460-1w

"Geographical Variations in Infant Mortality in Relation to Birthweight"
448w

George, Mr Bruce
Debates etc.
Prevention of Terrorism (Temporary Provisions) Bill, 2R & Money res (06:12:88) 258-60
Questions
Security industry 718w

Geriatrics
Wales 663-6w

German measles
450w

Gibraltar
National insurance 189w

Gifford, Lord
1068

Gill, Mr Christopher
Debates etc.
EC budget (05:12:88) 140
Questions
Lead free petrol 902-3
Vaccination, NHS charges 540w
Young offenders, Parent & child 1077-8

Gilmour, Rt Hon Sir Ian
Debates etc.
European Council (06:12:88) 175
Questions
Child benefit 382w

Gilmour, Rt Hon Sir Ian—continued
Child benefit, Tax burden 308w
Council house rents 200-1w
Disposable income 700w
Family income, Interest rates 744w
Pensioners, Personal income 65-6w
Personal income, Child benefit 59-60w
Retirement pensions, Average earnings 383-4w
Tax allowances, Income tax 644w

Glasgow
Community opportunities 636w
Eye disorders 442w
Voluntary projects programme 636-7w

Glasgow District Council
(07:12:88) 291

Glaucoma
79w, 442w
Blind 79w
Eye tests 79w

Gloucestershire Regiment
Northern Ireland 745w

Glue sniffing
Health education 102w
Young people 131w

Glyn, Dr Alan
Debates etc.
Electricity Bill, 2R (12:12:88) 675
Questions
Business statements 438
Estate agents, Defective housing 645w
Power failures, Windsor 633-4, 684w
Property law, Scottish legal system 663w
Zimbabwe, Exchange control 40w

Godman, Dr Norman A
Debates etc.
British Shipbuilders, Privatisation (14:12:88) 955, 957
EC Fisheries Council (12:12:88) 657-8
North East Shipbuilders, Factory closures (07:12:88) 321
Public expenditure, Scotland (13:12:88) 782
Scottish Enterprise (06:12:88) 199
Questions
Community care 545w
Conservation of Seals Act 1970, Law reform 369w
Fish conservation, Scotland 672-3w
Fish farming, Birds 367w
Fish farming, Fishery protection 367w
Fish farming, Seals 368w
Fishing catches, Shetland 672w
Pesticides, Scotland 369-70w
Prawns, Fish conservation 778w
Seals, Nature conservation 368w
Tax rates & bands, Interest rates 419-20
VAT, Construction 587w

Gold
Mining 781w
Scotland 781w

Gold & foreign exchange reserves
117w

Golding, Mrs Llin
Questions
Business sponsorship incentive scheme, West Midlands 34w
Hypothermia, Elderly 546-7w
Opencast mining, Health hazards 233w

Goodhart, Sir Philip
Questions
Business statements 1088

Goodlad, Mr Alastair
Debates etc.
Water Bill, 2R (07:12:88) 374-7
Questions
Mental hospitals 88w
Mental illness, Research finance 42w
Mentally ill, Hospital length of stay 42w
Profitability, North West region 430
Psychiatric nurses, Scotland 42w

Goods vehicles
Refrigeration 563w

Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Questions
Crown Agents 562-3w
Trade union officials, Facilities agreements 139w

Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Questions
Driver Testing & Training Division 660w
Skill shortages 142w

Gould, Mr Bryan
Debates etc.
British Shipbuilders, Privatisation (14:12:88) 924-7

Government
Scotland 171

Government achievements
Pravda 170-1

Government assistance
Business 311-4w
Coal mining 482w
Land reclamation 263-4w

Government assistance to industry
Design initiative 93-4w
Dixon's 497w
Rolls-Royce Aeroengines 297

Government assistance to nationalised industries
Coal mining 629

Government buildings
Greater London 348-9w, 624w

Government Communications Headquarters
268w
Lie detectors 268-9w
Trade union membership 16-8
USSR 488w

Government contracts
Small businesses 153-4

Government data network
502w

Government departments
Land acquisition 402w
Procurement 100w

Government grants
Centrepoint Soho 324w
Horticulture 187w
Police 709w
Sheltered housing 619-20w
Tourism 41-2w, 141w
VAT 437w
Water authorities 11w

Government grants to local authorities
526-8w
Civil defence 204-5w
Community charge 401-2w, 752w
Defective housing 904
Derbyshire County Council 109w
Emergency planning 203-4w
Housing investment programmes 625w
Sports centres 734-6w
Wales 6

Government grants to voluntary organisations
Health services 692w
Nature reserves 751w

"Government Purchasing"
100w

Government shareholding
Short Brothers 310

Gow, Mr Ian
Debates etc.
Elected Authorities (Northern Ireland) Bill, 2R & Money res (05:12:88) 42, 65-9
European Council (06:12:88) 182
Water Bill, 2R, Money res & Ways & means res (08:12:88) 512-3

Gow, Mr Ian—continued
Questions
Business statements 1092
Council house sales 425
Extradition, Republic of Ireland 767
Ryan, Patrick, Extradition 162-3w, 915

Gower, Sir Raymond
Questions
Council house sales, Wales 21w
Nurses, Appeals 3
Owner occupied housing, Wales 24w

Graham, Morton
Credit licensing 25-6w

Graham, Mr Thomas
Debates etc.
Scottish Enterprise (06:12:88) 199-200
Transport (Scotland) Bill, 2R & Money res (14:12:88) 1005-6, 1030
Questions
Business statements 1096
Community opportunities, Further education 636w
Community opportunities, Glasgow 636w
Community work, Training Agency 610w
Tax rates & bands, Price increases 419-20
Training Agency 635-6w
Training Agency, Voluntary projects programme 635-6w
Voluntary projects programme, Glasgow 636-7w
Voluntary projects programme, Recruitment 637w

Grande Carajas project
657w

Grangemouth
1080

Grant, Sir Anthony
Debates etc.
Water Bill, 2R (07:12:88) 345, 366-8, 402
Questions
Anglian Water Authority 899
Civil servants' political activities 434

Grant, Mr Bernie
Questions
Arts Council grants, Ethnic minorities 12-3
Broadwater Farm estate, Convictions 1068
Foreign patients, NHS 87-8w
Nurses, Career structure 81w
Teachers, Recruitment 102-3w

Grant maintained schools
9-10w
Educational finance 101w
Preparatory schools 7w

Grants by Local Housing Authorities (Appropriate Percentage & Exchequer Contributions) Order 1989
Debates etc.
(13:12:88) 785

Greater Glasgow Health Board
211w, 292w
Accident & emergency departments 440-1w
Heart pacemakers 44w, 211-2w, 369-70w

Greater London
Bus crews 2w
Dept of Social Security local offices 455-6w
Electricity distribution 505w
Government buildings 348-9w, 624w
Hard core unemployed 138-9w
Homelessness 617w
Missing persons 30-1w
Parking 352w
Railway fares 245w
Road tax 464w
Road traffic 244w
Roads 243-4w
Single homeless 324w
Squatting 199w
Supplementary benefits 755w
Unemployment 134w, 136w
Vacancies 148w, 378w
Water supply 408w

Greater Manchester
Average earnings 233-4w
Hospital patients 362-3w
Rape 354w
Vacancies 216-32w

"Green Gauntlet"
266w, 624w

Greenbelt
628w
Planning appeals 17w
Property development 905

Greenhouse effect
275w, 330w, 630w, 1079-80
Coastal areas 237-8w
Conferences 504w
European Commission 750w
Research 726w
Research finance 238w

Greenpeace
266w

Greenway, Mr Harry
Questions
Business statements 440-1
Council housing 896
Elderly, Standing charges 637-8
Electricity generation 477w
Extradition 385w
Foreign companies in UK, EC internal trade 306
Foreign tourists, Far East 139w
Foreign tourists, Foreign exchange 155
Hospital patients 556w
Independent Broadcasting Authority, Tax yields 508-9w
Inflation 58w
Inner London Staff Commission, Public appointments 490-1w
Lindholme Prison, Prison riots 207w
Literature, Children 35w
Official engagements 117w, 266-7w, 492w, 656w
Planning permission, London boroughs 278-9w
Play groups 336-8w
Police community liaison committees, London boroughs 458-9w
School transport 164w
Small businesses, Ealing 175w
Teachers, Educational standards 648-9w

Greenway, Mr John
Debates etc.
Eggs, Salmonella (16:12:88) 1277
Security Service Bill, 2R & Money res (15:12:88) 1118, 1168
Questions
Civil service manpower, Annual reports 743w

Gregory, Mr Conal
Questions
Railway timetables, Railway travel 242-3w
Tourist information, Opening hours 154

Griffiths, Sir Eldon
Debates etc.
Electricity Bill, 2R (12:12:88) 731

Griffiths, Mr Nigel
Debates etc.
Scottish Enterprise (06:12:88) 198
Questions
Average earnings, Non-metropolitan districts 743w
British Steel Corporation, Shares 263w
Capital investment 424-5w
Employment, Non-metropolitan districts 742w
Employment Training, Community programme 150-1w
Gas tariffs 331-2w
Heating, Costs 332w
Hypothermia, Death 85w
Seeds, Certification testing 776w
Tax rates & bands, Electricity tariffs 420-1
Unemployment, Rural areas 742-3w

Griffiths, Mr Nigel—continued
Water charges 412w

Griffiths, Mr Win
Debates etc.
Rate support grants, Wales (08:12:88) 454
Water Bill, 2R, Money res & Ways & means res (08:12:88) 467
Questions
British Coal Corporation 630
EC internal trade, Publicity 171w
Inflation 297-8w
Nurses, Career structure 3, 543w
Water authorities, Public sector assets 628w

Griffiths Committee
see Community Care Review

Grimethorpe
630

Grist, Mr Ian, Under-Secretary of State for Wales
Questions
Acid rain, Wales 391-2w
Cervical cancer, Screening 164w
Children, Poverty 20w
Community care, Wales 356w
Council house rents, Rent arrears 12
Council house rents, Wales 9-10
Council house sales, Wales 21w
Council house waiting lists, Carmarthen 1-2
Council housing, Swansea 2-3
Council tenants, Social security recipients 319-20w
Elderly, Diseases 663-6w
Elderly, Medical treatments 317w
Elderly, Wales 90-1w
Hospital waiting lists, NHS finance 561w
Hospital waiting lists, Wales 163-4w
Housing, Rural areas 4-5
Housing, Wales 5-6, 11
Local government expenditure 394w
Mental health community care, Wales 392w
Mental health services, Wales 356-7w
National Rivers Authority, Welsh Water Authority 358w
NHS finance, Wales 92w
Nurses, Appeals 3
Nurses, Career structure 3-4, 164w
Nurses, Pay settlements 4
Nurses, Wales 19-20w, 391w, 737w
Nursing homes, Wales 664w
Owner occupied housing, Wales 24w
Planning appeals, Wales 393w
Planning permission, National parks 393w
Rate support grants, Cardiff City Council 393w
Rented housing, Wales 2
Repossession orders, Newport 320w
Sewage, Pollution control 665-70w
Wastes, Wales 318w
Water charges, Wales 317w
Water supply industry, Land ownership & tenure 22w
Welsh Water Authority, Land acquisition 22w, 358w
Welsh Water Authority, Land ownership & tenure 21-2w
Welsh Water Authority, Vacant land 22w
Welsh Water Authority, Water pollution 24-5w

Grocott, Mr Bruce
Debates etc.
Employment opportunities (05:12:88) 34-5
Oral question time intervention (08:12:88) 432
Questions
Housing, Telford Development Corporation 622w
Prison medical services, Psychiatry 457-8w
Prison population, Mental patients 282-3w
Tax rates & bands, Income tax 303w
Television, Franchising 712w

Group of Seven
Inflation 302w, 428

Growish
Company investigations 27w, 422w

Growth promoting hormones
(12:12:88) 746-50, 788w

Grylls, Mr Michael
Debates etc.
European Council (06:12:88) 180
North East Shipbuilders, Factory closures (07:12:88) 318
Questions
Airbus Industrie 308
Business, Government assistance 311-4w
Mergers, EC action 176w

Guildford
Bombings 113w, 707-8w

Gummer, Rt Hon John Selwyn, Minister for Housing and Planning
Questions
Community charge 154w, 199w, 527w, 616w, 728w, 892
Community charge, Government grants to local authorities 752w
Community charge, Income tax 616w
Community charge, Local authorities 615-6w
Community charge, Local government expenditure 891-2
Community charge, Nottingham 615w
Community charge, Personal income 727-8w
Community charge, Publicity 401w, 616-7w
Community charge, Scotland 616-7w
Community charge, Tax evasion 616w
Government grants to local authorities 526-8w
Housing & Local Government Bill 1988/89 899-900
Housing subsidies 900
Local authorities, Direct labour departments 200w
Local government expenditure, Eggs 892
Manchester Council for Voluntary Service 269w
Planning authorities 900
Rate support grants 613w
Rate support grants, Local authorities 732-4w
Rates & rating 894
Rates & rating, Camden 893
Rates & rating, Nurses 614-5w, 893

Gun sports
728w, 906
Land use 199w, 905-6
Lead 14w
Town & Country Planning General Development Order 1988 729w

Guy's Hospital
(12:12:88) 745

Gwent
Employment schemes 319w
Skill shortages 318w
Tenant eviction 320w
Unemployment 21w

Gwent Glamorgan Archaeological Trust
392w

Gwynedd Health Authority
Finance 21w

Hall Committee
see Child Health Surveillance Joint Working Party

Hamilton, Mr Archie, Minister of State for the Armed Forces
Questions
Armed forces, Motor vehicle registration 686w
Armed forces deployment, Hong Kong 773w
Army in Northern Ireland 687-8w

Hamilton, Mr Archie—continued
Army in Northern Ireland, Armed forces strength 687w
Army in Northern Ireland, Firearms 773w
Army in Northern Ireland, Sub-machine guns 686w
Chemical weapons 685w
Defence, Computer privacy 498-9w
14 Intelligence Company, Armed forces deployment 686-7w
NATO, "Spycatcher" 466w
Nuclear submarines, Radioactivity 343w
Nuclear weapons, Modernisation 499w

Hamilton, Mr Neil
Debates etc.
North East Shipbuilders, Factory closures (07:12:88) 321
Public expenditure, Scotland (13:12:88) 783
Transport (Scotland) Bill, 2R & Money res (14:12:88) 1052
Questions
Uniform business rate, North West region 156

Hammersmith Broadway
Emergency services 366w
Road traffic 366w

Hampshire
Planning appeals 198-9w

Hampson, Dr Keith
Questions
Common agricultural policy, EC budget 430-1w
Exports 345w, 397w
Textiles, Exports 398-9w

Handicap benefits
Durham 592w
Social security recipients 532-3w
Stoke-on-Trent 382w

Handicapped
Career development loan scheme 742w
Housing benefits 63w
Scotland 441w

Handicapped drivers
Orange badge scheme 564w

Handicapped pupils
Scotland 368w

Handicapped students
Student grants 386w, 490w

Handicapped workers
140w
Blyth valley 610-1w
Civil service manpower 164w, 177w, 188w, 203w, 240w, 277w, 308-9w, 317w, 321-2w, 331w, 338w, 362w, 365w, 437w, 458w, 466w
Dept of Education & Science 164w
Dept of Employment 308-9w
Dept of Energy 331w
Dept of Health 338w
Dept of Social Security 321-2w
Dept of the Environment 277w
Dept of Trade & Industry 177w
Dept of Transport 365w
Employment opportunities 140-1w, 149w
Foreign & Commonwealth Office 188w
Home Office 458w
Ministry of Agriculture 240w
Ministry of Defence 466w
Northern Ireland Office 362w
Scottish Office 437w
Treasury 203w
Welsh Office 317w

Hanley, Mr Jeremy
Debates etc.
Prevention of Terrorism (Temporary Provisions) Bill, 2R & Money res (06:12:88) 223, 256-8
Questions
Charitable donations 303-4w
Level crossings, Railway safety 245w
Lotteries, Orders & regulations 351w

Hanley, Mr Jeremy—continued
Ministers, Pay 256-8w
Sewage, Waste disposal 199-200w

Hannam, Mr John
Debates etc.
Electricity Bill, 2R (12:12:88) 715-7
Questions
Career development loan scheme, Handicapped 742w
Disabled Persons (Services Consultation & Representation) Act 1986, Mental health community care 453w
Handicap benefits, Social security recipients 532-3w
Handicapped drivers, Orange badge scheme 564w
Handicapped students, Student grants 386w, 490w
Nuclear power, Death 634
Wheelchairs 556w

Hard core unemployed
Greater London 138-9w
Unemployment benefits 452-3w

Hardy, Mr Peter
Debates etc.
Electricity Bill, 2R (12:12:88) 674
Electricity Bill, 2R, Money res & Ways & means res (13:12:88) 822-4
Questions
Badgers, Bovine tuberculosis 239-40w
Coal mining, Redundancy 630-1
Coal mining, Termination of employment 478w
Conventional weapons, Military balance 570w
Eggs, Derbyshire 678w
Health education, Pensioners 761-2
Police, South Yorkshire 709w

Hargreaves, Mr Andrew
Debates etc.
Electricity Bill, 2R, Money res & Ways & means res (13:12:88) 840-1

Hargreaves, Mr Ken
Debates etc.
Livestock, Hormones (12:12:88) 746-8
Multifibre arrangement (09:12:88) 600-2
Questions
Abortion, Coroners 713w
Unemployment, Lancashire 135w

Harland & Wolff
Privatisation 574-5w

Harman, Ms Harriet
Questions
Cassel, Harold 18-9w
NHS administration, Women 340w
North Peckham task force 260-2w
North Peckham task force, Community relations 262w
North Peckham task force, Employment opportunities 494-5w
North Peckham task force, Expenditure 261-2w
Nurses, Career structure 81-2w
Nurses, Manpower 80-1w
Nurses, Part-time employment 340w
Personal social services, Local government expenditure 759-60w
Vaccination, Children 450w

Harris, Mr David
Debates etc.
EC Fisheries Council (12:12:88) 660
Electricity Bill, 2R, Money res & Ways & means res (13:12:88) 810-2
Questions
Business expansion scheme, Private rented housing 307w
Employment Training 136-7w
Enterprise initiative, Consultants 312
Home Office, Voluntary organisations 704w
Procurement Executive, Air force bases 685-6w

Harrow
Hostels 346w

Hartland Point
HM Coastguard 517-8w

Hartlepool Health Authority
603w

Hartlepool power station
Advanced gas-cooled reactors 371-2w
Nuclear fuels 329-30w

Harwich Harbour Bill (HL) 1987/88
Debates etc.
Rep* (13:12:88) 751

Haseldine, Patrick
Newspaper press 488w, 492w

Haselhurst, Mr Alan
Questions
Government data network 502w

Hattersley, Rt Hon Roy
Debates etc.
Prevention of Terrorism (Temporary Provisions) Bill, 2R & Money res (06:12:88) 215-23
Security Service Bill, 2R & Money res (15:12:88) 1106, 1113-22
Questions
Broadwater Farm estate, Convictions 1068-9
Crimes of violence 1072

Haverfordwest bypass
Road construction 738w

Hawkins, Mr Christopher
Debates etc.
Water Bill, 2R, Money res & Ways & means res (08:12:88) 497-8

Hayes, Mr Jerry
Questions
Thames Water Authority 899

Hayhoe, Rt Hon Sir Barney
Questions
Members' correspondence, Administrative delays 749w

Haynes, Mr Frank
Debates etc.
Electricity Bill, 2R, Money res & Ways & means res (13:12:88) 837, 851-2
Multifibre arrangement (09:12:88) 561, 562, 607-8, 610
Prevention of Terrorism (Temporary Provisions) Bill, 2R & Money res (06:12:88) 275
Water Bill, 2R, Money res & Ways & means res (08:12:88) 536
Questions
Business statements 443
English education, National Curriculum English Working Group 341w
Gas supply industry 477w
Health, Pensioners 547-8w

Hayward, Mr Robert
Debates etc.
Water Bill, 2R, Money res & Ways & means res (08:12:88) 534
Questions
Public expenditure 305w
Unemployment, South West region 134w

Hazardous materials
Water pollution 525-6w, 629w

Hazardous Waste Inspectorate
13w

Hazardous wastes
Imports 12w
Waste disposal 12w, 614w

HBMD
see Historic Buildings & Monuments Directorate

Headteachers
Primary education 571-2w
Special schools 114w

Health
Pensioners 547-8w
Police 704w
Women 757-8

Health & Safety Commission
see Health & Safety Executive

Health & Safety Executive
42w, 339w, 378w
Finance 143w

Health education
758
AIDS 601w
Glue sniffing 102w
Heart diseases 554w
Pensioners 761-2
Prisoners 108w

Health hazards
Bracken 582w
Opencast mining 233w, 468w

Health service ancillary staff
Pay 555w

Health service staff
Contracts of employment 127w
Hepatitis 448w
Manpower 545w, 768w

Health services
British dependent territories 570w
Buildings 557w
Caribbean 89-90w
Government grants to voluntary organisations 692w
Scotland 634w

Health visitors
Career structure 187w, 746w
Northern Ireland 746w

Health warnings
Eggs 548-9w

Hearing aids
Sales methods 493-4w

Heart diseases
Health education 554w
North Western Regional Health Authority 555w
Surgery 751-2
Transplant surgery 604w

Heart pacemakers
Greater Glasgow Health Board 44w, 211-2w, 369-70w
Surgery 606w

Heating
Costs 332w, 682w
Elderly 637
Pensioners 762-3

Heating allowances
Pensioners 321w
Social security recipients 592w

Heddle, Mr John
Questions
Brooks, Tony, Subversion 663-4w
Drug crimes, Music 283w
Housing benefits, Social security reform 591w
Land acquisition, Government departments 402w
M1, Road traffic 1w
National insurance credits, Departmental correspondence 588w
Payroll deduction scheme, Charitable donations 421w
Professional liability 258w
Restrictive trade practices 258w
VAT, Dept of Education & Science 164-5w
VAT, Dept of Employment 236w
VAT, Dept of Energy 329w
VAT, Dept of Health 185w
VAT, Dept of Social Security 321w
VAT, Dept of the Environment 153-4w
VAT, Dept of Trade & Industry 93w

Heddle, Mr John—continued
VAT, Dept of Transport 243w
VAT, Foreign & Commonwealth Office 189w
VAT, Home Office 206w
VAT, Ministry of Defence 158w
VAT, Northern Ireland Office 516w
VAT, Scottish Office 437w
VAT, Welsh Office 318w

Hedges & ditches
118w

Heffer, Mr Eric S
Debates etc.
Elected Authorities (Northern Ireland) Bill, 2R & Money res (05:12:88) 43, 87-90, 107
Employment opportunities (05:12:88) 31
European Council (06:12:88) 180
Points of order, House of Commons procedure (15:12:88) 1099
Security Service Bill, 2R & Money res (15:12:88) 1105-6, 1117, 1157, 1161-3, 1178
Water Bill, 2R, Money res & Ways & means res (08:12:88) 514
Questions
Ryan, Patrick, Extradition 913-4

Henderson, Mr Doug
Debates etc.
Abortion (16:12:88) 1233-6
Multifibre arrangement (09:12:88) 563-70, 615-6
Questions
Engineering industries, UK trade with EC 302
Inflation, Group of Seven 302w

Hepatitis
450w
Health service staff 448w
Prisoners 464-6w
Vaccination 765w

Hereford Cathedral
Mappa mundi 13-5, 36w

"Hero from Zero"
638-9

Hexham
Severe weather payments 382-3w

Heysham power station
371-2w
Construction costs 104-5w
Nuclear fuels 329-30w

Hicks, Mrs Maureen
Questions
Electronic surveillance, Urban areas 701w
M20, Road construction 97w
M20, Road traffic 96w
Resource Allocation Working Party, Regional health authorities 754
Take-home pay, Average earnings 304w
Unemployment, West Midlands 150w

Hicks, Mr Robert
Questions
Football, Identity cards 612w
Salmonella, Eggs 23
Tourism, Government grants 141w

Higgins, Rt Hon Terence L
Questions
Charities, VAT 428

Higher education
Freedom of expression 653-5w
Scotland 48w

Higher education administration
Wales 23w

Higher education admission
3-4w
Age participation rates 4w
Cambridge University 3-8w
Oxford University 3-8w
Student loans 489w

Hinchliffe, Mr David
Debates etc.
Water Bill, 2R (07:12:88) 377-9
Questions
Attendance allowance, Children 123-4w
Attendance allowance, Social security appeals 124w
Birds of prey, Prices 12w
Coastal protection, Expenditure 237w
Cook-chill catering, Wakefield Health Authority 82w
Council housing, Empty housing 153w
Dogs, Liability for animals 724w
EC Environment Council 153w
Energy conservation, Expenditure 327w
Food packaging, Listeria monocytogenes 339w
Greenhouse effect, Coastal areas 237-8w
Greenhouse effect, Research finance 238w
Hospital catering, Cook-chill catering 129w, 553w
House condition survey 153w
Income support, Old people's homes 596w
Inflation 297w
Listeria monocytogenes, International conferences 82w
Nuclear power stations, Power station closures 192w
Parole Review Committee, Probation & aftercare 1074
Petroleum exploration, Bristol Channel 50w
Pollution control, Industry 197w
Privatisation, Air pollution control 104w
Railway property, Trespass 661w
Railway safety, Fox hunting 566w
Residential care, Fees & charges 604w
River pollution, Yorkshire Water Authority 400-1w
Road accidents, Children 160w
Royal Society for the Protection of Birds, Data banks 206-7w
Seas & oceans, Coastal erosion 238w
Water supply disconnections, Water authorities 752w

Hind, Mr Kenneth
Debates etc.
Abortion (16:12:88) 1259
Eggs, Salmonella (16:12:88) 1277
North East Shipbuilders, Factory closures (07:12:88) 327
Prevention of Terrorism (Temporary Provisions) Bill, 2R & Money res (06:12:88) 221, 253-5
Security Service Bill, 2R & Money res (15:12:88) 1120, 1155-7
Questions
Association of Chief Police Officers 709-10w
Channel tunnel, Railway transport 563w
Council housing, Local government functions 529w
Criminal Justice Act 1988, Sentencing 285w
Defence expenditure, USSR 433
Dept of Social Security local offices, Greater London 455-6w
Foreign investment in UK, North West region 176w
Local authorities, Direct labour departments 200w
Local government services, Lancashire County Council 614w
Overseas aid, Environmental impact assessment 427w
Pornography, Children 1068
Sinclair User, Prosecutions 569-70w
Wildlife & Countryside Act 1981, Judgments 11-2w

Hinkley Point C
Departmental correspondence 583w
Inquiries 482w

Hip replacements
Costs 605w

Historic Buildings & Monuments Commission for England
153w, 261-2w, 402w

Historic Buildings & Monuments Directorate
Members' correspondence 638w

History
Dept of Trade & Industry 169w

HM Coastguard
Hartland Point 517-8w
Ramsey 517-8w

HM Inspectorate of Pollution
(09:12:88) 621-6
Air pollution control 730-2w
Manpower 618w
Polychlorinated biphenyl 13w

HM Land Registry
see Land Registry Office

HMSO
Civil service agencies 586w
Members' correspondence 502w

***Hogg, Mr Douglas**, Under-Secretary of State at the Home Office*
Debates etc.
Prevention of Terrorism (Temporary Provisions) Bill, 2R & Money res (06:12:88) 279-82
Questions
Abortion 1069
Abortion, Carlisle Hospital 713w, 1066-7
Abortion, Coroners 713w, 1066
Abortion deaths 1069
Aliens, Voting rights 462w
Animal experiments, Cosmetics 283-4w, 465w
Animal experiments, Labelling 284w
Animal welfare, Treaties 351w
Armley Prison, Death 286w
Armley Prison, Fine defaulters 285-6w
Armley Prison, Prison education services 286w
Armley Prison, Prison population 286w
Armley Prison, Prisoners on remand 755-6w
Armley Prison, Remand in custody 285w
Ashford Remand Centre, Libraries 755w
Breathalysers, Christmas 352-3w
Breathalysers, Police powers 461w
Breathalysers, Rugby 461w
Broadwater Farm estate, Convictions 1068-9
Broadwater Farm estate, Metropolitan Police 1068
Charter 88, Democracy 505-6w
Charter 88, Electoral reform 506w
Charter 88, Judiciary 506w
Complaints against police, Broadwater Farm estate 704w
Driving offences, Motor vehicle safety 284-5w
Drug abuse 716w
Drug crimes, Music 283w
Fire services, West Yorkshire Fire & Civil Defence Authority 351w
Firearms, Amnesties 507-8w
Football, Hooliganism 714w
Football, Police 709w
Forensic science, Finance 716-7w
Fraud, Mortgages 465w
Handicapped workers, Home Office 458w
Home Office, Empty property 721w
Infant Life (Preservation) Act 1929, Prison sentences 709w
Infanticide, Prison sentences 1069
Intoxicating Substances (Supply) Act 1985, Prosecutions 110w
Law enforcement, Police relations with public 724w
Lindholme Prison, Prison riots 207w
Mentally disturbed offenders, Schizophrenia 32w
Metropolitan Police, Fingerprints 715-6w
Metropolitan Police, Public relations 284w
Metropolitan Police, Road traffic control 459w
Missing persons, Greater London 30-1w
Missing persons, Police records 31w
Offensive weapons 705w
Parking, Greater London 352w

***Hogg, Mr Douglas**—continued*
Parking Enforcement Working Party 712-3w
Parking offences 508w
Parole Review Committee, Prison population 709w
Police, Efficiency scrutinies 715w
Police, Government grants 709w
Police, Leicestershire 462w
Police, Manpower 701w
Police, Recruitment 701w
Police, South Yorkshire 709w
Police & Criminal Evidence Act 1984, Arrests 289w
Police civilians, Manpower 720w
Police community liaison committees, London boroughs 458-9w
Police interrogation, Tape recorders 717w
Police national computer, Administrative delays 352w
Police national computer, Computer privacy 458w
Police records, Child care 284w
Police relations with public, Schools 701-2w
Police surgeons, Women 207w
Policewomen, Manpower 720-1w
Prescriptions, Misuse of Drugs Act 1971 722w
Prison escapes 723w
Prison medical services, Psychiatry 457-8w
Prison Officers' Association, Trade union membership 207w
Prison population 716w
Prison population, Mental patients 282-3w
Prison staff, London allowance 109w
Prisoners, AIDS 464-6w, 706w
Prisoners, Contraceptives 108w
Prisoners, Health education 108w
Prisoners, Prison employment 354-5w
Prisoners, Prison rules 354w
Prisoners, Rule 43 722w
Prisoners, Solitary confinement 712w
Prisoners' transfers, Northern Ireland 722w
Prisons, AIDS 108w
Prisons, Construction 719-20w
Prisons, Drug abuse 108w
Prisons, Food hygiene 706w
Prisons, Planning permission 110w
Protection of Animals (Amendment) Act 1988, Dog fighting 354w
Protection of Animals (Amendment) Act 1988, Law enforcement 354w
Remand in custody 755w
Road tax, Greater London 464w
Road traffic offences 508w
Road traffic police, Motorways 724w
Royal Society for the Protection of Birds, Data banks 206-7w
Smoke detection, Elderly 33w
Terrorism, Police right of search 287w
Wandsworth Prison, Prison visits 721w

Hogg, Mr Norman
Debates etc.
Electricity Bill, 2R (12:12:88) 669
Electricity Bill, 2R, Money res & Ways & means res (13:12:88) 796, 807
Scottish Enterprise (06:12:88) 197
Questions
Curriculum, Primary education 47w
Examinations, Primary education 47w
School administration, Scotland 47w
Technical education, Educational finance 47-8w

Holidays abroad
Dept of Energy 680w
Dept of the Environment 725w

Holland, Mr Stuart
Debates etc.
EC budget (05:12:88) 124-8, 135, 138, 141

Holocaust News
Malicious Communications Act 1988 640

Holt, Mr Richard
Debates etc.
Employment opportunities (05:12:88) 36
Members' facilities, Taxis (15:12:88) 1100
Questions
Business statements 1092-3
Civil service dispersal 17
Council house sales 424
Criminal Injuries Compensation Board, Administrative delays 710w
Diagnosis 548w
Double glazing 480w
Unemployment, Northern region 135w

Home Office
Empty property 721w
Handicapped workers 458w
VAT 206w
Voluntary organisations 704w

Home Robertson, Mr John
Debates etc.
Scottish Enterprise (06:12:88) 197
Transport (Scotland) Bill, 2R & Money res (14:12:88) 1049
Questions
A1, Road accidents 48w
Accident & emergency departments, Lothian Health Board 48w
Coal mining, Lothian 49w
Cockenzie power station 49w
Loch Sunart, Pollution 674w
Nuclear accidents, Pollution monitoring 289-90w
Nuclear fuel reprocessing, Sellafield 329w
Nuclear safeguards, Torness power station 104w
Nuclear safeguards, Transport of radioactive materials 104w
Plutonium, Exports 328w
Plutonium, USA 328w
Public bodies, Public appointments 211w
Roads, Scotland 48w
Scottish health boards, Public appointments 671w
Set-aside schemes, Agricultural workers 674w, 677-8w
Tied housing, Domestic rates 726w
Tobacco, Children 721w
Tobacco, Prosecutions 635w

Homelessness
198w, 617w
Calderdale 154w
Greater London 617w
Local authorities 618w
Wales 1-2
Young people 324w

Homicide
British residents abroad 37-8w
McConnell, Robert 747w
Northern Ireland 747w

Homosexuality
Prisons 108w

Hong Kong
Armed forces deployment 773w
Explosions 253w
Vietnamese refugees 38w

Hood, Mr Jimmy
Debates etc.
Electricity Bill, 2R (12:12:88) 715, 735-6
Electricity Bill, 2R, Money res & Ways & means res (13:12:88) 792-3
Transport (Scotland) Bill, 2R & Money res (14:12:88) 970, 995, 1001, 1002, 1024
Questions
British Coal Corporation 479w
Business statements 444
Coal mining, Manpower 482w
Educational administration, Scotland 637w

Hood, Mr Jimmy—continued
Electricity generation, Scotland 292w
Low flying, Compensation 499w
Low flying, Costs 499w
South Africa, Mgedezi, Tjeluvyo 315-6w

Hooliganism
Football 714w

Hordern, Sir Peter
Debates etc.
Employment opportunities (05:12:88) 29
European Council (06:12:88) 178
Questions
British Petroleum, Shareholders 177w

Hormones
Livestock (12:12:88) 746-50

Horne Committee
see Public Utilities Street Works Act 1950 Review

Horse racing
Betting 717w

Horticulture
Government grants 187w

Hospital beds
132-3w
Oldham Health Authority 362-3w
Waltham Forest Health Authority 557-8w

Hospital catering
Cook-chill catering 129w, 553w

Hospital closures
Pay incentives 556-7w

Hospital consultants
761

Hospital length of stay
Mentally ill 42w

Hospital patients
556w
Cancer 363w
Greater Manchester 362-3w
Housing benefits 123w
NHS 541-2w
Waltham Forest Health Authority 557-8w

Hospital waiting lists
Crewe Health Authority 128w
NHS finance 561w
North Western Regional Health Authority 540w
Ophthalmic services 74-5w, 446w
Scotland 442w
Trent Regional Health Authority 128w
Wales 163-4w, 561w

Hospitals
131w, 448w
Change of use 557w
Construction 554w
Epping 363-4w
Resource management initiative 548w
Yorkshire Regional Health Authority 554w

Hostels
Harrow 346w
Social security recipients 325w

Hotel & catering industry
Fees & charges 568w
Trading standards departments 568w

Hotels
Capital allowances 51w

HOTOL
Aerospace industry 173w
International cooperation 304

House condition survey
153w

House of Commons accommodation
Members 669w
Members' facilities 580w
Members' staff 580w

House of Commons chamber
Lighting 152w, 345w, 525w, 727w

House of Commons divisions
Terrorism 170

House of Commons galleries
Speaker's rulings & statements (14:12:88) 1031

House of Commons procedure
Scotland 434
Speaker's rulings & statements (12:12:88) 655, (14:12:88) 916

House of Commons questions
(07:12:88) 291-2
Costs 268w

House of Commons Select Committees
(07:12:88) 295

House of Commons (Services) Select Committee
Members' facilities 579-80w

House of Commons Standing Committees
(07:12:88) 295

House of Commons standing orders
Speaker's rulings & statements (14:12:88) 1031

House of Commons times of sittings
(07:12:88) 294

House of Fraser
Takeovers 638-9

House prices
Housing market 308
Location of industry 308-9
Personal income 627w
Repossession orders 309
South East region 628w

House renovation grants
Defective housing 271w, 411-2w
Radon gas 406w

Households
Neighbourhood watch schemes 702w

Housing
Fires 577w
Industrial wastes 406-7w
Radon gas 406-7w
Rural areas 4-5
Solar power 680-1w
Telford Development Corporation 622w
Wales 4-6, 11

Housing & handicapped
Housing Corporation 151-2w

Housing & Local Government Bill 1988/89
Questions
899-900

Housing & Planning Act 1986
Questions
626w

Housing associations
Capital investment 107w
Charities 151w
Council housing 151w
Northern Ireland 107w
Owner occupied housing 633w
Rural areas 531w

Housing benefits
122w
Handicapped 63w
Hospital patients 123w
Nottingham 321w
Pensioners 590w, 753w
Private rented housing 60w
Rental purchase 456w
Rhondda 594-5w
Social security recipients 121-2w, 319w
Social security reform 456w, 536-7w, 591w, 597w, 695w, 697w

Housing cooperatives
152w

Housing Corporation
261-2w, 531w, 633w
Housing & handicapped 151-2w

Housing Corporation—continued
Housing finance 631-3w
Manpower 13-4w

Housing Defects Act 1984
Questions
Defective housing 411-2w

Housing finance
530w
Disposable income 627w
Housing Corporation 631-3w
Wales 740w

Housing investment programmes
Government grants to local authorities 625w
Islington 404w
Local authorities 274w

Housing market
East Anglia 623-4w
House prices 308

Housing stock
273w
Council housing 273w
Scotland 295w

Housing subsidies
900
Costs 152w

Housing support grants
Scotland 295w

Howard, Mr Michael, Minister of State for Local Government
Debates etc.
Water Bill, 2R, Money res & Ways & means res (08:12:88) 518, 522-8
Questions
Anglian Water Authority 899
Beaches, EC law 906
Gun sports 906
Gun sports, Land use 905-6
Planning appeals, Hampshire 198-9w
Sea pollution, Coastal areas 630-1w
Sewage, Waste disposal 199-200w
Thames Water Authority 898-9
Water abstraction, Water authorities 750w
Water authorities, Land ownership & tenure 613w
Water pollution 906
Water pollution, Nitrates 751w
Water pollution, Woollen industry 528w
Water supply industry, Privatisation 899

Howarth, Mr George
Questions
Cervical cancer, Screening 552-3w
Engineering industries, Skill shortages 302
Prisons, Planning permission 110w
Tax allowances, Children 303w

Howarth, Mr Gerald
Questions
Greenbelt 628w

Howe, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey, Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs
Questions
Nigeria, Overseas aid 90w

Howell, Rt Hon David
Debates etc.
Electricity Bill, 2R (12:12:88) 689-93
Railway accidents, Clapham junction (12:12:88) 651
Questions
Lie detectors, Intelligence services 268-9w

Howell, Mr Ralph
Questions
Income support 125w
Income tax 456-7w
Income tax, Tax rates & bands 418w
Wheat, Prices 434w

Howells, Mr Geraint
Questions
Agricultural research, Wales 357-8w
Artificial fertilisers, Wales 357w
Bovine somatotropin, Wales 357w

Howells, Mr Geraint—continued
Butter, Intervention stocks 582w
Common sheep meat regime, Wales 7-8
Hospital waiting lists, Wales 163-4w
Industry, Wales 318w
Location of industry, Wales 91w
NHS finance, Wales 92w
Pesticides, Agricultural research 318w
Sheep premiums, Wales 357w
Welsh Development Agency 163w

Hoyle, Mr Doug
Debates etc.
European Council (06:12:88) 183
Inmos, Standing Order No 20 applications (12:12:88) 668
Questions
British Airways, Airbuses 307
Mergers, Office of Fair Trading 171w

HSE
see Health & Safety Executive

Hughes, Mr Robert
Debates etc.
EC Fisheries Council (12:12:88) 661, 662
Electricity Bill, 2R (12:12:88) 675, 687, 709-11, 742
Oral question time point of order (07:12:88) 303
Transport (Scotland) Bill, 2R & Money res (14:12:88) 971, 979, 1029
Questions
International trade 302-3
Road tax, Expenditure 518w

Hughes, Mr Robert G
Debates etc.
Eggs, Salmonella (16:12:88) 1278
Questions
Arts, Ethnic minorities 33w
Hostels, Harrow 346w
NHS finance 599w
Offences against children, Crime prevention 714w
Playgrounds, Accidents 379w
Rates & rating 894
Rates & rating, Nurses 615w
Tourist industry 213w

Hughes, Mr Roy
Debates etc.
Rate support grants, Wales (08:12:88) 452
Water Bill, 2R, Money res & Ways & means res (08:12:88) 475-7
Questions
Council tenants, Social security recipients 319-20w
Employment schemes, Newport 319w
Mental health community care, Wales 392w
Repossession orders, Newport 320w
Skill shortages, Newport 318w
Skilled workers, Recruitment 318w
Unemployment, Newport 21w

Hughes, Mr Sean
Questions
Dentists, Family practitioner committees 186-7w
Dentists, Surgical gloves 338-9w
Fraud, Mortgages 283w, 386w, 465-6w
Handicapped workers, Dept of Education & Science 164w
Handicapped workers, Dept of Employment 308-9w
Handicapped workers, Dept of Energy 331w
Handicapped workers, Dept of Health 338w
Handicapped workers, Dept of Social Security 321-2w
Handicapped workers, Dept of the Environment 277w
Handicapped workers, Dept of Trade & Industry 177w
Handicapped workers, Dept of Transport 365w
Handicapped workers, Foreign & Commonwealth Office 188w
Handicapped workers, Home Office 458w

Hughes, Mr Sean—continued
Handicapped workers, Ministry of Agriculture 240w
Handicapped workers, Ministry of Defence 466w
Handicapped workers, Northern Ireland Office 362w
Handicapped workers, Scottish Office 437w
Handicapped workers, Treasury 203w
Handicapped workers, Welsh Office 317w
Income tax, Pensioners 301w

Hughes, Mr Simon
Debates etc.
Teaching hospitals, Public petitions (12:12:88) 745
Questions
Community charge 728w
Heating, Elderly 637
Hereford Cathedral, Mappa mundi 13-4
Homelessness 617w
Inner cities initiative 166w
Nursing homes, Inner London boroughs 447w
Overseas aid 429w
Science & technology research, Equipment 9w
Squatting, Greater London 199w
Student loans, Disclosure of information 388w
Teachers, Recruitment 490w
Universities, Educational finance 649w

Human rights
China 89w

Humberside
Leukaemia 552w

Hume, Mr John
Debates etc.
Elected Authorities (Northern Ireland) Bill, 2R & Money res (05:12:88) 44, 73
European Council (06:12:88) 178
Questions
Electricity distribution, Rathlin Island 265w
Northern Ireland Housing Executive, Paramilitary forces 362w
Secondary education, Northern Ireland 746w

Hunter, Mr Andrew
Debates etc.
Prevention of Terrorism (Temporary Provisions) Bill, 2R & Money res (06:12:88) 209, 247-9
Railway accidents, Clapham junction (12:12:88) 649
Questions
Driving offences, Disqualifications 208w

Hunterston power station
328-9w
Plutonium 328w

Hurd, Rt Hon Douglas, Secretary of State for the Home Department
Debates etc.
Oral questions, Ministers (15:12:88) 1098-9
Prevention of Terrorism (Temporary Provisions) Bill, 2R & Money res (06:12:88) 207-15, 219, 222
Security Service Bill, 2R & Money res (15:12:88) 1104-13, 1118, 1121
Questions
"Animal Procedures Committee Annual Report, 1987" 112-3w
Association of Chief Police Officers 709-10w
BBC, Broadcasting 713w
Bombings, Guildford 113w
Boundary Commission for England, Buckingham 289w
Crimes of violence 1072
Crimes of violence, Rural areas 1071
Criminal Injuries Compensation Board, Administrative delays 710w
Data Protection Act 1984, Intelligence services 31w
Extradition, Italy 722-3w

Hurd, Rt Hon Douglas—continued
Fiore, Roberto, Extradition 723w
Forensic science 1070-1
Forensic science, Civil service manpower 703-4w, 1070
Identity cards 1072-4
Immigration, EC action 576-7w
Immigration appeals, Members 578w
Independent Broadcasting Authority, Tax yields 508-9w
Intelligence services, Accountability 33w
Intelligence services, National security 463-4w
Interception warrants, National security 463w
Metropolitan Police 107w
Metropolitan Police, Road traffic control 507w
MI5 722w
Official Secrets Bill 1988/89 706-7w
Police, Health 704w
Police, Manpower 1071
Police Federation of England & Wales 718w
Police national computer, Emergency planning 506-7w
Prevention of Terrorism (Temporary Provisions) Bill 1988/89 719w
Public order, Counter culture 1072
Public order policing, Students 32-3w, 461w
Remand centres 701w
Terrorism, Arrests 287-8w
Terrorism, EC countries 711w
Terrorism, European Court of Human Rights 711w
VAT, Home Office 206w
Video recordings, Surveillance 1071-2
Young offenders, Parent & child 1077-8

Hybrid Bills
(07:12:88) 293-4

Hypothermia
Death 85w
Elderly 183w, 546-7w
Publicity 449-50w
Scotland 444-5w

IAEA
see International Atomic Energy Agency

IBA
see Independent Broadcasting Authority

Identity cards
352w, 1072-4
Football 14w, 612-3w
Football League 728w

ILEA
see Inner London Education Authority

Illsley, Mr Eric
Debates etc.
Electricity Bill, 2R (12:12:88) 730-2
Questions
Balance of payments 298w
Coal mining, Accidents 41w
Coal mining, Manpower 104w
Football, Identity cards 612w
Mine accidents, Coal mining 232w, 310w
Mine safety, Coal mining 231w
Nurses, Career structure 543w
Police Federation of England & Wales 718w

ILO
see International Labour Organisation

IMF
see International Monetary Fund

Immigrant detainees
Police custody 459w

Immigration
EC action 576-7w

Immigration Act 1971
Questions
459-60w

Immigration Act 1988
Questions
459-60w, 509w

Immigration appeals
Costs 386w
Genetics 579w
Members 578w

Immigration controls
Genetics 460-1w
Immigration officers 459w

Immigration officers
386w
Immigration controls 459w

Immigration (Restricted Right of Appeal against Deportation) (Exemption) (No 2) Order 1988
Questions
509w

Immigration rules
Children's rights 708w

Imports
Animal feed 581w
Hazardous wastes 12w
Personal income 502w

Income
National Rivers Authority 280-1w
Privatisation 299w
Water authorities 277w

Income & Corporation Taxes Act 1988
Questions
414-5w, 422w

Income support
125w, 452w, 700w
Automatic credit transfer 753-4w
Community charge 728w
Northern Ireland 362w
Northern region 453-4w
Old people's homes 596w
Pensioners 589w
Residential care of children 383w
Severe weather payments 451w
Social security recipients 536w
Young people 595-6w
Youth training scheme 325w

Income tax
456-7w, 500w
Community charge 616w
Pensioners 52w, 301w, 422w
Personal income 100-1w
Personal tax allowances 499w, 501w
Poverty trap 415w
Separate taxation of wife's earnings 416w
Tax allowances 644w
Tax rates & bands 303w, 416-8w, 500w
Tax thresholds 303w
Tax yields 53w

Income tax on investment incomes
Tax rates & bands 416w

Incontinence aids
Residential care 336w

Independent Broadcasting Authority
111w, 462-3w
Tax yields 508-9w

Independent local radio
180w

Independent Television Commission
209w

India
Overseas aid 427w
Primary education 427w

Indirect taxation
Tax harmonisation 99w

Industrial accidents
Industrial diseases 474-5w

Industrial democracy
EC action 40w

Industrial Development Board for Northern Ireland
679w, 746w

Industrial diseases
Industrial accidents 474-5w

Industrial disputes
Lost working days 147w
Nurses 756-7

Industrial energy prices
Electricity tariffs 330-1w, 635-6
Gas tariffs 632-3

Industrial health & safety
International Labour Organisation 42w
Youth training scheme 143w

Industrial injuries
Industrial training schemes 670w

Industrial Injuries Advisory Council
532w

Industrial investment
57-8w, 93w, 311-2
Manufacturing industries 57-8w

Industrial production
Manufacturing industries 171w
Textile industry 673w

Industrial research
Contracts 170w
Research finance 168w

Industrial training
213w, 301-2
EC grants & loans 758-9w
Textile industry 142w
Training & enterprise councils 151-2
Women 146-7w

Industrial training schemes
644-5w
Industrial injuries 670w

Industrial wastes
Housing 406-7w
River pollution 275-6w
Waste disposal 30w

Industry
Interest rates 173w
Pollution control 197w
Productivity 137w
Wales 318w

Infant Life (Preservation) Act 1929
Questions
505w, 1069
Convictions 712w
Law reform 505w
Prison sentences 709w
Prosecutions 662w

Infant mortality
448w

Infanticide
Prison sentences 1069

Inflation
58w, 101w, 297-8w, 422, 428-9
Group of Seven 302w, 428
Interest rates 299-300w
Mortgage interest rates 429
Public expenditure 298w

Information technology
Science & technology research 168w

Ingram, Mr Adam
Debates etc.
Scottish Enterprise (06:12:88) 196-7
Questions
National Engineering Laboratory, Consultants 26w
National Engineering Laboratory, Planning authorities 260w
Water authorities, Land ownership & tenure 613w

Initial teacher training
102w

Injuries
Demonstrations 32-3w

Inland Revenue
417-8w
Tax evasion 55-6w

Inmos
Standing Order No 20 applications (12:12:88) 668

Inner cities initiative
166w
North West region 166-7w
Private sector 170w

Inner city areas
Central-local government relations 298
Public statues 36w
Training 297-8
Vacant land 623w

Inner city school compacts
150w

Inner London boroughs
Arts 388w
Nursing homes 447w
Road traffic 1-2w
Vocational guidance 473-4w

Inner London Education Authority
199w, 261-2w, 473-4w, 490-1w

Inner London Staff Commission
Public appointments 490-1w

Inquiries
Coventry four 588w
Hinkley Point C 482w
Tobacco duties 422w

Insolvency
Electricity supply industry 372w
Redundancy pay 148w, 516-7w

Insolvency Service
397w

Institute of Directors
Small businesses 138w

Institute of Environmental Health Officers
706w

Institute of Food Research
238-9w, 655w

Insurance
Child workers 231-2w
EC action 745w

Intelligence services
265w, (15:12:88) 1104-90
Accountability 33w
Appropriation accounts 52w
Data Protection Act 1984 31w
Lie detectors 268-9w
Military intelligence 52w
National security 463-4w

Interception warrants
(15:12:88) 1104-90
National security 463w

Inter-city rail transport
Crime prevention 283w

Interest charges
National debt 305-6w

Interest rates
299w, 422-3
Agriculture 637w
Confederation of British Industry 430-1
Exchange rates 299-300w
Export promotion 305-6
Family income 744w
Industry 173w
Inflation 299-300w
International trade 303-4
Tax rates & bands 419-20, 744w
Wales 6-8

Intergovernmental Agreement
56-7w

International Atomic Energy Agency
332w, 396w, 749w

International conferences
Listeria monocytogenes 82w
Ozone layer 619w

International cooperation
Defence contracts 585w
Environment protection 198w
Extradition 641
HOTOL 304

International Fund for Animal Welfare
730w

International Labour Office
see International Labour Organisation

International Labour Organisation
Industrial health & safety 42w

International Monetary Fund
297w, 643w

International organisations
Official secrets 487-8w

International trade
302-3
Interest rates 303-4
Overseas trade 26w
Sterling 303

Intervention Board
29w, 240-1w
Computer applications 16-7, 28-9w

Intervention Board for Agricultural Produce
see Intervention Board

Intervention stocks
Butter 582w
EC free food scheme 119-20w

Interviews
Restart programme 310w

Intoxicating Substances (Supply) Act 1985
Questions
569-70w
Prosecutions 110w

Invalid care allowances
Social security benefits rules 383w

Invalidity benefits
Social security benefits uprating 326w

Investment
Financial services 397w

Invisible exports
Foreign tourists 141-2w
Tourism 154-5

IPE
192-3w

Iran
Visas 748-9w

Iraq
Diplomatic service 38w, 570w

Iron & steel industry
174w
EC grants & loans 494w
Employment opportunities 528w
Research finance (13:12:88) 884

Iron Casting (Scientific Research Levy) (Abolition) Order 1988
Debates etc.
(13:12:88) 884

Irvine, Mr Michael
Debates etc.
Electricity Bill, 2R, Money res & Ways & means res (13:12:88) 824-5
Questions
Hospitals, Resource management initiative 548w

Irving, Mr Charles
Questions
Gloucestershire Regiment, Northern Ireland 745w

Islington
Housing investment programmes 404w

Italy
Extradition 722-3w

Jack, Mr Michael
Debates etc.
Electricity Bill, 2R, Money res & Ways & means res (13:12:88) 843-5
Questions
Advanced gas-cooled reactors 329w

Jack, Mr Michael*—*continued
Arts finance 37w
Challenger tanks 66w
Child benefit 457w
Computers in schools 758-9w
HOTOL, International cooperation 304
Official engagements 492w, 656w
Profitability, North West region 429-30
RAE Farnborough 773w
Rain forests 643-4
Rape, Sentencing 282w
Road signs 161w
Royal Aircraft Establishment, Civil service manpower 772w
Royal Aircraft Establishment, Defence land 772w
Unemployment, North West region 155-6

Jackson, Craig
340w

***Jackson, Mr Robert**, Under-Secretary of State for Education and Science*
Questions
AIDS, Research finance 648w
Business & Technician Education Council 649w
Cambridge University, Higher education admission 3-8w
Education (No 2) Act 1986 653-5w
Further education colleges, Educational administration 648w
Handicapped students, Student grants 386w, 490w
Higher education admission, Age participation rates 4w
Mature students 3-4w
National Union of Students 10w
Natural Environment Research Council, Voluntary work 11w
Science & technology research, Equipment 9w
Science & technology research, Research finance 342w, 648w
Science & technology research, Shetland 573w
Scottish Marine Biological Association, Research finance 44w
Seas & oceans, Research finance 650w
Social science, Research 489w
"Strategy for the Science Base" 572w
Student grants, Parental contributions 757-8w
Student grants, Student numbers 386-7w
Student loans, Disclosure of information 388w
Student loans, Higher education admission 489w
Student loans, Mature students 7-8w
Student unions 10w
Student Unions Review 341-2w
Student Unions Review, Questionnaires 10w, 342w
Universities, Educational finance 649w
Universities, Science education 341w
Universities, Veterinary services 8-9w

Janman, Mr Tim
Debates etc.
Electricity Bill, 2R, Money res & Ways & means res (13:12:88) 837-8
Questions
Employment Training, Transport & General Workers' Union 166-7
Rates & rating, Nurses 615w
Robbery, Sentencing 705w

Janner, Mr Greville
Debates etc.
Multifibre arrangement (09:12:88) 598
Questions
British Coal Corporation 479w
Business statements 438, 1094-5
Immigration appeals, Genetics 579w
Malicious Communications Act 1988, Holocaust News 640
Missing persons, Greater London 30-1w
Missing persons, Police records 31w
Smith houses, Leicester 904
Youth training scheme, Ethnic minorities 608-9w, 669-70w, 741w

Japan
Chlorofluorocarbons 630w
Overseas trade 645w
Whisky 173w

Jessel, Mr Toby
Debates etc.
EC Fisheries Council (12:12:88) 663
Sports Council (16:12:88) 1279-81, 1284, 1286
Questions
Local plans 901

Jews
Political refugees 1077
USSR 350w

Jobclubs
141w

John, Brynmor
Members' deaths (14:12:88) 891

John, Mr Brynmor
Questions
Pollution control, Wales 10-1

Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Questions
Dairy products, New Zealand 430w
Salmonella, Eggs 768-9w

Johnston, Sir Russell
Questions
Kampuchea, Overseas aid 426w

Jones, Mr Barry
Debates etc.
Rate support grants, Wales (08:12:88) 450, 456
Water Bill, 2R, Money res & Ways & means res (08:12:88) 465-73
Questions
Common sheep meat regime, Wales 8-9
Pollution control, Wales 11

Jones, Mr Gwilym
Debates etc.
Rate support grants, Wales (08:12:88) 452
Questions
Housing finance, Wales 740w
PICKUP, Wales 9
Rented housing, Wales 2

Jones, Mr Ieuan Wyn
Debates etc.
Employment opportunities (05:12:88) 34
Questions
Elderly, Medical treatments 317w
Elderly, Wales 90-1w
Employment Training, Take-up 136w
Sewage, Pollution control 624-5w

Jones, Mr Martyn
Debates etc.
Water Bill, 2R, Money res & Ways & means res (08:12:88) 506-8
Questions
Block grant, Clwyd 25w
Children, Poverty 20w
Clay Pigeon Shooting Association, Town & Country Planning General Development Order 1988 617w
Interest rates 299w
Nature conservation, EC action 347w
Nature reserves, Land acquisition 347-8w
Security industry 718w
Water authorities, Land ownership & tenure 348w

Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Questions
Bovine somatotropin, Agricultural land 431w
Lancaster canal, Repairs & maintenance 99w

Journalists
Press conferences 297w

Judgments
Wildlife & Countryside Act 1981 11-2w

Judiciary
Charter 88 506w
Ethnic groups 662-3w

Junior Ministers
656w

Justices' clerks
286w
London allowance 286-7w
Pay 286w

Kampuchea
Art works 350w
Overseas aid 426w
Peace negotiations 748w
United Nations 40w

Keeni Meeni Services
Advertising 686w

Kennedy, Mr Charles
Debates etc.
Employment opportunities (05:12:88) 30
North East Shipbuilders, Factory closures (07:12:88) 322
Public expenditure, Scotland (13:12:88) 775-6
Scottish Enterprise (06:12:88) 201
Questions
Electrical safety, Plugs & sockets 297
Heating, Elderly 637

Kent County Council
244w

Key, Mr Robert
Debates etc.
Water Bill, 2R, Money res & Ways & means res (08:12:88) 488
Questions
Clergy, Community charge 399w
Computer software 259w
Patients' transport, Air transport 554w
Police relations with public, Schools 701-2w
Prisoners, Contraceptives 108w
Prisoners, Health education 108w
Prisons, AIDS 108w
Prisons, Drug abuse 108w
Public order, Counter culture 1072
Salmonella, Eggs 21
Stonehenge, Tourism 614w
Structure plans, Wiltshire 406w

Khmer Rouge
40w

Kilfedder, Mr James
Debates etc.
European Council (06:12:88) 179
Prevention of Terrorism (Temporary Provisions) Bill, 2R & Money res (06:12:88) 236-8
Questions
Ryan, Patrick, Extradition 912-3
Sewage, Waste disposal 399-400w

Kindertransport Group
1077

King, Mr Roger
Debates etc.
Electricity Bill, 2R (12:12:88) 733-5
Security Service Bill, 2R & Money res (15:12:88) 1184
Water Bill, 2R (07:12:88) 403
Questions
Broadwater Farm estate, Metropolitan Police 1068
Income support, Youth training scheme 325w
Lost working days, Industrial disputes 147w
Motor vehicles, Road accidents 661w
Neighbourhood watch schemes 703w
Railway fares, Greater London 245w

***King, Rt Hon Tom**, Secretary of State for Northern Ireland*
Debates etc.
Elected Authorities (Northern Ireland) Bill, 2R & Money res (05:12:88) 38-47, 69, 71, 82-3, 102
Fair Employment (Northern Ireland) Bill, 1R (15:12:88) 1102

***King, Rt Hon Tom**—continued*
Questions
Gloucestershire Regiment, Northern Ireland 745w
Ministers, Northern Ireland 678-80w
Police & Criminal Evidence (Northern Ireland) Order 1988 747w

Kingsnorth
Coal fired power stations 375-6w, 684-5w

Kinnock, Rt Hon Neil
Debates etc.
European Council (06:12:88) 174, 186
Ryan, Patrick, Extradition (13:12:88) 769
Questions
Arms control, USSR 432-3
Eggs, Salmonella 1078-9
Ryan, Patrick, Extradition 764-6
Teachers, Shortage subjects 168

Kirkhope, Mr Timothy
Questions
Organ donor cards 549-50w

Kirkwood, Mr Archy
Debates etc.
EC Fisheries Council (12:12:88) 666
Multifibre arrangement (09:12:88) 558, 591-4, 618
Questions
A10 aircraft, Air accidents 468w
AIDS, Deaf 691w
Charter 88, Democracy 505-6w
Computer privacy, Dept of Social Security 695-6w
Dept of Social Security, Computers in Government departments 60-1w
Employment Training, Day care of children 133w
Excise duties, Lead free petrol 300w
Family credit, Expenditure 319w
HM Inspectorate of Pollution, Manpower 618w
Hospitals, Epping 363-4w
Housing benefits 122w
Multifibre arrangement, China 179w, 646-7w
Radioactive waste disposal, Costs 636
Rain forests, Overseas aid 644-6
Registered Homes Act 1984 765-6w
Residential care, Licensing 672w
Social security payments, Automatic credit transfer 62w
"Strategy for the Science Base" 572w
VAT, Funerals 501w
Widows, Age 694w
Widows' benefits, Pensions 694-5w
Widows' benefits, Social security recipients 693w

KMS
see Keeni Meeni Services

Knapman, Mr Roger
Debates etc.
Water Bill, 2R (07:12:88) 379-81
Questions
Arts finance 33-4w
Business statements 1094
Pravda, Government achievements 170-1

Knight, Mr Greg
Questions
Broadcasting controls, Satellite broadcasting 706w
"Export of Works of Art Annual Report 1987/88" 255w
Food additives 239w
M1 657-8w
M1, Road accidents 244w
M1, Road signs 658w
M1, Road works 658w
M69, Road works 95-6w
Motorways, Road works 95w
Ozone layer, International conferences 619w
Rolls-Royce Aeroengines, Aircraft engines 297

Knight, Dame Jill
Questions
Health education 758
Palestine Liberation Organisation, Peace negotiations 1079
Railway accidents, Clapham junction 764

Knowles, Mr Michael
Questions
Housing Corporation, Housing finance 631-3w
Inner cities initiative 166w

Knox, Mr David
Questions
Council house sales 625w
Interest rates, Inflation 299-300w
NHS, Hospital patients 541-2w
Prison population 716w
Roads, Expenditure 7

Kuwait Investment Office
177w

Labelling
Animal experiments 284w
Clothing 345w

Labour market
School leaving 214w
Unemployment 378w

Labour Party
159-60, 424-5, 891-3

Lambeth
Restart programme 148w

Lambie, Mr David
Debates etc.
Public expenditure, Scotland (13:12:88) 778
Transport (Scotland) Bill, 2R & Money res (14:12:88) 1035

Lamond, Mr James
Debates etc.
Employment opportunities (05:12:88) 32
Multifibre arrangement (09:12:88) 575-9, 610
Questions
Hospital beds, Oldham Health Authority 362-3w
NHS finance, North Western Regional Health Authority 126w
Oldham Health Authority, Capital investment 74w
Oldham Health Authority, Ophthalmic services 74-5w
Regional aid, North West region 300
Salmonella, Eggs 21-2

Lamont, Rt Hon Norman, Financial Secretary to the Treasury
Debates etc.
Consolidated Fund Bill, 1R (13:12:88) 874-5
Questions
Additional personal allowance 53-4w, 417-8w
Additional personal allowance, One parent families 55w
Business expansion scheme, Private rented housing 307w
Capital allowances, Hotels 51w
Capital gains tax, Shares 55w
Charitable donations 303-4w
Child benefit 457w
Corporation tax, Tax yields 301w
Disposable income 423w
Earned income, Women 415w
Group of Seven, Inflation 428
Growish, Company investigations 422w
Income tax 456-7w, 500w
Income tax, Pensioners 52w, 301w, 422w
Income tax, Personal income 100-1w
Income tax, Personal tax allowances 499w, 501w
Income tax, Poverty trap 415w
Income tax, Separate taxation of wife's earnings 416w
Income tax, Tax rates & bands 416-8w, 500w

Lamont, Rt Hon Norman—continued
Income tax, Tax yields 53w
Income tax on investment incomes, Tax rates & bands 416w
Inflation 297w, 428-9
Inflation, Mortgage interest rates 429
Inland Revenue, Tax evasion 55-6w
Intelligence services, Appropriation accounts 52w
Intelligence services, Military intelligence 52w
Life insurance, Tax yields 418-9w
Life insurance, Taxation 417-8w
Married personal allowance, Average earnings 53w
Mortgage interest rates, Tax yields 424w
Mortgage relief 54w
National insurance contributions, Employees' contributions 54-5w
Negative income tax 416w
Negative income tax, Costs 306w
Oil revenues, North Sea oil 299w
Payroll deduction scheme, Charitable donations 421w
Payroll deduction scheme, Charities 421w
Pension funds 423w
Pensions, Occupational pensions 423-4w
Pensions, Tax allowances 420w
Personal equity plans, Take-up 52w
Personal tax allowances 417w
Personal tax allowances, Married people 52-3w
Personal tax allowances, Single people 417w
Personal taxation, Tax reform 302w
Privatisation 425-6
Privatisation, Advertising 423w
Privatisation, Shares 301w
Profit sharing 100w
"Residence in the United Kingdom" 300-1w
Separate taxation of wife's earnings, Tax reform 53w
Take-home pay, Average earnings 304w
Tax allowances, Children 303w
Tax allowances, Training 54w
Tax collection offices, Londonderry 51-2w
Tax evasion, Company investigations 414-5w
Tax rates & bands, Income tax 303w
Tax thresholds, Child benefit 418w
Tax thresholds, Income tax 303w
Taxation, EC internal trade 417w
Taxation, Environmental policy 301w
Tobacco duties, Inquiries 422w

Lancashire
Unemployment 135w

Lancashire County Council
Local government services 614w

Lancaster canal
Repairs & maintenance 99w

Lance missiles
73w

Land acquisition
Forestry Commission 369-70w
Government departments 402w
Nature reserves 347-8w
Scotland 369w
Seaton Barracks 466-7w
Thames Water Authority 898-9
Water authorities 413w
Welsh Water Authority 22w, 358w

Land drainage
Rivers 515w

Land ownership & tenure
Water authorities 348w, 613w
Water supply industry 22w
Welsh Water Authority 21-2w

Land reclamation
Government assistance 263-4w

Land registration
NHS 365w

Land Registry
see Land Registry Office

Land Registry Office
Administrative delays 569w
Members' correspondence 663w

Land use
Gun sports 199w, 905-6
Property transfer 621w
Waste disposal 263-4w

Land values
Forestry Commission 370w

Lang, Mr Ian, Minister of State for Scotland
Debates etc.
Electricity Bill, 2R (12:12:88) 740-4
Electricity Bill, 2R, Money res & Ways & means res (13:12:88) 797
Questions
Cockenzie power station 49w
Community charge, Driver & Vehicle Licensing Centre 485w
Community charge, Millport 444w
Community opportunities, Further education 636w
Community opportunities, Glasgow 636w
Electricity generation, Scotland 292w
Employment Training, Scotland 485w
Regional development grants, Codes of practice 443w
Regional development grants, Employment opportunities 442-3w
Regional development grants, Fraud 442-4w
Salmon, Rates & rating 445w
Textile industry, Industrial production 673w
Training Agency 635-6w
Training Agency, Voluntary projects programme 635-6w
Voluntary projects programme, Glasgow 636-7w
Voluntary projects programme, Recruitment 637w
Youth training scheme, Dumfries & Galloway 43-4w
Youth training scheme, Lothian 487w
Youth training scheme, Scotland 113w, 486w
Youth unemployment, Scotland 485w

Languages
Departmental publications 322w
UK trade with EC 311

Languages education
Scotland 438-9w, 784w
Teacher training 640w
Teachers 490w, 640w, 784w

Laser isotope separation
Research 749w

Latham, Mr Michael
Questions
Bottesford bypass, Road construction 523-4w
Business statements 440
Ethiopia, Peace negotiations 39w
Maternity services, Leicestershire Health Authority 551w
Maternity services, Southport 339w
Prison staff, London allowance 109w
Schools, Arts 489w

Law enforcement
Police relations with public 724w
Protection of Animals (Amendment) Act 1988 354w

Law officers
Belgium 641

"Law on Child Care & Family Services White Paper"
690w

Law reform
Conservation of Seals Act 1970 369w
Infant Life (Preservation) Act 1929 505w
Nurseries & Childminders Regulation Act 1948 690w
Shares 179-80w
Shops Act 1950 505w

Law Society
639

Law Society of Scotland
440w

Lawrence, Mr Ivan
Debates etc.
Prevention of Terrorism (Temporary Provisions) Bill, 2R & Money res (06:12:88) 229-33, 263, 265
Security Service Bill, 2R & Money res (15:12:88) 1147-9, 1176
Questions
Prison sentences 1075
Road traffic police, Motorways 724w
Ryan, Patrick, Extradition 911-2

Lawson, Rt Hon Nigel, Chancellor of the Exchequer
Questions
Average earnings 421-2
Child benefit, Tax burden 308w
Confederation of British Industry, Interest rates 430-1
Crown Estate Commissioners, Financial targets 502-3w
Developing countries 643w
EC Finance Council 743w
European monetary system, EC Finance Council 304w
Exchange control, Developing countries 643w
Family income, Interest rates 744w
HMSO, Civil service agencies 586w
Inflation 422
Interest rates 422-3
International Monetary Fund 297w
Mortgage interest rates 423
Personal income, Child benefit 59-60w
Price increases 423
Privatisation 422
Tax allowances, Income tax 644w
Tax rates & bands, Electricity tariffs 420-1
Tax rates & bands, Interest rates 419-20
Tax rates & bands, Mortgage interest rates 420-1
Tax rates & bands, Personal income 422
Tax rates & bands, Price increases 419-20

Lead
Gun sports 14w

Lead free petrol
902-4
District health authorities 129w
Excise duties 300w

Leadbitter, Mr Ted
Debates etc.
British Shipbuilders, Privatisation (14:12:88) 941-3
North East Shipbuilders, Factory closures (07:12:88) 323

Leader of the Opposition
Security 343w

Leasehold housing
North West region 621w

LEB
see London Electricity Board

Lee, Mr John, Under-Secretary of State for Employment
Questions
Average earnings, Greater Manchester 233-4w
Average earnings, Non-metropolitan districts 743w
"British Tourist Authority Annual Report 1987/88" 141w
Career development loan scheme, Handicapped 742w

Lee, Mr John—continued
Cost of living, Economic regions 149w
Disabled Persons (Employment) Act 1944 475w
Employment 135w
Employment, EC countries 134-5w
Employment, Non-metropolitan districts 742w
Employment opportunities, Handicapped workers 140-1w, 149w
England for Excellence award scheme, English Tourist Board 471w
Foreign tourists 142w
Foreign tourists, Far East 139w
Foreign tourists, Foreign exchange 155
Foreign tourists, Invisible exports 141-2w
Foreign tourists, Transport 742w
Handicapped workers 140w
Handicapped workers, Dept of Employment 308-9w
Hard core unemployed, Greater London 138-9w
Jobclubs 141w
Labour market, Unemployment 378w
Lost working days, Industrial disputes 147w
Manufacturing industries, North West region 147w
Manufacturing industries, Northern region 471w
Pay, Teachers 309w
Personal income 150w
Restart programme 148w
Restart programme, Interviews 310w
Restart programme, Lambeth 148w
Service industries, Manpower 133w
Statistics 135w
Tourism 148w
Tourism, Balance of payments 155
Tourism, Capital investment 147w, 236w
Tourism, Government grants 41-2w, 141w
Tourism, Invisible exports 154-5
Tourism, Urban areas 147w
Tourist industry 41w, 141w, 213w
Tourist industry, Low pay 155
Tourist industry, Manpower 236w
Tourist industry, Private investment 471w
Tourist information, Opening hours 154
Tourist information, Tourist boards 154
Training Commission, Compensation 149w
Unemployment 537-8w
Unemployment, East Midlands 135w
Unemployment, Economic regions 134w
Unemployment, Greater London 134w, 136w
Unemployment, Lancashire 135w
Unemployment, Lincolnshire 135-6w
Unemployment, North West region 155-6
Unemployment, Northern region 135w
Unemployment, Rural areas 742-3w
Unemployment, Statistics 135w, 234-6w, 378w, 537w
Unemployment, Stretford 233w
Unemployment, West Midlands 150w
Unemployment, Yorkshire & Humberside 134w
Uniform business rate, North West region 156
Vacancies 470-1w
Vacancies, Greater London 148w, 378w
Vacancies, Greater Manchester 216-32w
Youth unemployment, Eccles 134w

Leeds
Business sponsorship incentive scheme 34w

Leeds City Council
Rate support grants 272w, 412-3w

Leeds Western Health Authority
Public appointments 339w

Legal advice & assistance
Scotland (14:12:88) 1057

Legal aid
639-40
Bradford 639-40
Scotland 440w, (14:12:88) 1057

Legal Aid (Scotland) Act 1986 Amendment Regulations 1988
Debates etc.
(14:12:88) 1057

Legal costs
Planning appeals 626w

Legal profession
Defence procurement 157w
National Rivers Authority 752w

Legal remedies
Financial Intermediaries' Managers' & Brokers' Association 567w

Leicester
298
Council house waiting lists 901-2
Council housing 901-2
Police (08:12:88) 545
Smith houses 904

Leicester City Council
904

Leicestershire
Police 462w

Leicestershire Health Authority
Maternity services 551w

Leigh, David
663-4w

Leigh, Mr Edward
Debates etc.
Elected Authorities (Northern Ireland) Bill, 2R & Money res (05:12:88) 60, 74-5
Water Bill, 2R (07:12:88) 349, 373, 374, 394, 398-9
Questions
Crown Suppliers, Privatisation 273w
Unemployment, Lincolnshire 135-6w

Leighton, Mr Ron
Debates etc.
Eggs, Salmonella (16:12:88) 1273
Questions
Employment Training 538w
Employment Training, Manpower 538w
Employment Training, Scotland 485w
Employment Training, Wales 561w
Employment Training, Wandsworth 538w
Indirect taxation, Tax harmonisation 99w
Labour market, Unemployment 378w
Vacancies 470-1w
Youth training scheme 472w
Youth training scheme, Bridging allowances 609w
Youth training scheme, Social security benefits reductions 610w

Lester, Mr Jim
Debates etc.
Employment opportunities (05:12:88) 28
Questions
Football, Hooliganism 714w
Football, Identity cards 14w
Pensions, Tax allowances 420w
Taxation, Standard of living 125w

Lestor, Miss Joan
Questions
Children, Advisory services 541w
Developing countries, EC internal trade 428w
Immigration rules, Children's rights 708w
Income support, Northern Ireland 362w
Organisation for Economic Cooperation & Development, Overseas aid 27w
Overseas aid 643
Overseas trade, Caribbean 174-5w
Police records, Child care 284w
Youth unemployment, Eccles 134w

Leukaemia
Humberside 552w

Level crossings
Railway safety 245w

Lewis, Clive Warren
414-5w

Lewis, Mr Terry
Questions
Ambulance services, Manpower 607w
Medical appeal tribunals, Administrative delays 597w

Lewis & Tucker
414-5w

Lewisham & North Southwark Health Authority
450w

Leyton
664w

Liability for animals
Dogs 724w

Libraries
Ashford Remand Centre 755w

Licensing
Aldrin 202w
Financial services 260w
Power stations 371w
Residential care 672w
Tree felling 678w

Licensing laws
Scotland 444w

Lie detectors
Government Communications Headquarters 268-9w
Intelligence services 268-9w

Life insurance
Tax yields 418-9w
Taxation 417-8w

***Lightbown, Mr David**, a Lord Commissioner*
Debates etc.
Elected Authorities (Northern Ireland) Bill, 2R & Money res (05:12:88) 53

Lighting
House of Commons chamber 152w, 345w, 525w, 727w
Sports facilities (16:12:88) 1279-86

***Lilley, Mr Peter**, Economic Secretary to the Treasury*
Questions
Balance of payments 298w
Bank loans 500-1w
Building societies 588w
Building Societies Act 1986 644w
Car tax 306w
Charities, Tax evasion 428
Charities, VAT 427-8
Council house sales 424-5
Coventry four, Arms embargoes 587-8w
Coventry four, Bail 588w
Coventry four, Inquiries 588w
Coventry four, Passports 588w
Credit 203w
Deposit taking institutions 55w
Excise duties, Lead free petrol 300w
HMSO, Members' correspondence 502w
Indirect taxation, Tax harmonisation 99w
Inflation 58w, 101w, 297-8w
Inflation, Group of Seven 302w
Interest rates 299w
Interest rates, Exchange rates 299-300w
Interest rates, Inflation 299-300w
Marcos, Ferdinand, Fraud 99w
Mortgage interest rates 423-5
Motor vehicles, Taxation 307-8w
National debt, Interest charges 305-6w
New businesses, VAT registration 306w
Owner occupied housing 424
Public sector borrowing requirement 358w

***Lilley, Mr Peter**—continued*
Public sector debt 304w
Tax allowances, Smokeless fuels 203w
Tax avoidance, Platinum 359w
Tobacco duties, Tax harmonisation 58-9w
VAT, Construction 587w
VAT, Funerals 501w
VAT, Medical equipment 586-7w
VAT, NHS 502w, 587w
VAT zero rated goods, Village halls 59w

Limited list prescribing
Prescription charges 604-5w

Lincolnshire
Unemployment 135-6w

Lindholme Prison
Prison riots 207w

Listed buildings
402w

Listeria monocytogenes
Food packaging 339w
Food poisoning 603w
International conferences 82w

Literature
Children 35w

Liverpool
Business sponsorship incentive scheme 34w
Truscon low rise houses 14-5w

Liverpool City Council
14-5w
Employment Training 213-4w

Livestock
Hormones (12:12:88) 746-50

Livingstone, Mr Ken
Questions
Army in Northern Ireland 687-8w
Army in Northern Ireland, Armed forces strength 687w
Army in Northern Ireland, Firearms 773w
Army in Northern Ireland, Sub-machine guns 686w
14 Intelligence Company, Armed forces deployment 686-7w
Keeni Meeni Services, Advertising 686w
McConnell, Robert, Homicide 747w
Neave, Airey, Members' correspondence 656w
Police firearms, Theft 679w
Prisoners' transfers, Northern Ireland 722w
Rate support grants, Brent 618w
Royal Ulster Constabulary, Manpower 746-7w

Livsey, Mr Richard
Debates etc.
Rate support grants, Wales (08:12:88) 452
Water Bill, 2R (07:12:88) 339, 357-60
Questions
Housing, Rural areas 4-5
National Rivers Authority, Income 280-1w
Salmonella, Eggs 21
Water authorities, Income 277w
Water authorities, Public sector assets 621w
Water authorities, Public sector borrowing 348w

Lloyd, Sir Ian
Debates etc.
Electricity Bill, 2R (12:12:88) 697-702
Questions
Breathalysers, Police powers 461w
Breathalysers, Rugby 461w

***Lloyd, Mr Peter**, Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Dept of Social Security*
Questions
Additional pensions, Pensioners 753w
Attendance allowance, Administrative delays 533-4w
Availability for work, Medical certificates 456w

***Lloyd, Mr Peter**—continued*
Board & lodging charges, Social security reform 698-9w
Child benefit 382w
Child benefit, School leaving 537w
Child benefit, Social security recipients 381w
Computer privacy, Dept of Social Security 695-6w
Dept of Social Security, Civil service dispersal 597w
Dept of Social Security, Computers in Government departments 60-2w
Dept of Social Security, Departmental publications 452w
Dept of Social Security local offices, Computers in Government departments 61-2w
Dept of Social Security local offices, Greater London 455-6w
Departmental forms, Dept of Social Security 322-4w
Departmental publications, Dept of Social Security 322w
Dietary allowances, Social security recipients 592w
Disposable income 700w
Earnings rules, One parent families 454w
Elderly, Personal income 320w
Family benefits, Costs 324w
Family benefits, Publicity 325w
Family credit, Administrative delays 325w, 452w, 590-1w
Family credit, Departmental forms 593w
Family credit, Expenditure 319w, 535w
Family credit, Nottingham 180-1w
Family credit, Self-employed 63w, 181w
Family credit, Social security recipients 697w
Family income supplements, Administrative delays 324-5w
Handicap benefits, Durham 592w
Heating allowances, Pensioners 321w
Homelessness, Young people 324w
Housing benefits, Nottingham 321w
Housing benefits, Private rented housing 60w
Housing benefits, Rhondda 594-5w
Housing benefits, Social security reform 456w, 536-7w, 591w, 597w, 695w, 697w
Income support 452w, 700w
Income support, Automatic credit transfer 753-4w
Income support, Residential care of children 383w
Income support, Social security recipients 536w
Income support, Young people 595-6w
Income support, Youth training scheme 325w
Invalidity benefits, Social security benefits uprating 326w
National insurance contributions 593w
National insurance contributions, Company pensions 597w
National insurance contributions, Post Office 754w
National insurance credits, Departmental correspondence 588w
National insurance fund, Personal pensions 535w
Occupational pensions 534-6w, 593w
Occupational pensions, Derbyshire 753w
One parent benefit, Shetland 454w
One parent families, Child support 359-60w
One parent families, Social security benefits 592w
Pension books, Theft 60w
Pensioners 589w
Pensioners, British residents abroad 319-20w
Pensioners, Derbyshire 695w
Pensioners, Economic situation 590w
Pensioners, Housing benefits 590w, 753w
Pensioners, Income support 589w
Pensioners, National income 590w
Pensioners, Occupational pensions 589-90w
Pensioners, Personal income 65-6w, 534w
Pensioners, Social security reform 65w

Lloyd, Mr Peter—continued
Pensions, Average earnings 612w
Rental purchase, Housing benefits 456w
Retirement pensions, Administrative delays 533w
Retirement pensions, Average earnings 383-4w
Retirement pensions, British residents abroad 182w
Retirement pensions, Earnings rules 181w, 320-2w
Retirement pensions, EC countries 182w
Single homeless, Greater London 324w
Social Fund 536w
Social Fund, Ayr 697w
Social Fund. Birmingham 455w
Social Fund, Civil service manpower 181w
Social Fund, Community care 63-5w, 593w, 695w
Social Fund, Durham 591-2w
Social Fund, Expenditure 64w, 696w
Social Fund, Finance 64w
Social Fund, Fuel bills 455w
Social Fund, Loans 382w, 591w
Social Fund, Rhondda 593-4w
Social Fund, Statistics 64w
Social security benefits, Cash limits 381w
Social security benefits, Departmental leaflets 451-2w
Social security benefits, Marginal tax rates 590w
Social security benefits, Take-up 531-2w, 753w
Social security benefits uprating 454w
Social security payments, Automatic credit transfer 62w
Social security recipients, Birmingham 326w
Social security recipients, Hostels 325w
Social security reform 535-6w
Supplementary benefits, Fuel bills 755w
Supplementary benefits, Northern region 453-4w
Supplementary benefits, Rhondda 595w
Taxation, Social security benefits 699-700w
Unemployment benefits, Coventry 326w
Unemployment benefits, Hard core unemployed 452-3w
Unemployment benefits, Social security benefits disqualification 533w
VAT, Dept of Social Security 321w
Widows, Age 694w
Widows' benefits, Pensions 694-5w
Widows' benefits, Social security claims 181-4w
Widows' benefits, Social security recipients 693w
Working mothers, Marginal tax rates 592-3w
Youth training scheme, Social security benefits reductions 610w

Lloyd, Mr Tony
Questions
Business statements 443-4
Hazardous wastes, Waste disposal 614w
Industrial investment 311-2
Midwives, Career structure 336w
Police, Government grants 709w
Unemployment, Stretford 233w

Lloyd's Bank
538w

Loan guarantee scheme
137w

Loans
EC budget 56w
Social Fund 382w, 591w, 697w

Local authorities
Community charge 615-6w
Companies 404w
Direct labour departments 200w
EC internal trade 198w
Employment Training 741-2w
Homelessness 618w
Housing investment programmes 274w
Nuclear power stations 635
Rate support grants 732-4w

Local authorities—continued
Sewers 155w, 411w
Smoke detection 577w
Urban programme 732-4w

Local authority associations
Wales 6

Local education authorities
Private education 250-2w
Vocational guidance 214-6w

Local Employment Development Unit
746w

Local enterprise agencies
138w

Local Government Act 1972
Questions
18w

Local government elections
District councils 891
Northern Ireland (05:12:88) 38-120

Local government expenditure
394w
Community charge 891-2
Eggs 892
Personal social services 759-60w
Urban programme 154w

Local government finance
Capital investment 272-3w
Rates & rating 272w

Local government functions
Council housing 529w

Local government land
Compensation 276-7w
Water authorities 276-7w
Water supply industry 280w

Local government pensions
Death 278w

Local Government Planning & Land Act 1980
Questions
200w

Local government property
Council housing 730w

Local government services
Lancashire County Council 614w

Local government staff
Emergency planning 204-5w
Employment protection 574w
Scotland 640w

Local plans
900-1

Local radio
Public bodies 463w
Radio broadcasting licences 462-3w
Radio frequencies 463w

Location of industry
House prices 308-9
Wales 91w

Loch Sunart
Pollution 674w

Locums
Trent Regional Health Authority 446w

Lofthouse, Mr Geoffrey
Debates etc.
Electricity Bill, 2R (12:12:88) 693, 713-4
Questions
Criminal Injuries Compensation Board, Administrative delays 710w
Fire services, West Yorkshire Fire & Civil Defence Authority 351w
House prices, South East region 628w
NHS Review 555w
Radioactive waste disposal, Costs 627-8
Salmonella, Eggs 758

London airports
Air traffic 524w

London allowance
Crown prosecutors 335w
Justices' clerks 286-7w

London allowance—continued
Prison staff 109w

London assessment studies
243w
Road construction 367-8w

London boroughs
Planning permission 278-9w
Police community liaison committees 458-9w
Right to buy 154-6w

London Buses
2w, 517w

London Electricity Board
505w

London Regional Transport
245w
Bus services 517w
Contracts 517w

London Regional Transport (Penalty Fares) Bill (HL) 1986/87
Debates etc.
2R order read (15:12:88) 1065

London Residuary Body
199w

London Underground
564-6w

Londonderry
Tax collection offices 51-2w

Longannet coal complex
631

Lord, Mr Michael
Questions
Small businesses, Government contracts 153

Lord Chancellor
663w

Lord Chancellor's Office
see Lord Chancellor

Lorries
EC action 520w
Road accidents 366-7w, 521w
Road safety 159w

Lost working days
Industrial disputes 147w

Lothian
Coal mining 49w
Youth training scheme 487w

Lothian Health Board
Accident & emergency departments 48w

Lotteries
Orders & regulations 351w

Low flying
Aircraft noise 770-1w
Compensation 499w
Costs 499w
Military aircraft 769-70w
Public meetings 772w
Wales 772w

Low pay
Tourist industry 155

Loyden, Mr Eddie
Debates etc.
Security Service Bill, 2R & Money res (15:12:88) 1162
Questions
Child benefit 1067
Health, Pensioners 547-8w

LRT
see London Regional Transport

Luce, Rt Hon Richard, Minister of State Privy Council Office (Minister for the Arts)
Questions
Art works, Export controls 14-5

Luce, Rt Hon Richard—continued
Art works, Objects in lieu of tax 113w
Art works, Property transfer 254w
Arts, Ethnic minorities 33w
Arts centres, Rural areas 36w
Arts Council, Regional arts associations 35w
Arts Council grants, Ethnic minorities 12-3, 33w
Arts finance 33-5w, 37w, 255-6w
Arts finance, Ethnic minorities 13
Arts finance, Private sector 37w
Barlow Clowes, Parliamentary Commissioner for Administration 19w
British Library 254w
British Library, Business 254w
British Library, Construction costs 254w, 598w
British Library, Offices 254w
British Library, Science & technology 255w
Business sponsorship incentive scheme, Leeds 34w
Business sponsorship incentive scheme, Liverpool 34w
Business sponsorship incentive scheme, Northern region 34-5w
Business sponsorship incentive scheme, Oxford 34w
Business sponsorship incentive scheme, Photography 34w
Business sponsorship incentive scheme, Wales 34w
Business sponsorship incentive scheme, West Midlands 34w
Civil servants 17
Civil servants' secondment 15-6
Civil service, Foreign & Commonwealth Office 414w
Civil service agencies 18, 88w
Civil service agencies, Management 18
Civil service dispersal 17
Civil service unions 16-7
Drama, Arts finance 36w
"Export of Works of Art Annual Report 1987/88" 255w
Government Communications Headquarters, Trade union membership 17-8
Hereford Cathedral, Mappa mundi 13-5, 36w
Literature, Children 35w
Mappa mundi 15
Museums & galleries 35w
Music, Ethnic minorities 33w
Non-departmental public bodies 180w
Public libraries, Finance 256w, 414w
Public libraries, Part-time education 36w
Public statues, Inner city areas 36w
Welsh Arts Council 36w

Lyell, Sir Nicholas, Solicitor-General
Debates etc.
No-fault compensation, Medical treatments (13:12:88) 887-90
Questions
Fiore, Roberto, Extradition 640-1
House of Fraser, Takeovers 638-9
Legal aid 639-40
Legal aid, Bradford 639-40
Malicious Communications Act 1988, Holocaust News 640
Prisoners on remand 640

M1
657-8w
Road accidents 244w
Road signs 658w
Road traffic 1w
Road works 658w

M4
7, 20-1w
Road safety barriers 97w

M6
99w
Road traffic 1w

M20
Road construction 97w
Road traffic 96w

M25
Road traffic 98-9w

M66
657w

M69
Road works 95-6w

M77
(15:12:88) 1191-8

McAllion, Mr John
Debates etc.
North East Shipbuilders, Factory closures (07:12:88) 322
Public expenditure, Scotland (13:12:88) 783-4
Scottish Enterprise (06:12:88) 200
Transport (Scotland) Bill, 2R & Money res (14:12:88) 973, 989-94, 1000-1
Questions
British Gas 481w
Youth training scheme, Take-up 143w

McAvoy, Mr Thomas
Debates etc.
Electricity Bill, 2R (12:12:88) 727-8
Transport (Scotland) Bill, 2R & Money res (14:12:88) 1020-2
Questions
Abortion, Carlisle Hospital 1067
Balance of payments 298-9w
Pensioners, Personal income 534w
UK trade with EC, EC internal trade 168w

MacBride principles
Members' correspondence 516w

McCartney, Mr Ian
Questions
Nurses, Career structure 692-4w
Tax allowances, Children 303w

McConnell, Robert
Homicide 747w

McCrea, Rev William
Debates etc.
Prevention of Terrorism (Temporary Provisions) Bill, 2R & Money res (06:12:88) 252-3

McCrindle, Mr Robert
Questions
Business statements 1089
Emergency planning, Disasters 702w
Exhaust emissions, Standards specifications 623w
Labour market, School leaving 214w
Local government pensions, Death 278w
Medical malpractice, Compensation 80w
Nurses, Career structure 756
Pension funds 423w
Pensions, Occupational pensions 423-4w
Prisoners, Prison employment 354-5w
Prisoners, Prison rules 354w

Macdonald, Mr Calum
Debates etc.
EC Fisheries Council (12:12:88) 665
Scottish Enterprise (06:12:88) 199
Transport (Scotland) Bill, 2R & Money res (14:12:88) 1051, 1053
Questions
Gaelic language, Television 710w
Nurses, Career structure 185w
Official engagements 117w, 267w, 492w
Overseas trade, International trade 26w
PIEDA 291w
Public expenditure, Retirement pensions 302-3w
Radioactive waste disposal, Costs 636
Severe disability premium, Social security recipients 596w
Severe disability premium, Take-up 596w
Shellfish, English Channel 240w
Student grants, Scotland 439-40w
Student grants, Student numbers 386-7w

McFall, Mr John
Debates etc.
Transport (Scotland) Bill, 2R & Money res (14:12:88) 1022-3
Questions
Skill shortages, Finance 426

McFall, Mr John—continued

McGrady, Mr Eddie
Debates etc.
Elected Authorities (Northern Ireland) Bill, 2R & Money res (05:12:88) 75-9
European Council (06:12:88) 185
Questions
Business statements 1089-90
Official engagements 656w

MacGregor, Rt Hon John, Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food
Debates etc.
EC Fisheries Council (12:12:88) 656-67
Eggs, Ministerial statements (16:12:88) 1268-78
Questions
Agriculture, Departmental publications 30w
Common agricultural policy, EC budget 430-1w
EC Agriculture Council 675w
EC Fisheries Council 433w

Machinery (UK)
524w

McKay, Mr Allen
Debates etc.
Abortion (16:12:88) 1222
Eggs, Salmonella (16:12:88) 1275-6
Electricity Bill, 2R (12:12:88) 678
Electricity Bill, 2R, Money res & Ways & means res (13:12:88) 839-40
Employment opportunities (05:12:88) 35
Water Bill, 2R (07:12:88) 405
Questions
Community care 545w
Community charge 154w
Fire services, South Yorkshire 705w
Minibuses, Driving licences 740w
Opencast mining, Health hazards 468w
Sewers, Local authorities 155w
Water meters, Costs 281w
Water meters, Testing 281-2w
Water supply industry, Privatisation 280w

MacKay, Mr Andrew
Debates etc.
Abortion (16:12:88) 1202, 1207-8, 1223, 1236-44
Railway accidents, Clapham junction (12:12:88) 654
Questions
House prices, Location of industry 308-9
Identity cards 1073
Palace of Westminster, Theft 257-8w
Royal College of Nursing 550w
Sunday trading 714w

McKelvey, Mr William
Debates etc.
Transport (Scotland) Bill, 2R & Money res (14:12:88) 998, 1004, 1028, 1031
Questions
Business statements 445-6
Coal mining, Manpower 475w
Youth training scheme, Scotland 113w

McLeish, Mr Henry
Questions
Child benefit, School leaving 537w
EC grants & loans, Scotland 296-7w
Frontiers, EC internal trade 708w
School leaving 539w
School leaving, Child benefit 539-40w
School leaving, Scotland 487w
Youth training scheme, Bridging allowances 609w
Youth training scheme, Expenditure 609w
Youth training scheme, Publicity 609w
Youth training scheme, Scotland 486w

Maclennan, Mr Robert
Debates etc.
Prevention of Terrorism (Temporary Provisions) Bill, 2R & Money res (06:12:88) 216-7, 236, 244-7
Security Service Bill, 2R & Money res (15:12:88) 1109, 1134-6
Questions
Arts finance 35w
Police, Manpower 1071
"Punishment Custody & the Community" 714w
Ryan, Patrick, Extradition 913

McLoughlin, Mr Patrick
Debates etc.
Prime Minister's questions, Points of order (08:12:88) 458
Water Bill, 2R, Money res & Ways & means res (08:12:88) 535
Questions
Community charge, Local authorities 615-6w
EC Agriculture Council 675w
Health service staff, Manpower 545w
Medicines Commission, Conflict of interests 558-9w
Planning authorities 900

McNair-Wilson, Sir Michael
Debates etc.
No-fault compensation, Medical treatments (13:12:88) 889
Questions
Building societies 588w
Business statements 438-9
Disabled Persons (Employment) Act 1944 475w
Economic growth, Productivity 300w
Enthorpe Lodge Special School Newbury 342-3w
Erythropoietin 607w
Heating, Pensioners 762
Infant Life (Preservation) Act 1929, Law reform 505w
Obscene Publications Act 1959 701w
Road safety barriers, A34 3w
Transplant surgery 86-7w

McNamara, Mr Kevin
Debates etc.
Elected Authorities (Northern Ireland) Bill, 2R & Money res (05:12:88) 47-55, 89, 106
Questions
Electorate, Northern Ireland 361-2w
MacBride principles, Members' correspondence 516w

McTaggart, Mr Bob
Questions
Fish, Pollution monitoring 201w
Ports, EC internal trade 563w
Ports, Subsidies 563-4w

Madden, Mr Max
Debates etc.
Business statements, Points of order (08:12:88) 448
Employment opportunities (05:12:88) 36
Multifibre arrangement (09:12:88) 558-9, 582-6
Old people's homes, Bradford (15:12:88) 1100
Questions
Business statements 444-5, 1095-6
City technology colleges, Bradford 389w
Civil service agencies 18
Denis-Wild houses, Mortgages 624w
Dept of Social Security local offices, Computers in Government departments 61-2w
Dixon's, Government assistance to industry 497w
Fiore, Roberto, Extradition 1077
HMSO, Members' correspondence 502w
Land Registry Office, Members' correspondence 663w
Legal aid, Bradford 639-40
Radioactive waste disposal 636-7
Social Fund, Community care 64-5w

Madden, Mr Max—continued
Social Fund, Expenditure 64w
Social Fund, Finance 64w
Social Fund, Statistics 64w
Urban programme, Local government expenditure 154w
Woollen industry, Export promotion 262-3w

Madel, Mr David
Debates etc.
Employment opportunities (05:12:88) 33
Questions
Advisory Conciliation & Arbitration Service 136w
CERN, UK contributions 647w
Nurses, Pay settlements 551w
Occupational pensions, Sex discrimination 754w

MAFF
see Ministry of Agriculture

Mafia
743-4w

Maginnis, Mr Ken
Debates etc.
Prevention of Terrorism (Temporary Provisions) Bill, 2R & Money res (06:12:88) 220-1, 227-9, 266

Magistrates
Manpower 334w
Public appointments 664w
Waltham Forest 664w

Magistrates' courts
Manpower 287w

Magnox reactors
Nuclear fuels 49w
Radioactive waste disposal 403w

Mahon, Mrs Alice
Debates etc.
Multifibre arrangement (09:12:88) 562, 566, 597-600
Questions
Clothing, Labelling 345w
Crimes of violence, Sentencing 711w
Heart diseases, Surgery 751-2
Homelessness, Calderdale 154w
Industrial training, Women 146-7w
Rate support grants 613w
Rented housing, National mobility scheme 271w
Takeovers, Company finance 167w

Major, Rt Hon John, Chief Secretary to the Treasury
Questions
Balance of payments 298-9w
Capital investment 302w, 306w, 424-5w
Cash limits, Public expenditure 100w
Civil service manpower, Annual reports 743w
Confederation of British Industry 302w
Contracts, EC law 424w
Disposable income 306w
Economic growth 300w
Economic growth, Productivity 300w
Economic growth, Unemployment 304w
Imports, Personal income 502w
Industrial investment 57-8w
Inflation, Public expenditure 298w
Journalists, Press conferences 297w
National income, Autumn Statement 305w
National income, Balance of trade 420w
Overseas investment, Public sector assets 203w
Pensions, Finance 426
Profitability, Economic growth 301-2w
Profitability, North West region 429-30
Profits 430
Public expenditure 305w, 426
Public expenditure, National income 99-100w, 304w
Public expenditure, Retirement pensions 302-3w
Public sector debt, National income 586w

Major, Rt Hon John—continued
Retirement pensions 426-7
Skill shortages, Finance 426
Standard of living, Community charge 586w

Malicious Communications Act 1988
Questions
Holocaust News 640

Malins, Mr Humfrey
Questions
Planning permission, Croydon 15w

Mallon, Mr Seamus
Debates etc.
Elected Authorities (Northern Ireland) Bill, 2R & Money res (05:12:88) 40, 56, 81, 82, 83-4, 86
Prevention of Terrorism (Temporary Provisions) Bill, 2R & Money res (06:12:88) 228, 238-42
Questions
Extradition, Republic of Ireland 767

Malta
Power stations 483w, 629-30w

Managing agents
23-4w, 472w

Manchester
Opticians 604w

Manchester Airport
96w, 162w, (14:12:88) 1059-64
Railway network 245w

Manchester Council for Voluntary Service
269w

Mans, Mr Keith
Debates etc.
EC Fisheries Council (12:12:88) 662-3
Electricity Bill, 2R (12:12:88) 681, 695
Electricity Bill, 2R, Money res & Ways & means res (13:12:88) 805, 829-31
Security Service Bill, 2R & Money res (15:12:88) 1161
Water Bill, 2R, Money res & Ways & means res (08:12:88) 516-7
Questions
EH 101 helicopters 312
Lead free petrol 904
Neighbourhood watch schemes 702-3w
Official engagements 266-7w
Student grants, Parental contributions 757-8w
Youth training scheme 143w

Manufactured goods
Balance of trade 176w

Manufacturing industries
Industrial investment 57-8w
Industrial production 171w
North West region 147w, 171w
Northern region 471w

Maples, Mr John
Debates etc.
Electricity Bill, 2R (12:12:88) 681
Water Bill, 2R (07:12:88) 345
Questions
Foreign companies in UK 176-7w
Self-employed 133w

Mappa mundi
15
Hereford Cathedral 13-5, 36w

Marcos, Ferdinand
Fraud 99w

Marek, Dr John
Debates etc.
Railway accidents, Clapham junction (12:12:88) 650
Questions
Council house rents, Wales 9-10
Government Communications Headquarters, Trade union membership 17-8

Marginal tax rates
Social security benefits 590w
Working mothers 592-3w

Marine animals
Nature conservation 730w

Market share
Car industry 175-6w

Marks & Spencer
538w

Marland, Mr Paul
Questions
Clay Pigeon Shooting Association, Town & Country Planning General Development Order 1988 617w
Eggs, Salmonella 767-8

Marlow, Mr Tony
Debates etc.
Electricity Bill, 2R, Money res & Ways & means res (13:12:88) 854
Public expenditure, Scotland (13:12:88) 784
Questions
Abortion 1069
Community charge, Local government expenditure 891-2
Unemployment benefits, Availability for work 121w

Married people
Personal tax allowances 52-3w

Married personal allowance
Average earnings 53w

Marshall, Mr David
Debates etc.
Public expenditure, Scotland (13:12:88) 780
Transport (Scotland) Bill, 2R & Money res (14:12:88) 969-70, 983, 995, 1000, 1001, 1017-20, 1028, 1033
Questions
Channel tunnel, Safety 657w
Youth unemployment, Scotland 485w

Marshall, Mr Jim
Debates etc.
Elected Authorities (Northern Ireland) Bill, 2R & Money res (05:12:88) 99-104
Questions
Harland & Wolff, Privatisation 574-5w
Myalgic encephalomyelitis, Northern Ireland 264-5w
Short Brothers, Privatisation 264w, 575w

Marshall, Mr John
Debates etc.
North East Shipbuilders, Factory closures (07:12:88) 324
Questions
Barnet Health Authority 447w
Football, Arrests 17w, 629w
"Medical Research Council Annual Report, 1987/88" 574w
Pensioners, National income 590w
Personal equity plans, Take-up 52w
Primary health care 553w
Property development, Outer London boroughs 628w
UK trade with EC 311
Vacancies, Greater London 378w

Marshall, Mr Michael
Debates etc.
A27, Noise (08:12:88) 548

Martin, Mr David
Questions
Housing associations, Owner occupied housing 633w
Immigration appeals, Members 578w
Portsmouth 139w

Martin, Mr Michael J
Debates etc.
Public expenditure, Scotland (13:12:88) 778-9
Questions
Accident & emergency departments, Stobhill Hospital 441w

Martin, Mr Michael J—continued
Drug abuse 716w

Martlew, Mr Eric
Debates etc.
Water Bill, 2R, Money res & Ways & means res (08:12:88) 510-2
Questions
Community care 545w
Inflation 297w
Multiple occupation 613w

Mass media
Ministers' visits abroad 267w

Maternity benefits
Social security claims 181-4w

Maternity services
Leicestershire Health Authority 551w
Southport 339w

Mature students
3-4w
Student loans 7-8w

Maude, Francis
Official stationery 25w

Maude, Mr Francis, Under-Secretary of State for Corporate and Consumer Affairs
Questions
1992 hotline, Advisory services 306
Barlow Clowes 169-70w
British Coal Corporation, Monopolies & Mergers Commission 172w
British Petroleum, Shareholders 177w
Company investigations 178-9w
Company investigations, Cemetery Assets United Kingdom 178w
Company investigations, Fraud 396-7w
EC internal trade, EC action 189-92w
EC internal trade, Publicity 171-2w
EC internal trade, South Yorkshire 172w
Financial Intermediaries' Managers' & Brokers' Association 26w, 259w
Financial Intermediaries' Managers' & Brokers' Association, Codes of practice 567w
Financial Intermediaries' Managers' & Brokers' Association, Financial institutions 299
Financial Intermediaries' Managers' & Brokers' Association, Legal remedies 567w
Financial services, Company investigations 259w
Financial services, EC action 397w
Financial services, Investment 397w
Financial services, Licensing 260w
Financial services, Self-regulating organisations 259-60w, 567w
Financial services, Training 259w
Foreign companies in UK, EC internal trade 306
Graham, Morton, Credit licensing 25-6w
Growish, Company investigations 27w
Insolvency Service 397w
Insurance, EC action 745w
Manufacturing industries, Industrial production 171w
Manufacturing industries, North West region 171w
Mergers 309-10
Mergers, EC action 176-7w
Mergers, Office of Fair Trading 171w
Mergers, Takeovers 495-7w
Monopolies & Mergers Commission 174w
National Engineering Laboratory, Planning authorities 260w
Professional liability 258w
Restrictive trade practices 258w
Restrictive trade practices, Small businesses 27w
Scottish & Newcastle Breweries, Takeovers 565-7w
Shares, Disclosure of information 179-80w
Takeovers 167w, 173w
Takeovers, Company finance 167w
Takeovers, Monopolies & Mergers Commission 167w

Maude, Mr Francis—continued
Takeovers, Shareholders 174w
Unit trusts, EC internal trade 298-9

Mawhinney, Dr Brian, Under-Secretary of State for Northern Ireland
Questions
Educational visits, Armagh 264w
Members' correspondence, Administrative delays 400w
Secondary education, Northern Ireland 746w

Maxton, Mr John
Debates etc.
Electricity Bill, 2R (12:12:88) 737-40
Electricity Bill, 2R, Money res & Ways & means res (13:12:88) 819

Maxwell House
Building alterations 531w

Maxwell-Hyslop, Mr Robin
Debates etc.
Eggs, Salmonella (16:12:88) 1274
Questions
Business statements 1087
Eggs, Salmonella 168-9
Ministers, Departmental responsibilities 163w
Ministers, Food hygiene 163w
USSR 117w

Mayhew, Rt Hon Sir Patrick, Attorney-General
Questions
Abortion, Prosecutions 662w
Brooks, Tony, Subversion 663-4w
Cassel, Harold 18-9w
Councillors' interests, Prosecutions 18w
Coventry four, Criminal proceedings 386w
Crown prosecutors 334-5w
Crown prosecutors, London allowance 335w
Crown prosecutors, Pay 335w
Extradition 385w
Extradition, Belgium 641
Extradition, Republic of Ireland 385w, 569w
Fraud, Mortgages 465-6w
Immigration appeals, Costs 386w
Infant Life (Preservation) Act 1929, Prosecutions 662w
Judiciary, Ethnic groups 662-3w
Land Registry Office, Administrative delays 569w
Land Registry Office, Members' correspondence 663w
Law officers, Belgium 641
Magistrates, Manpower 334w
Magistrates, Waltham Forest 664w
Property law, Scottish legal system 663w
Ryan, Patrick, Extradition 162-3w, 385w, 909-16
"Satanic Verses", Prosecutions 19w
Sinclair User, Prosecutions 569-70w

Meacher, Mr Michael
Debates etc.
Employment opportunities (05:12:88) 26-7
Questions
Employment Training 152-3
Employment Training, Manpower 469-70w
Industrial investment 57-8w
Mine accidents, Coal mining 232-3w
Nurses, Career structure 185w
Opticians, Manchester 604w
Sex Discrimination Act 1975 475w
Unemployment, Part-time employment 161-6
Youth Training Board 671w
Youth training scheme 472w, 609w
Youth training scheme, Board & lodging charges 472w
Youth training scheme, Death 472-3w
Youth training scheme, Vacancies 472w

Meale, Mr Alan
Questions
Business statements 444, 1096
Central Nottinghamshire Health Authority 557w

Meale, Mr Alan—continued
Central Nottinghamshire Health Authority, Performance related pay 556-7w
Eggs, Salmonella 510w
Health services, Buildings 557w
Health warnings, Eggs 548-9w
Hypothermia, Elderly 547w
NHS, Public meetings 608w
Speech therapy, Contracts 600w
Trade competitiveness 168w

Medical appeal tribunals
Administrative delays 597w

Medical certificates
Availability for work 456w

Medical education
Doctors 78w

Medical equipment
Emergency planning 125-6w
Radiotherapy 339w
VAT 586-7w

Medical examinations
Babies 364w

Medical malpractice
Compensation 80w

Medical records
Manpower 693-4w

Medical Research Council
574w, 648w

"Medical Research Council Annual Report, 1987/88"
574w

Medical treatments
Bolton 340w
Drug abuse 691-2w
Elderly 317w
Montserrat 570w
NHS finance 547w
No-fault compensation (13:12:88) 885-90

Medicines Commission
Conflict of interests 558-9w

"Medicines Commission Annual Report, 1987"
558-9w

Medicines (Hormone Growth Promoters) (Prohibition of Use) Regulations 1986
Questions
778w

***Mellor, Mr David**, Minister of State, Dept of Health*
Debates etc.
Abortion (16:12:88) 1209, 1221, 1229, 1262-6
Midwives, Career structure (07:12:88) 413-8
Questions
AIDS 450w, 600-1w
AIDS, Association of London Authorities 541w
AIDS, Health education 601w
AIDS, Screening 82w, 541w
Ambulance services, Manpower 607w
Appeals, District health authorities 603w
Barnet Health Authority 447w
Benzodiazepines, Prescriptions 551w
Blindness 80w
Blood transfusion services, Oxford 761
Child health, Children's rights 73w
Committee on Safety of Medicines 83-4w, 129-30w
Committee on Safety of Medicines, Expenditure 82-3w
Committee on Safety of Medicines, Finance 84w
Committee on Safety of Medicines, Public appointments 83w, 130w
Committee on Safety of Medicines, Women 83-4w
Community care 447w, 545w
Dentists, Family practitioner committees 186-7w

Mellor, Mr David—continued
Doctors, Medical education 78w
Doctors, Pay 607w
Drug abuse, Publicity 552w
Drug industry, Capital investment 183w
Drug side effects, Disclosure of information 82w
Drugs, Abortion 599w
Drugs, Parallel imports 767w
East Anglian Regional Health Authority, Expenditure 598-9w
Erythropoietin 607w
Eye disorders, Diagnosis 78w
Eye tests 80w, 132w
Eye tests, Optical charges 79-80w
Food poisoning 601-2w
Food poisoning, Food hygiene 602w
Food poisoning, Listeria monocytogenes 603w
Foreign patients, NHS 87-8w
General Medical Council 75w
General Medical Council, Professional misconduct 75-8w
General Medical Council, Professional qualifications 77-8w
General Practice Finance Corporation 188w
Glue sniffing, Young people 131w
Health service ancillary staff, Pay 555w
Health service staff, Contracts of employment 127w
Health service staff, Manpower 545w, 768w
Heart diseases, Surgery 751-2
Hepatitis, Health service staff 448w
Hepatitis, Vaccination 765w
Hospital consultants 761
Hospital waiting lists, Crewe Health Authority 128w
Hospital waiting lists, North Western Regional Health Authority 540w
Hospital waiting lists, Trent Regional Health Authority 128w
Hospitals, Resource management initiative 548w
Leeds Western Health Authority, Public appointments 339w
Locums, Trent Regional Health Authority 446w
Medical malpractice, Compensation 80w
Medical records, Manpower 693-4w
Medical treatments, NHS finance 547w
Medicines Commission, Conflict of interests 558-9w
Mental health community care 768w
Mental health services, Expenditure 450w
Midwives 86w
Midwives, Career structure 549w
Midwives, Vocational education 603-4w
NHS, Contracts for services 73w
NHS, Hospital patients 541-2w
NHS, Public meetings 608w
NHS administration, Women 340w
NHS finance 599w
NHS finance, Dorset 540-1w
NHS finance, North Western Regional Health Authority 126w
NHS finance, Northern Regional Health Authority 546w
NHS finance, West Midlands 186w
Nurses, Career structure 80-1w, 127w, 185w, 187w, 543-6w, 598w, 759-66w
Nurses, Manpower 80-1w, 131-2w
Nurses, Northern region 759-60w
Nurses, Part-time employment 340w
Nurses, Pay settlements 129w
Nurses, Recruitment 132w
Nurses' training, Project 2000 608w
Nursing homes, Inner London boroughs 447w
Oldham Health Authority, Ophthalmic services 74-5w
Ophthalmic services, Hospital waiting lists 446w
Opticians, Manchester 604w
Orthopaedics, Manpower 607w
Oxford Regional Health Authority 760-1
Personal social services, Local government expenditure 759-60w

Mellor, Mr David—continued
Prescription charges, Limited list prescribing 604-5w
Prescription charges exemptions, Crohn's disease 447-8w
Prescriptions, Costs 126-8w
Prescriptions, NHS complaints 606w
Primary health care 126w, 553w, 558w
Prosthetics, Manpower 556w
Radiographers, Manpower 769w
Registered Homes Act 1984 765-6w
Residential care, Social Services Inspectorate 185-6w
Royal College of Nursing, Nurses' training 560w
South Western Regional Health Authority, Finance 607-8w
Speech therapists, Manpower 600w
Speech therapists, Resignations 599w
Tranquillisers, Drug abuse 84-5w
Vaccination, NHS charges 540w
Wheelchairs 556w, 605-6w
Wheelchairs, Disablement Services Authority 605w
Wheelchairs, Expenditure 605w
Wheelchairs, Muscular dystrophy 605w
Yorkshire Regional Health Authority, Performance indicators 549w

Members
House of Commons accommodation 669w
Immigration appeals 578w

Members' conduct
Speaker's rulings & statements (05:12:88) 114, (06:12:88) 275, (08:12:88) 533, (14:12:88) 1008, 1025, 1034, 1036, (15:12:88) 1075, 1080, 1176

Members' correspondence
Administrative delays 400w, 506w, 587w, 749w
Dept of the Registers of Scotland 638w
Historic Buildings & Monuments Directorate 638w
HMSO 502w
Land Registry Office 663w
MacBride principles 516w
Neave, Airey 656w
Passport Office 722w
United Reform Church 576w
Warren Spring Laboratory 493w

Members' deaths
John, Brynmor (14:12:88) 891

Members' facilities
House of Commons accommodation 580w
House of Commons (Services) Select Committee 579-80w
Speaker's rulings & statements (15:12:88) 1100

Members' interests
Speaker's rulings & statements (15:12:88) 1099, 1101

Members' interventions
Speaker's rulings & statements (05:12:88) 145, (06:12:88) 176, 182, (07:12:88) 316, 343, (09:12:88) 562, 567, 568, 610, (13:12:88) 802, 860, (14:12:88) 1035, 1052

Members' misconduct
Speaker's rulings & statements (14:12:88) 1043

Members' speeches
Speaker's rulings & statements (05:12:88) 87, (06:12:88) 207, (07:12:88) 336, 352, 356, 365, 389, (08:12:88) 459, 475, (09:12:88) 580, 585, (12:12:88) 669, 721, (13:12:88) 787, 808, 821, 825, 828, (14:12:88) 949, 1046, 1049, 1053, (15:12:88) 1100, 1105, 1136, 1141, 1149, 1185, (16:12:88) 1249

Members' staff

House of Commons accommodation 580w

Mental health
Women 555w

Mental health community care
768w
Disabled Persons (Services Consultation & Representation) Act 1986 453w
Wales 392w

Mental health services
Expenditure 450w
Wales 356-7w

Mental hospitals
88w
Property transfer 674w

Mental illness
Research finance 42w
Scotland 42w

Mental patients
Prison population 282-3w

Mentally disturbed offenders
Schizophrenia 32w

Mentally handicapped
542w
Disabled Persons (Services Consultation & Representation) Act 1986 453w

Mentally ill
Hospital length of stay 42w

Merchant seamen
Prescribed industrial diseases 532w

Merchant Shipping (Safety at Work Regulations) (Non UK Ships) Regulations 1988
Debates etc.
(05:12:88) 37

Mercury
Fish 365w

Mergers
309-10
EC action 176-7w
Office of Fair Trading 171w
Takeovers 495-7w

Mersey Regional Health Authority
80-1w
Midwives 85-6w, 130w

Merseyside
Employment Training 151, 610w
Midwives (07:12:88) 409-18
Prisons 110w

Methane
Arkwright colliery 50w

Metropolitan counties
Fire services 705w

Metropolitan Police
32w, 107w, 352w, 458w, 464w
Broadwater Farm estate 1068
Fingerprints 715-6w
Public relations 284w
Road traffic control 459w, 507w

Meyer, Sir Anthony
Debates etc.
Rate support grants, Wales (08:12:88) 451
Questions
Employment schemes, Wales 20w
Nurses, Pay settlements 4
Prescription charges exemptions, Crohn's disease 447-8w

Mgedezi, Tjekuyo
South Africa 315-6w

MI5
268w, 722w, (15:12:88) 1104-90

Michael, Mr Alun
Questions
Balance of payments 298w
Electricity generation, Severn barrage 476w
Electricity generation, Tidal power 634

Michael, Mr Alun—continued
Health, Pensioners 548w
House prices, Housing market 308
Local government expenditure 394w
Nurses, Pay settlements 4
Nurses, Wales 19-20w
Official engagements 117w
Rate support grants, Cardiff City Council 393w
Social security benefits uprating, Retail price index 698w
Water pollution, Civil service manpower 621w

Michie, Mr Bill
Debates etc.
North East Shipbuilders, Factory closures (07:12:88) 328
Young people, Social security benefits (05:12:88) 145
Questions
Graham, Morton, Credit licensing 25-6w
Railway Inspectorate, Manpower 517w

Michie, Mrs Ray
Debates etc.
Scottish Enterprise (06:12:88) 193
Transport (Scotland) Bill, 2R & Money res (14:12:88) 996-9
Questions
Council house rents, Average earnings 291-3w
Council house rents, Scotland 293-4w
Council housing, Housing stock 273w
Council housing, Scotland 295w
Degrees, Scotland 487w
Domestic violence, Criminal statistics 212w, 355w
Gaelic language, Television 710w
Higher education, Scotland 48w
Housing finance 530w
Housing stock 273w
Housing stock, Scotland 295w
Housing support grants, Scotland 295w
Mental health, Women 555w
Mortgage interest rates, Tax yields 424w
Ozone layer 622w
Pensioners, Social security reform 65w
Seas & oceans, Research finance 650w
Takeovers, Monopolies & Mergers Commission 167w

Mid Glamorgan
Employment Training 23-4w

Mid Glamorgan Health Authority
Nurses 3

Middle East
Peace negotiations 1079

Midland Bank
538w

Midwives
86w
Career structure 85-6w, 130w, 187w, 336w, (07:12:88) 409-18, 542-3w, 549w, 779-80w
Conditions of employment 549w
Mersey Regional Health Authority 85-6w, 130w
Merseyside (07:12:88) 409-18
North Middlesex Hospital 760
Scotland 779-80w
Vocational education 603-4w

Milford Haven
Oil pollution 168

Military aircraft
Aircraft noise 466w
Defence equipment 685w
Low flying 769-70w
RAF Upper Heyford 343w

Military balance
Conventional weapons 570w

Military exercises
Nuclear power stations 770w

Military intelligence
Intelligence services 52w

Milk
Food industry 679w
Production quotas 510-1w

Milk—continued
Retail prices 581w

Miller, Sir Hal
Questions
Business statements 437-8
Salmonella, Eggs 19

Millport
Community charge 444w

Mills, Mr Iain
Questions
Water supply industry, Capital investment 619w

Milton Keynes
Boundary Commission for England 289w

Mine accidents
Coal mining 232-3w, 310w

Mine safety
Coal mining 231w

Mines & Quarries Act 1984
Questions
310w

Minibuses
Driving licences 740w
EC action 566w
Road accidents 566w

Mining
Gold 781w

Ministerial changes
Departmental correspondence 655w

Ministerial policy advisors
Prime Minister 267w

Ministerial powers
(15:12:88) 1104-90
Commissions for local administration 413w

Ministerial statements
Eggs (16:12:88) 1268-78
Environment protection 729w
European Council (06:12:88) 173-86
North East Shipbuilders (07:12:88) 315-30
Public expenditure (13:12:88) 770-86
Railway accidents (12:12:88) 647-55
Rate support grants (08:12:88) 449-56
Scottish Enterprise (06:12:88) 187-201
Speaker's rulings & statements (07:12:88) 333, 334-5, (08:12:88) 451, (13:12:88) 769, (16:12:88) 1199, 1220, 1221, 1223, 1224, 1228-9, 1273, 1278

Ministers
Departmental responsibilities 163w
Europassport 207w
Food hygiene 163w
Northern Ireland 678-80w
Northern Ireland Office 678-80w
Pay 256-8w

Ministers of religion
Termination of employment 561w

Ministers' visits abroad
Africa 28w
Ethiopia 427w
Mass media 267w

Ministry of Agriculture
163w
Computers in Government departments 29w
Food Safety (Radiation) Unit 677w
Handicapped workers 240w
National Farmers' Union 675w
Radiation hazards 379w

Ministry of Agriculture Fisheries & Food
see Ministry of Agriculture

Ministry of Defence
268w, 403w, 686w, 773-6w
Civil service manpower 687w
Fraud 776w
Handicapped workers 466w

Ministry of Defence*—*continued
Security industry 585w
VAT 158w

Missing persons
Greater London 30-1w
Police records 31w

Misuse of Drugs Act 1971
Questions
Prescriptions 722w

Mitchell, Mr Andrew
Debates etc.
Security Service Bill, 2R & Money res (15:12:88) 1163-5
Questions
Communication, Electronics industry 568-9w
Privatisation, Shares 301w
Resource Allocation Working Party, Nottingham Health Authority 755
Statistics 135w

Mitchell, Mr Austin
Debates etc.
EC Fisheries Council (12:12:88) 664
Questions
Additional personal allowance 53-4w, 417-8w
Additional personal allowance, One parent families 55w
Credit 203w
Deposit taking institutions 55w
Electricity tariffs, Industrial energy prices 330-1w
Fishing vessels, EC grants & loans 201-2w
Fishing vessels, Fishery protection 202w
Fishing vessels, Spain 202w
Income tax 500w
Income tax, Personal income 100-1w
Income tax, Personal tax allowances 499w, 501w
Income tax, Poverty trap 415w
Income tax, Separate taxation of wife's earnings 416w
Income tax, Tax yields 53w
Income tax on investment incomes, Tax rates & bands 416w
Married personal allowance, Average earnings 53w
Mergers 309-10
Mortgage relief 54w
National income, Balance of trade 420w
National insurance contributions, Employees' contributions 54-5w
One parent families, Child support 359-60w
Pensions, Average earnings 612w
Personal tax allowances 417w
Personal tax allowances, Married people 52-3w
Personal tax allowances, Single people 417w
Public sector borrowing requirement 358w
Separate taxation of wife's earnings, Tax reform 53w
Tax thresholds, Child benefit 418w

Mitchell, Sir David
Questions
Taxis, Mobility of disabled 520-1w

MMC
see Monopolies & Mergers Commission

Moate, Mr Roger
Questions
Dock labour scheme 143w

Mobility allowance
Age 532w

Mobility of disabled
Taxis 520-1w

MOD
see Ministry of Defence

Modernisation
Nuclear weapons 499w

Molyneaux, Rt Hon James
Debates etc.
European Council (06:12:88) 177
Railway accidents, Clapham junction (12:12:88) 651

Molyneaux, Rt Hon James*—*continued
Questions
Police stations, Dromara 747-8w

Monopolies & Mergers Commission
173-4w, 194-5w, 565-7w, 632
British Coal Corporation 172w
Post Office Counters 497w
Takeovers 167w

Monopoly
Postal services 176w, 766

Monro, Sir Hector
Debates etc.
Scottish Enterprise (06:12:88) 192
Transport (Scotland) Bill, 2R & Money res (14:12:88) 986-8
Questions
Clay Pigeon Shooting Association, Town & Country Planning General Development Order 1988 617w
Gun sports 906
Student grants, Scotland 782-4w
VAT, Government grants 437w

Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Debates etc.
Manchester Airport, Air routes (14:12:88) 1059-61
Questions
India, Primary education 427w

Montserrat
Medical treatments 570w

Monuments
Westminster Hall 530w

Moonie, Dr Lewis
Debates etc.
Electricity Bill, 2R, Money res & Ways & means res (13:12:88) 794, 848-51
Scottish Enterprise (06:12:88) 198
Questions
Electricity generation, Nuclear power stations 476w
Interest rates 299w
Kampuchea, United Nations 40w
Universities, Science education 341w

***Moore, Rt Hon John**, Secretary of State for Social Security*
Debates etc.
Social Security Bill, 1R (15:12:88) 1102-3

Moray
517-8w

Morgan, Mr Rhodri
Debates etc.
Electricity Bill, 2R (12:12:88) 695, 707
Electricity Bill, 2R, Money res & Ways & means res (13:12:88) 790
Rate support grants, Wales (08:12:88) 456
Water Bill, 2R, Money res & Ways & means res (08:12:88) 473
Questions
Carbon dioxide, Air pollution 349-50w
Electricity tariffs, Price increases 636
Inflation, Group of Seven 302w
Interest rates, Wales 6-7
Judiciary, Ethnic groups 662-3w

Morley, Mr Elliot
Debates etc.
No-fault compensation, Medical treatments (13:12:88) 885-7
North East Shipbuilders, Factory closures (07:12:88) 329
Water Bill, 2R (07:12:88) 385
Water Bill, 2R, Money res & Ways & means res (08:12:88) 500-3
Questions
Frontiers, EC internal trade 708w
Income tax, Pensioners 301w
Nurses, Career structure 544-6w
South East region 896

Morris, Rt Hon Alfred
Debates etc.
Electricity Bill, 2R (12:12:88) 671
Questions
Air routes, USA 162w

Morris, Rt Hon Alfred*—*continued
Barlow Clowes, Parliamentary Commissioner for Administration 19w
Caribbean, Health services 89-90w
Invalid care allowances, Social security benefits rules 383w
Manchester Airport, Railway network 245w
Manchester Council for Voluntary Service 269w
Montserrat, Medical treatments 570w
Orthopaedics, Manpower 607w
Orthopaedics, Scotland 486w
Prosthetics, Manpower 556w
Prosthetics, Scotland 486w

Morris, Mr Michael
Questions
Drug industry, Capital investment 183w

Morrison, Sir Charles
Debates etc.
Water Bill, 2R (07:12:88) 360-3
Questions
Water abstraction, Water authorities 750w

Morrison, Rt Hon Peter, Minister of State for Energy
Debates etc.
Petroleum Royalties (Relief) & Continental Shelf Bill, Rem stages (15:12:88) 1189-90
Questions
British Gas 481w
Double glazing 480w
Elderly, Standing charges 637-8
Energy conservation, Advertising 481w
Energy conservation, Electricity area boards 330w
Energy conservation, Expenditure 327w
Energy consumption, Property transfer 684w
Energy Efficiency Office 482w
Gas supply industry 477w
Gas tariffs, Industrial energy prices 632-3
Heating, Costs 332w, 682w
Heating, Elderly 637
Natural gas, Power stations 680w
Offshore safety 475w, 631-2
Offshore safety, Departmental responsibilities 631-2
Offshore structures, Demolition 684w
Offshore suppliers, Capital investment 503-4w
Offshore suppliers, North Sea oil 481w
Offshore suppliers, Statistics 503w
Oil exports 744-5w
Oil reserves, Petroleum exploration 477-8w
Oil rigs, Costs 480w
Petroleum exploration, Bristol Channel 50w
Piper Alpha platform, Salvage 333-4w

Mortgage defaulters
626-7w

Mortgage interest rates
423-5
Inflation 429
Social security benefits uprating 384w, 698w
Tax rates & bands 420-1
Tax yields 424w

Mortgage relief
54w
Defective housing 152w

Mortgages
Denis-Wild houses 624w
Fraud 283w, 386w, 465-6w

Moss, Mr Malcolm
Debates etc.
Electricity Bill, 2R, Money res & Ways & means res (13:12:88) 814-7
Questions
Common agricultural policy, Expenditure 241-2w
Economic growth 300w
Oil reserves, Petroleum exploration 477-8w
Small businesses 141w

Motor vehicle registration
Armed forces 686w

Motor vehicle safety
Driving offences 284-5w
Transport & Road Research Laboratory 661w

Motor vehicle testing
Buses 365-6w

Motor vehicle theft
Royal Victoria Hospital Belfast 745w

Motor vehicles
Road accidents 661w
Spain 179w
Taxation 307-8w

Motorcycles
161w
Casualties 129w
Road accidents 160-1w

Motorway service areas
Tidy Britain Group 407-8w

Motorways
Road traffic 523w
Road traffic police 724w
Road works 95w

Mowlam, Ms Marjorie
Debates etc.
European Council (06:12:88) 181
Questions
Business sponsorship incentive scheme, Northern region 34-5w
Central Electricity Generating Board 478w
Companies, Offices 169w
Group of Seven, Inflation 428
Nurses, Career structure 542-3w
Police & Criminal Evidence Act 1984, Arrests 289w
Police. & Criminal Evidence (Northern Ireland) Order 1988 747w
Prevention of Terrorism (Temporary Provisions) Bill 1988/89 719w
Terrorism, Arrests 287-8w
Terrorism, Police right of search 287w

Moynihan, Mr Colin, Under-Secretary of State for the Environment (Sport)
Debates etc.
Sports Council (16:12:88) 1281-6
Water Bill, 2R (07:12:88) 404-8
Water Bill, 2R, Money res & Ways & means res (08:12:88) 541-4
Questions
Football, Arrests 620w, 629w
Football, Identity cards 14w, 612-3w
Football League, Identity cards 728w
National Rivers Authority, Income 280-1w
National Rivers Authority, Legal profession 752w
Nature conservation, Staffordshire 401w
Pollution control, Bristol Channel 627w
River Clyst, River pollution 526w
River pollution 620w
River pollution, Control of Pollution Act 1974 276w
River pollution, Fishing 276w
River pollution, Industrial wastes 275-6w
River pollution, Pollution control 526w
River pollution, Yorkshire Water Authority 400-1w
Sea pollution, Cumbria 281w
Sewage, Pollution control 624-5w
Sewers, Local authorities 155w, 411w
Sewers, Private sector 282w
Sports centres, Government grants to local authorities 734-6w
Water authorities 620w
Water authorities, Civil defence 11w
Water authorities, Income 277w
Water authorities, Land acquisition 413w
Water authorities, Local government land 276-7w
Water authorities, Pollution control 276w
Water authorities, Public sector assets 621w, 628w
Water authorities, Public sector borrowing 348w

Moynihan, Mr Colin—continued
Water authorities, Wealth 277w
Water Bill 1988/89 619w
Water charges 412w
Water meters, Costs 281w
Water meters, Testing 281-2w
Water pollution, Civil service manpower 621w
Water pollution, Hazardous materials 525-6w, 629w
Water pollution, Nottingham 12w
Water pollution, Pollution control 413-4w
Water pollution, Water authorities 627w
Water supply, EC law 408w
Water supply, Greater London 408w
Water supply disconnections, Water authorities 752w
Water supply industry, Capital investment 619w
Water supply industry, Foreign investment in UK 525w
Water supply industry, Privatisation 275w, 279-80w, 529-30w

MRC
see Medical Research Council

Mudd, Mr David
Questions
Maude, Francis, Official stationery 25w

Mullin, Mr Chris
Debates etc.
British Shipbuilders, Privatisation (14:12:88) 945-8
European Council (06:12:88) 179
Members' interests (15:12:88) 1101-2
North East Shipbuilders, Factory closures (07:12:88) 318-9
Prevention of Terrorism (Temporary Provisions) Bill, 2R & Money res (06:12:88) 211
Security Service Bill, 2R & Money res (15:12:88) 1125, 1172, 1176
Questions
Berlin, Security 644w
Bombings, Guildford 708w
China, Human rights 89w
Community charge 892
Extradition, Republic of Ireland 385w
Heysham power station, Construction costs 104-5w
Official engagements 117w, 266-7w
Power stations, Operating costs 105w
Road accidents, Lorries 366-7w, 521w
Youth training scheme, Training allowances 148w

Multifibre arrangement
(09:12:88) 555-620
China 179w, 646-7w

Multiple occupation
613w

Mundic blocks
Defective housing 271w

Murphy, Mr Paul
Questions
Electricity tariffs, Industrial energy prices 635-6
HM Inspectorate of Pollution, Manpower 618w
International Monetary Fund 297w
Local authority associations, Wales 6
Polychlorinated biphenyl, HM Inspectorate of Pollution 13w

Muscular dystrophy
Wheelchairs 605w

Museums & galleries
35w

Music
Drug crimes 283w
Ethnic minorities 33w

MV Ardlough
Shipping accidents 662w

Myalgic encephalomyelitis
Northern Ireland 264-5w

NAA
see North Atlantic Assembly

Namibia
Ethnic groups 39w
Uranium 683w

NAO
see National Audit Office

NAPO
see National Association of Probation Officers

NASDIM
see National Association of Security Dealers Investment Managers

National Agricultural Centre Rural Trust
531w

National Association of Probation Officers
1074

National Association of Security Dealers Investment Managers
260w

National Audit Office
20w

National Coal Board
see British Coal Corporation

National Council for Vocational Qualifications
290w

National Curriculum English Working Group
English education 341w

National debt
Interest charges 305-6w

National Engineering Laboratory
Consultants 26w
Planning authorities 260w

National Farmers' Union
675w
Ministry of Agriculture 675w

National finance
see Treasury

National grid
373w
Electricity generation 327w

National Grid Company
483w

National income
Autumn Statement 305w
Balance of trade 420w
Pensioners 590w
Public expenditure 99-100w, 304w
Public sector debt 586w

National Institute of Agricultural Botany
Agricultural research 511-2w

National insurance
Gibraltar 189w

National insurance contributions
593w
Company pensions 597w
Employees' contributions 54-5w
Post Office 754w

National insurance credits
Departmental correspondence 588w

National insurance fund
Occupational pensions 535w
Personal pensions 535w

National mobility scheme
Rented housing 271w

National Museum of Wales
Objects in lieu of tax 491w

National parks
Planning appeals 16-8w
Planning permission 393w

National Petroleum Company of Iran
748-9w

National Power
483w.

National Rivers Authority
(07:12:88) 336-408, (08:12:88) 459-544
Income 280-1w
Legal profession 752w
Welsh Water Authority 358w

National security
Intelligence services 463-4w
Interception warrants 463w

National service
Community work 149w

National training task force
(05:12:88) 25-37

National Union of Students
10w, 32w, 461w

NATO
73w, 389-90w, 499w, 743-4w
"Spycatcher" 466w
Warsaw Pact 488w

Natural Environment Research Council
573w, 650w
Voluntary work 11w

Natural gas
Electricity generation 584w
Power stations 680w

Nature Conservancy Council
347-8w, 751w, 782w

Nature conservation
EC action 270w, 347w
Marine animals 730w
Seals 368w
Staffordshire 401w
Voluntary organisations 13w

Nature reserves
Government grants to voluntary organisations 751w
Land acquisition 347-8w

Naval bases
Scotland 72w

Navy
Tobacco 68w

NCB
see British Coal Corporation

NCC
see Nature Conservancy Council

Neale, Mr Gerrard
Debates etc.
Water Bill, 2R, Money res & Ways & means res (08:12:88) 486-8

Neave, Airey
Members' correspondence 656w

***Needham, Mr Richard**, Under-Secretary of State for Northern Ireland*
Debates etc.
Elected Authorities (Northern Ireland) Bill, 2R & Money res (05:12:88) 51, 52, 68, 104-8, 116, 118
Questions
Air pollution control, Northern Ireland Office 106w
Electorate, Northern Ireland 361-2w
Floods, Building repairs 265w
Game, Radioactivity 575-6w
Health visitors, Career structure 746w
Housing associations, Capital investment 107w
Income support, Northern Ireland 362w
Myalgic encephalomyelitis, Northern Ireland 264-5w
Northern Ireland Housing Executive, Paramilitary forces 362w
Nurses, Ards Hospital 360w

***Needham, Mr Richard**—continued*
Nurses, Belvoir Hospital 360w
Nurses, Career structure 107w, 361w, 399w, 576w
Nurses, East Antrim 361w, 399w
Nurses, Forster Green Hospital 360w
Nurses, Pay settlements 360w
Nurses, Purdysburn Hospital 361w
Royal Victoria Hospital Belfast, Motor vehicle theft 745w
Sewage, Waste disposal 399-400w
Social Fund, Northern Ireland 106w

Negative income tax
416w
Costs 306w

Neighbourhood watch schemes
702-3w
Households 702w

NEL
see National Engineering Laboratory

Nellist, Mr Dave
Debates etc.
Prevention of Terrorism (Temporary Provisions) Bill, 2R & Money res (06:12:88) 276, 277, 280
Security Service Bill, 2R & Money res (15:12:88) 1108, 1111
Young people, Social security benefits (05:12:88) 144-5, 150
Questions
Business statements 1088-9
Community charge 616w
Defence contracts, Boeing 467-8w
Defence contracts, Offset arrangements 468w
Hospitals 131w, 448w
Manufactured goods, Balance of trade 176w
Nurses, Career structure 543-4w
Passport Office, Civil service manpower 714-5w
Restart programme, Interviews 310w
Tanks, General Dynamics 467w
Training Commission, Compensation 149w
Unemployment benefits, Coventry 326w
Youth employment, Conditions of employment 165-6
Youth employment, Equal pay 158

Nelson, Mr Anthony
Debates etc.
A27, Noise (08:12:88) 546-50

NERC
see Natural Environment Research Council

***Neubert, Mr Michael**, Vice-Chamberlain of Her Majesty's Household*
Debates etc.
Addresses to the Crown, Queen's Speech (05:12:88) 1

New businesses
VAT registration 306w

New Zealand
Dairy products 430w

Newcastle Health Authority
Nurses 763-6w

Newcastle upon Tyne Town Moor Bill (HL) 1986/87
Debates etc.
Rep* (07:12:88) 291
3R* (13:12:88) 751

Newport
Council tenants 319-20w
Employment schemes 319w
Repossession orders 320w
Skill shortages 318w
Skilled workers 318w
Unemployment 21w

Newspaper press
Haseldine, Patrick 488w, 492w

***Newton, Rt Hon Tony**, Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster & Minister of Trade & Industry*
Debates etc.
British Shipbuilders, Privatisation (14:12:88) 918-23, 925, 957-60
North East Shipbuilders, Ministerial statements (07:12:88) 315-30
Questions
British Steel Corporation, Engineering industries 302
Confederation of British Industry 169w
Dept of Trade & Industry, Civil service dispersal 173-4w
Dept of Trade & Industry, History 169w
EC Research Council 94-5w
Engineering industries, EC internal trade 301
Engineering industries, Skill shortages 302
Engineering industries, UK trade with EC 302
Engineering industries, Young people 302
Industrial training 301-2
Industrial training schemes 644-5w
Industry, Interest rates 173w
Inner cities initiative 166w
Inner cities initiative, Private sector 170w
Inner city areas, Central-local government relations 298
North Peckham task force 260-2w
North Peckham task force, Community relations 262w
North Peckham task force, Expenditure 261-2w
Postal services, Monopoly 176w
Regional aid 299-300
Regional aid, North West region 300
Regional aid, Sherwood 300
Regional planning & development, Contracts for services 301
Regional planning & development, EC internal trade 301
Trade competitiveness 168w
Training, Inner city areas 297-8

Newtownards
Community policing 263w

NFU
see National Farmers' Union

NHS
Armed forces casualties 73-4w
Contracts for services 73w, 587w
Expenditure 599w
Foreign patients 87-8w
Hospital patients 541-2w
Land registration 365w
Public meetings 608w
Road accidents 520w
Scotland 502w
VAT 502w, 587w

NHS administration
Women 340w

NHS charges
Vaccination 540w

NHS charges exemptions
Students 122w

NHS complaints
Prescriptions 606w

NHS finance
599w, 605w
Dorset 540-1w
Hospital waiting lists 561w
Medical treatments 547w
North Western Regional Health Authority 126w
Northern Regional Health Authority 546w
Scotland 439w, 674w
Wales 92w
West Midlands 186w

NHS Review
555w

NI Office
see Northern Ireland Office

***Nicholls, Mr Patrick**, Under-Secretary of State for Employment*
Questions
Advisory Conciliation & Arbitration Service 136w
Child workers, Insurance 231-2w
Coal mining, Accidents 41w
Community work, Training Agency 610w
Day nurseries 473w
Dock labour scheme 143w
Economic League, Recruitment 539w
Employee reports, Disclosure of information 539w
Employment, Day nurseries 611w
Employment Training 136-7w, 538w
Employment Training, Arts 470w
Employment Training, Blyth valley 610w
Employment Training, Broadcasting 470w
Employment Training, Child care 469w, 538-40w
Employment Training, Community programme 150-1w
Employment Training, Day care of children 133w
Employment Training, Finance 307-8w
Employment Training, Liverpool City Council 213-4w
Employment Training, Local authorities 741-2w
Employment Training, Manpower 469-70w, 538w
Employment Training, Merseyside 610w
Employment Training, Nottingham 377-8w
Employment Training, Redundancy pay 468-9w
Employment Training, Take-up 136w
Employment Training, Trade unions 136w
Employment Training, Wandsworth 538w
Handicapped workers, Blyth valley 610-1w
Health & Safety Executive, Finance 143w
Industrial accidents, Industrial diseases 474-5w
Industrial training schemes, Industrial injuries 670w
Mine accidents, Coal mining 232-3w, 310w
Mine safety, Coal mining 231w
Older workers, Recruitment 138w
Opencast mining, Health hazards 233w, 468w
Playgrounds, Accidents 379w
Radiation Protection Working Party 378w
Redundancy pay, Insolvency 148w
Sex Discrimination Act 1975 475w
Trade union officials, Facilities agreements 139w
Training, School leaving 157-8
Training, Unemployment 156-7
Training, Voluntary organisations 671w
Training Commission 149w
Unemployment, Castle Point 160
Unemployment, Parliamentary constituencies 159-60
Unemployment, Part-time employment 161-6
Unemployment, Rochester 160-1
Unemployment, South West region 134w
Unemployment, Workington 160
Unemployment benefits, Social security appeals 611w
Unemployment benefits, Stoke-on-Trent 611w
Women's employment, Recruitment 140w
Working hours, Youth employment 139w

Nicholson, Mr David
Questions
Employment, EC countries 134-5w
Heart diseases, Transplant surgery 604w
River pollution 620w

Nicholson, Miss Emma
Debates etc.
Abortion (16:12:88) 1203, 1207-8, 1212, 1247-51
British Shipbuilders, Privatisation (14:12:88) 939-41
North East Shipbuilders, Factory closures (07:12:88) 320-1
Water Bill, 2R, Money res & Ways & means res (08:12:88) 503-6
Questions
Arts centres, Rural areas 36w
Lead free petrol 903
Nurses, Career structure 172
Radiotherapy, Medical equipment 339w
Rape, Prison sentences 711-2w
UN Convention on Torture 351w

Nigeria
Overseas aid 90w

NII
see Nuclear Installations Inspectorate

NIREX
see Nuclear Industry Radioactive Waste Executive

Nissan
Exports 179w

Nitrates
12w, 357w
Water pollution 751w

No-fault compensation
Medical treatments (13:12:88) 885-90

Noise
A27 (08:12:88) 546-54

Non-departmental public bodies
180w

Non-metropolitan districts
Average earnings 743w
Employment 742w

North Atlantic Assembly
748w

North Atlantic Treaty Organisation
see NATO

North Devon link road
Speed limits 524w

North East region
Coal mining 481w

North East Shipbuilders
Factory closures (14:12:88) 918-67
Ministerial statements (07:12:88) 315-30
Standing Order No 20 applications (07:12:88) 331-2

North Killingholme Cargo Terminal Bill 1987/88
Debates etc.
(15:12:88) 1065

North Middlesex Hospital
Midwives 760

North of Scotland Hydro-Electric Board
292w, 349-50w

North Peckham task force
260-2w
Community relations 262w
Employment opportunities 494-5w
Expenditure 261-2w

North Sea
Pollution control 898
Pollution monitoring 441w
Polychlorinated biphenyl 633-4w
Research 44w
Sea pollution 896-8

North Sea oil
Offshore suppliers 481w
Oil revenues 299w

North Staffordshire Health Authority
Cervical cancer 336w

North Tees Health Authority
127w

North Tees Hospital
Nurses 127w

North West region
Enterprise allowance scheme 166
Foreign investment in UK 176w
Inner cities initiative 166-7w
Leasehold housing 621w
Manufacturing industries 147w, 171w
Profitability 429-30
Regional aid 300
Unemployment 155-6
Uniform business rate 156

North Western Regional Health Authority
Heart diseases 555w
Hospital waiting lists 540w
NHS finance 126w

Northern Ireland
Accountants 746w
Baton rounds 195w
Electorate 361-2w
Employment discrimination (15:12:88) 1102
Family credit 362w
Firearms 679w
Fisheries 512-4w
Fishing catches 512-4w
Floods 515-6w
Food industry 679w
Gloucestershire Regiment 745w
Health visitors 746w
Homicide 747w
Housing associations 107w
Income support 362w
Local government elections (05:12:88) 38-120
Ministers 678-80w
Myalgic encephalomyelitis 264-5w
Nurses 107w, 360-1w, 576w
Prisoners' transfers 722w
Prisons 195-6w
Radioactivity 575-6w
Redundancy pay 516-7w
Regional planning & development 196w, 746w
Rivers 515w
Secondary education 746w
Sewage 399-400w
Sheep 513w
Social Fund 106w
Terrorism (06:12:88) 207-82

Northern Ireland Dept of Agriculture
515w

Northern Ireland Electricity
195w

Northern Ireland Health & Social Services Boards
576w

Northern Ireland Housing Executive
Floods 265w
Paramilitary forces 362w

Northern Ireland Office
Air pollution control 106w
Handicapped workers 362w
Ministers 678-80w
VAT 516w

Northern region
Business sponsorship incentive scheme 34-5w
Employment opportunities 491w
Income support 453-4w
Manufacturing industries 471w
Nurses 759-60w
Supplementary benefits 453-4w
Unemployment 135w
Youth training scheme 149-50w

Northern Regional Health Authority
127w
NHS finance 546w

Northern Regional Health Authority—continued
Nurses 598w

Nottingham
City technology colleges 647w
Community charge 615w
Employment Training 377-8w
Family credit 180-1w
Housing benefits 321w
Radioactive waste disposal 197w
Radioactivity 198w
Rating revaluations 277w
Unemployment 378w
Uniform business rate 272w
Water pollution 12w
Youth training scheme 538w

Nottingham Health Authority
Ophthalmology 446w
Resource Allocation Working Party 755

NSHEB
see North of Scotland Hydro-Electric Board

NSRB
see Nursing Staff & Professions Allied to Medicine Review Body

Nuclear accidents
Emergency planning 389w
Pollution monitoring 289-90w
Radioactivity 675w
USSR 390w

Nuclear disarmament
Nuclear Non Proliferation Treaty 316w

Nuclear fuel reprocessing
Nuclear safeguards 488w, 503w
Radioactive waste disposal 503w
Sellafield 329w, 503w

Nuclear fuels
Berkeley power station 49w, 103w
Exports 103w
Hartlepool power station 329-30w
Heysham power station 329-30w
Magnox reactors 49w

Nuclear fusion
Nuclear weapons 332-3w

Nuclear Industry Radioactive Waste Executive
614w
Radioactive waste disposal 906-7

Nuclear Installations Inspectorate
583w

Nuclear Non Proliferation Treaty
Nuclear disarmament 316w

Nuclear power
Death 634
Electricity supply industry 328w
Research finance 372w

Nuclear power stations
683w
Carbon dioxide 330w
Electricity generation 371w, 476w
Local authorities 635
Military exercises 770w
Plutonium 370-1w
Power station closures 192w, 330w, 376w
Scotland 683w
USA 679-80w

Nuclear reactors
Calder Hall 771-2w
Chapelcross power station 771-2w
Energy research 332w
Radioactive wastes 504w

Nuclear safeguards
Atomic Energy Research Establishment 332w
Nuclear fuel reprocessing 488w, 503w
Radioactive wastes 504w
Torness power station 104w
Transport of radioactive materials 104w

Nuclear safety
634
Plutonium 328-9w
Trawsfynydd power station 583w

Nuclear submarines
Radioactivity 343w

Nuclear test ban
317w

Nuclear weapons
Modernisation 499w
Nuclear fusion 332-3w
Sellafield 331w
South Africa 396w
USA 389-90w

Nuclear weapons tests
157w

Nurseries & Childminders Regulation Act 1948
Questions
Law reform 690w

Nursery schools
650w

Nurses
Appeals 3, 185w
Ards Hospital 360w
Ayrshire & Arran Health Board 779-82w
Barnsley Health Authority 543w
Belvoir Hospital 360w
Career structure 3-4, 80-2w, 107w, 127w, 164w, 169, 172, 185w, 187w, 212w, 360-1w, 399w, 542-6w, 576w, 598w, 692-4w, 756, 758-9, 759w, 760, 760-6w, 768, 779-82w
Durham Health Authority 761-4w
East Antrim 361w, 399w
Forster Green Hospital 360w
Industrial disputes 756-7
Manpower 80-1w, 131-2w
Mid Glamorgan Health Authority 3
Newcastle Health Authority 763-6w
North Tees Hospital 127w
Northern Ireland 107w, 360-1w, 576w
Northern region 759-60w
Northern Regional Health Authority 598w
Part-time employment 340w
Pay settlements 4, 129w, 360w, 390w, 449w, 551-2w, 757
Purdysburn Hospital 361w
Rates & rating 614-5w, 893
Recruitment 132w
Rotherham Health Authority 757
Scotland 212w
Scunthorpe Health Authority 544-6w
Sheffield Health Authority 763-4w
South Manchester Health Authority 759-60w
Wales 19-20w, 164w, 391w, 737w
Wigan Health Authority 692-4w

Nurses' training
Fees & charges 132w
Project 2000 608w
Royal College of Nursing 560w

Nursing homes
Inner London boroughs 447w
Wales 664w

Nursing Staff & Professions Allied to Medicine Review Body
390w

NUS
see National Union of Students

OAL
see Office of Arts & Libraries

Objects in lieu of tax
Art works 113w
National Museum of Wales 491w

O'Brien, Mr William
Questions
Central Electricity Generating Board 478w
Community care 545w
Fire services, West Yorkshire 705w
O'Brien, Mr William—continued
Housing subsidies 900
Social Fund, Community care 63-4w

Obscene Publications Act 1959
Questions
701w

Occupational pensions
534-6w, 593w
Derbyshire 753w
National insurance fund 535w
Pensioners 589-90w
Pensions 423-4w
Sex discrimination 754w

Occupational Pensions Board
593w

ODA
see Overseas Development Administration

OECD
see Organisation for Economic Cooperation & Development

Offences against children
Crime prevention 714w

Offences against the Person Act 1861
Questions
505w

Offenders
Electronic surveillance 506w, 1077

Offensive weapons
705w

Office of Arts & Libraries
35w

Office of Electricity Regulation
Manpower 372w

Office of Fair Trading
25-6w
Mergers 171w

Offices
British Library 254w
Companies 169w
Dept of Energy 482w
Dept of Health 547w

Official cars
Dept of the Environment 407w

Official engagements
117w, 266-7w, 492w, 656w
Electricity generation 633

Official gifts
Expenditure 267-8w, 390w

Official secrets
International organisations 487-8w

Official Secrets Bill 1988/89
Questions
706-7w

Official stationery
Maude, Francis 25w

Offset arrangements
467-8w
Defence contracts 468w

Offshore safety
475w, 631-2
Departmental responsibilities 631-2

Offshore structures
Demolition 684w

Offshore suppliers
Capital investment 503-4w
North Sea oil 481w
Statistics 503w

OFT
see Office of Fair Trading

Oil exports
744-5w

Oil pollution
Milford Haven 168

Oil reserves
Petroleum exploration 477-8w

Oil revenues
North Sea oil 299w

Oil rigs
Costs 480w

Old people's homes
Income support 596w

Old Perry bridge
751w

Older workers
Recruitment 138w

Oldham Health Authority
Capital investment 74w
Hospital beds 362-3w
Ophthalmic services 74-5w

One parent benefit
Shetland 454w

One parent families
Additional personal allowance 55w
Child support 359-60w
Earnings rules 454w
Social security benefits 592w

O'Neill, Mr Martin
Debates etc.
Transport (Scotland) Bill, 2R & Money res (14:12:88) 1047
Questions
Defence research establishments, Audit 158w, 688w
Defence research establishments, Civil service agencies 159w
Defence Statistical Organisation, Privatisation 159w
Explosions, Hong Kong 253w
Trident, Administrative delays 158w
Trident missiles 159w
Trident missiles, Repairs & maintenance 158-9w

Onslow, Rt Hon Cranley
Debates etc.
Water Bill, 2R (07:12:88) 362

Open University
Agriculture 776w

Opencast Executive
631

Opencast mining
Health hazards 233w, 468w

Opening hours
Tourist information 154

Operating costs
Power stations 105w

Operating department assistants
Pay 690w

Operating theatres
751

Ophthalmic services
Hospital waiting lists 74-5w, 446w
Nottingham Health Authority 446w
Oldham Health Authority 74-5w

Oppenheim, Mr Phillip
Debates etc.
British Shipbuilders, Privatisation (14:12:88) 943-5
North East Shipbuilders, Factory closures (07:12:88) 323
Questions

Oppenheim, Mr Phillip—continued
Arms control, USSR 431-2
Confederation of British Industry 169w
Derbyshire County Council, Ethnic minorities 109w
Owner occupied housing, Derbyshire 269w
Trade union elections, Secret ballot 671w
Training Commission 149w
Water authorities 620w
Water pollution 906

Opposition
Terrorism 1078

Opposition parties
Civil servants 492w
Speaker's rulings & statements (12:12:88) 705-6

Optical charges
Eye tests 79-80w

Opticians
Manchester 604w

Oral questions
Speaker's rulings & statements (05:12:88) 18, (08:12:88) 419, (15:12:88) 1098

Orange badge scheme
Handicapped drivers 564w

Order confirmation Bills
(07:12:88) 293-4

Orders & regulations
(07:12:88) 293, 295
Lotteries 351w

Organ donor cards
549-50w

Organ donors
Departmental circulars 556w

Organic farming
Food standards 675w

Organisation for Economic Cooperation & Development
642-3
Overseas aid 27w

Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Debates etc.
Electricity Bill, 2R (12:12:88) 673
Electricity Bill, 2R, Money res & Ways & means res (13:12:88) 808-10, 861

Orthopaedics
Manpower 607w
Scotland 486w

Outer London boroughs
Property development 628w

Overseas aid
428-9w, 643
Africa 642-3
Bangladesh 429w
Brazil 657w
Cape Verde Islands 497-8w
China 429w
Ecology 430w
Environmental impact assessment 427w
Forestry 428w
India 427w
Kampuchea 426w
Nigeria 90w
Organisation for Economic Cooperation & Development 27w
Rain forests 644-6
Senegal 430w
Tanzania 27-8w
Women 425w

Overseas development
see Foreign & Commonwealth Office

Overseas Development Administration
314-5w
School holidays 253w

Overseas investment
Public sector assets 203w

Overseas trade
Caribbean 174-5w
International trade 26w

Overseas trade—continued
Japan 645w
South America 174-5w
Taiwan 645w
USSR 173w

Owen, Rt Hon David
Debates etc.
Electricity Bill, 2R, Money res & Ways & means res (13:12:88) 812-4
Questions
Ryan, Patrick, Extradition 766

Own resources
56-7w, 743w

Owner occupied housing
424
Derbyshire 269w
Housing associations 633w
South East region 623w
Wales 24w

Oxford
Blood transfusion services 761
Business sponsorship incentive scheme 34w

Oxford Regional Health Authority
760-1

Oxford University
Higher education admission 3-8w

Ozone layer
622w
Air pollution control 908
Chlorofluorocarbons 346-7w
International conferences 619w

Page, Mr Richard
Questions
Hospital consultants 761
Insolvency, Redundancy pay 516-7w
Nigeria, Overseas aid 90w
Rolls-Royce Aeroengines, Government assistance to industry 297
Self-employed 140w

Paice, Mr James
Debates etc.
Employment opportunities (05:12:88) 32
Questions
Employment Training 136w
North Sea, Sea pollution 896-7
Training, Unemployment 157

Paisley, Rev Ian
Debates etc.
Elected Authorities (Northern Ireland) Bill, 2R & Money res (05:12:88) 40, 56, 69
Prevention of Terrorism (Temporary Provisions) Bill, 2R & Money res (06:12:88) 223-7
Questions
Salmonella, Eggs 24

Palace of Westminster
727w
Theft 257-8w

Palestine Liberation Organisation
Peace negotiations 39w, 396w, 644w, 1079, 1082

Paper
Recycling 495-6w

Parallel imports
Drugs 767w

Paramedical staff
Pay 753-4

Paramilitary forces
Northern Ireland Housing Executive 362w

Parent & child
Young offenders 1077-8

Parental contributions
Student grants 757-8w

Parking
Greater London 352w

Parking Enforcement Working Party
352w, 712-3w

Parking offences
508w

***Parkinson, Rt Hon Cecil**, Secretary of State for Energy*
Debates etc.
Electricity Bill, 2R (12:12:88) 669-79, 681, 683, 687, 691, 704
Electricity Bill, 2R, Money res & Ways & means res (13:12:88) 855
Questions
British Coal Corporation 479w
Central Electricity Generating Board 478w
Coal mining, Government assistance 482w
Coal mining, Government assistance to nationalised industries 629
Coal mining, Manpower 629
Coal mining, Privately owned mines 478-9w
Coal mining, Redundancy 629-30
Coal mining, Working hours 629
Dept of Energy, Advertising 375w
Dept of Energy, Offices 482w
Electricity supply industry, Pay 483w
Electricity supply industry, Privatisation 477w, 628
Energy supply, Private sector 478w
Fossil fuelled power stations, Pollution control 628
Handicapped workers, Dept of Energy 331w
Nuclear power, Death 634
Nuclear power stations, Local authorities 635
Nuclear safety 634
Power station closures, Costs 627-8
Radioactive waste disposal, Costs 627-8
South of Scotland Electricity Board 481w
VAT, Dept of Energy 329w

Parliament
Travel guides 669w

Parliamentary building maintenance & repair
Parliamentary Press Gallery 733-4w

Parliamentary Commissioner for Administration
Barlow Clowes 19w

Parliamentary constituencies
Unemployment 159-60

Parliamentary Press Gallery
Parliamentary building maintenance & repair 733-4w

Parliamentary privilege
Speaker's rulings & statements (15:12:88) 1101-2

Parole Review Committee
1074
Prison population 709w
Probation & aftercare 1074

Parry, Mr Robert
Questions
Tobacco duties, Inquiries 422w

Part-time education
Public libraries 36w

Part-time employment
Nurses 340w
Unemployment 161-6

Passport Office
Civil service manpower 714-5w
Members' correspondence 722w

Passports
32w, 716w
Coventry four 588w

Patchett, Mr Terry
Debates etc.
Elected Authorities (Northern Ireland) Bill, 2R & Money res (05:12:88) 92, 93
Electricity Bill, 2R, Money res & Ways & means res (13:12:88) 831-3
Questions
Apprentices 145-6w
British Coal Corporation 630
Community Care Review 763
Forensic science, Civil service manpower 703-4w
Income tax, Pensioners 301w
Industrial accidents, Industrial diseases 474-5w
Industrial health & safety, International Labour Organisation 42w

Pathology
Manpower 769w

Patients' transport
Air transport 554w
Death 440w

Patnick, Mr Irvine
Questions
Crime, South Yorkshire 703w
Employment Training, Trades Union Congress 166-7
Estate Action, Expenditure 613w
Hospital waiting lists, Trent Regional Health Authority 128w
Housing investment programmes, Local authorities 274w
Primary health care 558w

***Patten, Mr Chris**, Minister of State for Overseas Development*
Questions
Africa, Development aid 427-8w
Africa, Ministers' visits abroad 28w
Africa, Overseas aid 643
Bangladesh, Overseas aid 429w
Brazil, Overseas aid 657w
Cape Verde Islands, Overseas aid 497-8w
Caribbean, Health services 89-90w
Central African Federation, Public service pensions 428w
China, Overseas aid 429w
Crown Agents 562-3w
Debts 430w
Debts, Rain forests 429w
Developing countries, EC internal trade 428w
Diplomatic service, Civil service pensions 498w
EC Development Council 426w
Ethiopia, Ministers' visits abroad 427w
India, Overseas aid 427w
India, Primary education 427w
Kampuchea, Overseas aid 426w
Organisation for Economic Cooperation & Development, Overseas aid 27w
Overseas aid 428-9w, 643
Overseas aid, Africa 642-3
Overseas aid, Ecology 430w
Overseas aid, Environmental impact assessment 427w
Overseas aid, Forestry 428w
Overseas aid, Women 425w
Overseas Development Administration, School holidays 253w
Rain forests 643-4
Rain forests, Overseas aid 644-6
Senegal, Overseas aid 430w
Sri Lanka, Buses 28w
Tanzania, Overseas aid 27-8w
UN agencies, UK contributions 429-30w
UNICEF 425w
UNICEF, Vaccination 641-2

***Patten, Mr John**, Minister of State at the Home Office*

***Patten, Mr John**—continued*
Debates etc.
Security Service Bill, 2R & Money res (15:12:88) 1119, 1173-9, 1182, 1186-7
Questions
Abortion, Custodial treatment 505w
Alcoholic drinks, Beverley 579w
Alternatives to prison 718w
Arrests 206w
AWE Burghfield, Emergency services 285w
Bombings, Guildford 707-8w
Burglary, Crime prevention 713w
Child benefit 1067
Civil defence, Defence research 204w
Crime, South Yorkshire 703w
Crime prevention, Inter-city rail transport 283w
Crimes of violence, Rural areas 713w
Crimes of violence, Sentencing 711w
Criminal Injuries Compensation Board, Administrative delays 710w
Criminal Justice Act 1988, Sentencing 285w
Cruelty to children 1067-8
Cruelty to children, Punishment 1067
Cruelty to children, Sexual offences 351-2w
Derbyshire County Council, Ethnic minorities 109w
Domestic violence, Criminal statistics 355w
Driving offences, Disqualifications 208w
Drunkenness, Crime prevention 717w
Electronic surveillance, Urban areas 701w
Emergency planning, Disasters 702w
Emergency planning, Government grants to local authorities 203-4w
Emergency planning, Local government staff 204-5w
Emergency planning, Manpower 205-6w
Emergency planning, Satellites 284w
Extradition, Belgium 209-10w
Extradition, Republic of Ireland 209-11w, 288w, 458w
Extradition, South Africa 724w
Fiore, Roberto, Extradition 1077
Fire services, South Yorkshire 705w
Fire services, West Yorkshire 705w
Fires, Casualties 577w
Fires, Housing 577w
Fraud, Mortgages 283w, 386w
Home Office, Voluntary organisations 704w
Horse racing, Betting 717w
Identity cards 352w
Infant Life (Preservation) Act 1929, Convictions 712w
Infant Life (Preservation) Act 1929, Law reform 505w
Justices' clerks 286w
Justices' clerks, London allowance 286-7w
Justices' clerks, Pay 286w
Lotteries, Orders & regulations 351w
Magistrates' courts, Manpower 287w
Neighbourhood watch schemes 702-3w
Neighbourhood watch schemes, Households 702w
Offences against children, Crime prevention 714w
Offenders, Electronic surveillance 506w, 1077
Parole Review Committee 1074
Parole Review Committee, Probation & aftercare 1074
Pornography, Children 1068
Prison sentences 1075
Prisoners, Repatriation 208-9w
Probation, Expenditure 721w
Probation & aftercare 505w
"Punishment Custody & the Community" 714w
Rape, Greater Manchester 354w
Rape, Prison sentences 711-2w
Rape, Sentencing 282w
Robbery, Sentencing 705w
Security industry 718w
Smoke detection, Council housing 576w
Smoke detection, Domestic safety 577w
Smoke detection, Fire services 576w
Smoke detection, Local authorities 577w
Tobacco, Children 721w

Patten, Mr John—continued
United Kingdom Warning & Monitoring Organisation, Expenditure 205w
Women, Equal opportunities 107w

Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Questions
Mental health community care 768w

Pawsey, Mr James
Questions
Education support grants 652-4w
Neighbourhood watch schemes, Households 702w
Procurement Executive, Civil service dispersal 157-8w

Pay incentives
Hospital closures 556-7w

Pay television
Television engineering 111w

Payroll deduction scheme
Charitable donations 421w
Charities 421w

Peace negotiations
Angola 395w
Ethiopia 39w
Kampuchea 748w
Middle East 1079
Palestine Liberation Organisation 39w, 396w, 644w, 1079, 1082

Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Debates etc.
Multifibre arrangement (09:12:88) 560, 580, 594-7
Questions
Infant Life (Preservation) Act 1929, Prosecutions 662w

Pendry, Mr Tom
Debates etc.
Water Bill, 2R, Money res & Ways & means res (08:12:88) 496-8
Questions
Arrests 206w
Football, Identity cards 613w
Science & technology research, Research finance 342w
Sports facilities, Community charge 345w

Pension books
Theft 60w

Pension funds
423w

Pensioners
589w, 1081
Additional pensions 753w
British residents abroad 319-20w
Christmas bonus 124w
Concessionary television licences 712w
Derbyshire 695w
Economic situation 590w
Health 547-8w
Health education 761-2
Heating 762-3
Heating allowances 321w
Housing benefits 590w, 753w
Income support 589w
Income tax 52w, 301w, 422w
National income 590w
Occupational pensions 589-90w
Personal income 65-6w, 534w
Scotland 65w
Social security reform 65w
Standing charges 49w

Pensions
Average earnings 612w
Finance 426
Occupational pensions 423-4w
Tax allowances 420w
Widows' benefits 694-5w

Performance indicators
Yorkshire Regional Health Authority 549w

Performance related pay
Central Nottinghamshire Health Authority 556-7w

Personal equity plans
Take-up 52w

Personal income
150w
Child benefit 59-60w
Community charge 727-8w
Elderly 320w
House prices 627w
Imports 502w
Income tax 100-1w
Pensioners 65-6w, 534w
Tax rates & bands 422

Personal injury compensation
(15:12:88) 1102-3

Personal pensions
National insurance fund 535w

Personal social services
Local government expenditure 759-60w

Personal tax allowances
417w
Income tax 499w, 501w
Married people 52-3w
Single people 417w

Personal taxation
Tax reform 302w

Pest control
Pollen beetles 380w

Pesticides
Agricultural research 318w
Scotland 369-70w

Petroleum exploration
Bristol Channel 50w
Oil reserves 477-8w

Petroleum Royalties (Relief) & Continental Shelf Bill 1988/89
Debates etc.
Rem stages (15:12:88) 1188-90

Photography
Business sponsorship incentive scheme 34w

Physiotherapy
Teaching hospitals (12:12:88) 745

PICKUP
Wales 9

PIEDA
291w

Pike, Mr Peter L
Debates etc.
Water Bill, 2R (07:12:88) 340, 363-5
Questions
Electricity supply industry, Consumer protection 638
Hepatitis, Health service staff 448w
Manufacturing industries, North West region 147w, 171w
Mobility allowance, Age 532w
Nursery schools 650w
Official engagements 117w, 266-7w, 492w
Remand centres 701w
Road works, Road mileage 243w
Roads, Expenditure 365w
Sheltered housing, Government grants 619-20w
Unemployment, North West region 156

Piper Alpha platform
Salvage 333-4w

Pirate radio stations
Radio frequencies 180w

Planning appeals
17-8w, 626w
Greenbelt 17w
Hampshire 198-9w
Legal costs 626w
National parks 16-8w
Planning inquiries 413w
Wales 24w, 393w

Planning authorities
900
National Engineering Laboratory 260w

Planning authorities—continued
Planning permission 900-1
Town & country planning 905

Planning inquiries
627w
Planning appeals 413w
Public participation in planning 613w

Planning permission
Coastal erosion 622w
Croydon 15w
Farm buildings 751w
London boroughs 278-9w
National parks 393w
Planning authorities 900-1
Prisons 110w
Torquay 153w
Wales 393w

Platemede Limited
414-5w

Platinum
Tax avoidance 359w

Play groups
336-8w

Playgrounds
Accidents 379w

PLO
see Palestine Liberation Organisation

Plugs & sockets
Electrical safety 297

Plutonium
Air freight transport 99w
Central Electricity Generating Board 328-9w
Electricity generation 328-9w
Exports 328w
Hunterston power station 328w
Nuclear power stations 370-1w
Nuclear safety 328-9w
Power station closures 252w
Sellafield 328-9w
Transport of radioactive materials 583w
USA 328w, 749w

Plymouth
Radioactive wastes 772w

POA
see Prison Officers' Association

Points of order
Speaker's rulings & statements (05:12:88) 24, (07:12:88) 314, (12:12:88) 677, (14:12:88) 1003, (15:12:88) 1078, 1083-4, 1100

Police
Efficiency scrutinies 715w
Football 709w
Government grants 709w
Health 704w
Leicester (08:12:88) 545
Leicestershire 462w
Manpower 701w, 1071
Public petitions (08:12:88) 545
Recruitment 701w
South Yorkshire 709w

Police & Criminal Evidence Act 1984
Questions
747w
Arrests 289w
Convictions 289w

Police & Criminal Evidence (Northern Ireland) Order 1988
Questions
747w

Police civilians
459w, 507w
Manpower 720w

Police community liaison committees

London boroughs 458-9w

Police custody
Immigrant detainees 459w

Police detention
(06:12:88) 207-82

Police Federation
see Police Federation of England & Wales

Police Federation of England & Wales
718w

Police firearms
Baton rounds 679w
Theft 679w

Police interrogation
Tape recorders 717w

Police national computer
Administrative delays 352w
Computer privacy 458w
Emergency planning 506-7w

Police powers
Breathalysers 461w

Police records
Child care 284w
Missing persons 31w

Police relations with public
Law enforcement 724w
Schools 701-2w

Police right of search
Scotland 444w
Terrorism 287w

Police stations
Comber 263-4w
Dromara 747-8w

Police surgeons
South Yorkshire 207w
Women 207w

Policewomen
Manpower 720-1w

Political refugees
Jews 1077
Sri Lanka 207-8w

Pollen beetles
Agricultural research 435-6w
Pest control 380w

Pollution
Cynon valley 10
Loch Sunart 674w

Pollution control
902-3
Bristol Channel 627w
Fossil fuelled power stations 628
Industry 197w
North Sea 898
River pollution 526w
River Thames 897
Sewage 624-5w, 665-70w
Wales 10-1
Water authorities 276w
Water pollution 413-4w

Pollution Inspectorate
see HM Inspectorate of Pollution

Pollution monitoring
Fish 201w
North Sea 441w
Nuclear accidents 289-90w
Radioactivity 675-6w

Polycarboxylates
270w

Polychlorinated biphenyl
HM Inspectorate of Pollution 13w
North Sea 633-4w

Pornography
Children 1068

Port of Tyne Bill (HL) 1987/88
Debates etc.
2R* (06:12:88) 151

Porter, Mr Barry
Questions
Parliamentary Press Gallery, Parliamentary building maintenance & repair 733-4w
Planning appeals, Legal costs 626w

Porter, Mr David
Questions
"Animal Procedures Committee Annual Report, 1987" 112-3w
Fish farming, White fish 511w
Housing associations, Rural areas 531w

Portillo, Mr Michael, Minister for Public Transport
Debates etc.
Manchester Airport, Air routes (14:12:88) 1061-4
Questions
Bus crews, Greater London 2w
Bus services, Buy outs 486w
Bus services, Competition 659w
Channel tunnel, Railway transport 244w, 563w
Channel tunnel, Safety 657w
Coastguard, Brixham 658w
Dogs, Liability for animals 724w
HM Coastguard, Hartland Point 517-8w
Level crossings, Railway safety 245w
London Regional Transport, Bus services 517w
Manchester Airport, Railway network 245w
MV Ardlough, Shipping accidents 662w
Ports, EC internal trade 97-8w, 563w
Ports, Subsidies 563-4w
Public transport, Research finance 658-9w
Railway closures 741w
Railway fares, Greater London 245w
Railway Inspectorate, Manpower 517w
Railway property, Trespass 661w
Railway safety, Fox hunting 566w
Railway timetables, Railway travel 242-3w
Railway transport, Death 98w
Shipping accidents, Compensation 97w
Taxis, Mobility of disabled 520-1w

Ports
EC internal trade 97-8w, 563w
Subsidies 563-4w

Portsmouth
139w

Post Office
62w, 497w
National insurance contributions 754w

Post Office Counters
Monopolies & Mergers Commission 497w

Postal services
Monopoly 176w, 766

Potato Marketing Board
Departmental publications 201w

Poultry
Animal husbandry 432w
Salmonella 381w, 432-3w

Poultry meat
Salmonella 449w

Poverty
Children 20w

Poverty trap
Income tax 415w

Powell, Mr William
Debates etc.
Security Service Bill, 2R & Money res (15.12:88) 1119, 1122, 1130, 1159-61, 1170, 1174

Power failures
Windsor 633-4, 684w

Power station closures
331w, 683w
Calder Hall 681w
Chapelcross power station 377w, 681w

Power station closures—continued
Costs 627-8
Fossil fuelled power stations 683w
Nuclear power stations 192w, 330w, 376w
Plutonium 252w

Power stations
Competition 372w
Construction 376w
Cumbria 482w
Licensing 371w
Malta 483w, 629-30w
Natural gas 680w
Operating costs 105w
Private sector 749-50w

PowerGen
483w

Pravda
Government achievements 170-1

Prawns
Fish conservation 778w

PRC Homes
152w

Pregnancy
Young people 131w

Preparatory schools
Grant maintained schools 7w

Prescott, Mr John
Debates etc.
Railway accidents, Clapham junction (12:12:88) 647-8
Questions
European Clearway, Ferries 564w
Falderntor, Fires 564w
Ferries, Fires 566w
Motor vehicles, Taxation 307-8w
Prescribed industrial diseases, Merchant seamen 532w
Railway accidents 564-6w
Roads, Expenditure 2w

Prescribed industrial diseases
Merchant seamen 532w

Prescription charges
Limited list prescribing 604-5w

Prescription charges exemptions
Crohn's disease 447-8w

Prescriptions
Benzodiazepines 551w
Costs 126-8w
Misuse of Drugs Act 1971 722w
NHS complaints 606w

Press advertising
Severe weather payments 451w

Press conferences
Journalists 297w

Pressurised water reactors
Construction costs 376w

Prestwick Airport
99w

Prevention of Terrorism Acts
Questions
287-8w

Prevention of Terrorism (Temporary Provisions) Bill 1988/89
Debates etc.
2R & Money res (06:12:88) 207-82
Questions
719w

Preventive medicine
364w

Price, Sir David
Debates etc.
Railway accidents, Clapham junction (12:12:88) 648-9
Questions
AIDS, Screening 541w

Price, Sir David—continued
Employment opportunities, Handicapped workers 149w
Mergers, EC action 177w
Planning appeals, Hampshire 198-9w
VAT, Medical equipment 587w

Price controls
Electricity tariffs 373w, 635

Price increases
423
Electricity tariffs 636
Tax rates & bands 419-20

Prices
Birds of prey 12w
Wheat 434w

Primarolo, Ms Dawn
Questions
Defence research, Aerobiology 69w
Defence research, Research finance 69w
Defence research, Universities 68-9w
Defence research, Veterinary medicine 68w
Housing & Local Government Bill 1988/89 899-900
Training, Young people 145w
Universities, Veterinary services 8-9w

Primary education
Curriculum 47w
Examinations 47w
Headteachers 571-2w
India 427w

Primary health care
126w, 550w, 553w, 558w

Prime, Geoffrey
268-9w

Prime Minister
170-1, 267-8w, 390w
Ministerial policy advisors 267w
Railway transport 656-7w

Prime Minister's Office
see Prime Minister

Prime Minister's Policy Unit
268w

Prime Minister's questions
Speaker's rulings & statements (08:12:88) 457, 458

Prison education services
Armley Prison 286w

Prison employment
Prisoners 354-5w

Prison escapes
723w

Prison medical services
Psychiatry 457-8w

Prison Officers' Association
Trade union membership 207w

Prison population
716w
Armley Prison 286w
Mental patients 282-3w
Parole Review Committee 709w

Prison riots
Lindholme Prison 207w

Prison rules
Prisoners 354w

Prison sentences
1075
Infant Life (Preservation) Act 1929 709w
Infanticide 1069
Rape 711-2w

Prison staff
London allowance 109w
Relocation of employees 109w

Prison visits
Wandsworth Prison 721w

Prisoners
AIDS 464-6w, 706w
Contraceptives 108w

Prisoners—continued
Health education 108w
Hepatitis 464-6w
Prison employment 354-5w
Prison rules 354w
Repatriation 208-9w
Rule 43 722w
Solitary confinement 712w
Training 354-5w
Turkey 394w

Prisoners on remand
640
Armley Prison 755-6w

Prisoners' transfers
Northern Ireland 722w

Prisons
AIDS 108w
Construction 719-20w
Drug abuse 108w
Food hygiene 706w
Homosexuality 108w
Merseyside 110w
Northern Ireland 195-6w
Planning permission 110w

Private Bills
(07:12:88) 293-4

Private education
Local education authorities 250-2w
Voluntary schools 252w

Private health services
Dentists 186-7w

Private investment
EC countries 493w
Tourist industry 471w

Private Members' motions
Abortion (16:12:88) 1200-67

Private notice questions
Speaker's rulings & statements (05:12:88) 24

Private rented housing
Business expansion scheme 307w
Council house waiting lists 729w
Housing benefits 60w

Private sector
Arts finance 37w
Energy supply 478w
Inner cities initiative 170w
Power stations 749-50w
Sewers 282w

Privately owned mines
Coal mining 478-9w

Privatisation
422, 425-6
Advertising 423w
Air pollution control 104w
British Shipbuilders (14:12:88) 918-67
British Steel Corporation 94w
Crown Suppliers 273w
Defence Statistical Organisation 159w
Electricity supply industry 327-8w, 372-3w, 476-7w, 628, (12:12:88) 669-745, (13:12:88) 787-884
Forestry Commission 444w
Harland & Wolff 574-5w
Income 299w
Scottish Transport Group (14:12:88) 968-1057
Shares 301w
Short Brothers 264w, 310-1, 575w
Standard of living 586w
Water authorities (07:12:88) 336-408, (08:12:88) 459-544
Water supply industry 155w, 275w, 279-80w, 529-30w, 899

Probation
Expenditure 721w

Probation & aftercare
505w
Finance 1074

Probation & aftercare—continued
Parole Review Committee 1074

"Problems of Long Serving Ambulancemen"
607w

Procurators fiscal
638w

Procurement
Government departments 100w

Procurement Executive
Air force bases 685-6w
Civil service dispersal 157-8w
Civil service manpower 773-6w

Production costs
Television programmes 111w

Production quotas
Dairy farming 119w
Milk 510-1w

Productivity
Economic growth 300w
Industry 137w

Professional liability
258w

Professional misconduct
General Medical Council 75-8w

Professional qualifications
Electrical technology 296-7
General Medical Council 77-8w

Profit sharing
100w

Profitability
Economic growth 301-2w
North West region 429-30

Project 2000
Nurses' training 608w

Property development
Greenbelt 905
Outer London boroughs 628w
Vacant land 282w

Property law
Scottish legal system 663w

Property Services Agency
403w, 531w, 620w, 624w

Property transfer
Art works 254w
Council housing 894, 899-900
Dreadnought Seamen's Hospital 585w
Energy consumption 684w
Land use 621w
Mental hospitals 674w
Retford Hospital 74w

Prosecutions
Abortion 662w
Councillors' interests 18w
Infant Life (Preservation) Act 1929 662w
Intoxicating Substances (Supply) Act 1985 110w
"Satanic Verses" 19w
Sinclair User 569-70w
Television licences 112w
Tobacco 635w

Prosthetics
Manpower 556w
Scotland 486w

Protection of Animals (Amendment) Act 1988
Questions
Dog fighting 354w
Law enforcement 354w

Provisional Sinn Fein
see Sinn Fein

PSA
see Property Services Agency

Psychiatric nurses
Scotland 42w

Psychiatry
Prison medical services 457-8w

Public appointments
Committee on Safety of Medicines 83w, 130w

Public appointments—continued
European Commission 116w, 266w, 491w
Inner London Staff Commission 490-1w
Leeds Western Health Authority 339w
Magistrates 664w
Public bodies 211w
Scotland 211w
Scottish health boards 671w
Wales 20w

Public Bills
(07:12:88) 293

Public bodies
Local radio 463w
Public appointments 211w

Public expenditure
305w, 426
Cash limits 100w
Educational finance 302-3w
Inflation 298w
Ministerial statements (13:12:88) 770-86
National income 99-100w, 304w
Retirement pensions 302-3w
Scotland (13:12:88) 770-86

Public Health Laboratory Service
82w

Public libraries
Finance 256w, 414w
Part-time education 36w

Public meetings
Low flying 772w
NHS 608w

Public order
Counter culture 1072

Public order policing
Students 32-3w, 461w

Public participation in planning
Planning inquiries 613w

Public petitions
Channel tunnel (14:12:88) 1058
Police (08:12:88) 545
Teaching hospitals (12:12:88) 745

Public relations
Metropolitan Police 284w

Public sector assets
Overseas investment 203w
Water authorities 621w, 628w

Public sector borrowing
Water authorities 348w

Public sector borrowing requirement
358w

Public sector debt
304w
National income 586w

Public sector housing
908

Public service pensions
Central African Federation 428w

Public statues
Inner city areas 36w

Public transport
Research finance 658-9w

Public utilities
Road works 161-2w

Public Utilities Street Works Act 1950 Review
161-2w

Publicity
Community charge 401w, 616-7w
Drug abuse 552w
EC internal trade 171-2w
Education Reform Act 1988 571w
Family benefits 325w
Food hygiene 120w

Publicity—continued
Hypothermia 449-50w
Social security benefits 123w
Youth training scheme 609w

Punishment
Cruelty to children 1067

"Punishment Custody & the Community"
714w

Purdysburn Hospital
Nurses 361w

Queen's Own Highlanders
AIDS 68w

Queen's Speech
Addresses to the Crown (05:12:88) 1

Questionnaires
Student Unions Review 10w, 342w

Quin, Ms Joyce
Debates etc.
British Shipbuilders, Privatisation (14:12:88) 941, 953-5
North East Shipbuilders, Factory closures (07:12:88) 325
Questions
EC Development Council 426w
Energy conservation, Advertising 481w
Engineering industries, EC internal trade 301
Homelessness 198w
Interest rates, Exchange rates 300w
Policewomen, Manpower 720-1w
Preventive medicine 364w
Severe disablement allowance 591w
Shipbuilding, EC grants & loans 645-6w

Racial harassment
Schools 756-7w

Radiation
330w

Radiation hazards
Ministry of Agriculture 379w
Radioactive waste disposal 750w

Radiation Incident Monitoring Network
389w, 727w
Equipment 197-8w
Radioactivity 197w
Watnall 197w

Radiation Protection Working Party
378w

Radio broadcasting licences
Local radio 462-3w

Radio frequencies
Local radio 463w
Pirate radio stations 180w

Radioactive Substances Act 1960
Questions
197w

Radioactive waste disposal
630w, 636-7, 907
Central Electricity Generating Board 376w
Computer applications 724-5w
Costs 403w, 627-8, 636, 725w
Magnox reactors 403w
Nottingham 197w
Nuclear fuel reprocessing 503w
Nuclear Industry Radioactive Waste Executive 906-7
Radiation hazards 750w
Research 725w
Scotland 907-8
Sellafield 504-5w
South Yorkshire 13w

Radioactive Waste Management Advisory Committee
750w

Radioactive wastes
Electricity generation 479w
Exports 725w

Radioactive wastes—continued
Nuclear reactors 504w
Nuclear safeguards 504w
Plymouth 772w
Sellafield 49-50w

Radioactivity
727w
Cumbria 379-80w, 676w
Food contamination 431w
Game 575-6w
Northern Ireland 575-6w
Nottingham 198w
Nuclear accidents 675w
Nuclear submarines 343w
Pollution monitoring 675-6w
Radiation Incident Monitoring Network 197w
Scotland 289-90w
Sheep 513w
Surveying 676w

Radiographers
Cookridge Hospital 363w
Manpower 769w

Radiotherapy
Medical equipment 339w
Pay 689w
Royal Devon & Exeter Hospital 752-3

Radon gas
406w
House renovation grants 406w
Housing 406-7w
Yorkshire & Humberside 197w

RAE Bedford
685-6w

RAE Farnborough
685-6w, 773w

RAF Spadeadam
685w

RAF Upper Heyford
Military aircraft 343w

Raffan, Mr Keith
Debates etc.
Water Bill, 2R (07:12:88) 383-5
Questions
Housing, Wales 5-6
Opencast Executive 631
Roads, Clwyd 7
Roads, Wales 20w

Railway accidents
564-6w, 660-2w
Clapham junction (12:12:88) 647-55, 659w, 740-1w, 764, 1080
Ministerial statements (12:12:88) 647-55

Railway closures
741w

Railway fares
Greater London 245w

Railway Inspectorate
Manpower 517w

Railway network
Channel tunnel 169, (14:12:88) 1058
Construction costs 519-20w
Manchester Airport 245w

Railway property
Fox hunting 661w
Trespass 661w

Railway safety
Fox hunting 566w
Level crossings 245w

Railway timetables
Railway travel 242-3w

Railway transport
Channel tunnel 244w, 563w
Death 98w
Prime Minister 656-7w

Railway travel
Railway timetables 242-3w

Rain forests

Rain forests—continued
643-4
Debts 429w
Overseas aid 644-6
Wood 350w

Ramsey
HM Coastguard 517-8w

Randall, Mr Stuart
Debates etc.
Security Service Bill, 2R & Money res (15:12:88) 1169-73
Questions
Community care 545w
Cruelty to children 1068
Extradition, Republic of Ireland 458w
Intelligence services, National security 463-4w
Interception warrants, National security 463w

Rape
Greater Manchester 354w
Prison sentences 711-2w
Sentencing 282w

Rate fund contributions
530w
Scotland 295w

Rate increases
624w
Essex 614w

"Rate Support Grant (Wales) Supplementary (No 3) Report, 1986/87"
(08:12:88) 449-56

"Rate Support Grant (Wales) Supplementary (No 2) Report, 1987/88"
(08:12:88) 449-56

"Rate Support Grant (Wales) Supplementary Report, 1988/89"
(08:12:88) 449-56

"Rate Support Grant (Wales) Report, 1989/90"
(08:12:88) 449-56

Rate support grants
613w, 619w
Bradford City Council 412-3w
Brent 618w
Cardiff City Council 393w
Leeds City Council 272w, 412-3w
Local authorities 732-4w
Ministerial statements (08:12:88) 449-56
Wales 393w
Westminster City Council 347w

Rates & rating
894
Camden 893
Local government finance 272w
Nurses 614-5w, 893
Salmon 445w

Rathbone, Mr Tim
Questions
Dept of the Environment, Civil service dispersal 620w
Police, Manpower 701w

Rathlin Island
EC grants & loans 265w
Electricity distribution 195w, 265w
Telephones 265w

Rating revaluations
Nottingham 277w
Uniform business rate 277w

RCN
see Royal College of Nursing

ReChem International
13w

Recruitment
Economic League 539w
Nurses 132w
Older workers 138w

Recruitment—continued
Police 701w
Skilled workers 318w
Teachers 102-3w, 490w
Voluntary projects programme 637w
Women's employment 140w

Recycling
Paper 495-6w

Redmond, Mr Martin
Questions
Business statements 440
Chemical weapons, USA 157w
Civil defence, Defence research 204w
EC internal trade, South Yorkshire 172w
Emergency planning, Government grants to local authorities 203-4w
Emergency planning, Local government staff 204-5w
Emergency planning, Manpower 43w, 205-6w
Europassport, Ministers 207w
Grant maintained schools, Preparatory schools 7w
Housing cooperatives 152w
Locums, Trent Regional Health Authority 446w
Medical equipment, Emergency planning 125-6w
Negative income tax 416w
NHS, Armed forces casualties 73-4w
Nurses, Career structure 598w
Police surgeons, Women 207w
Potato Marketing Board, Departmental publications 201w
Primary health care 126w
Radioactive waste disposal, South Yorkshire 13w
Radon gas, Yorkshire & Humberside 197w
Railway transport, Death 98w
River pollution, Control of Pollution Act 1974 276w
River pollution, Fishing 276w
River pollution, Industrial wastes 275-6w
River pollution, Pollution control 526w
River pollution, Yorkshire Water Authority 400-1w
Shipping accidents, Compensation 97w
Standing charges, Pensioners 49w
Student loans, Mature students 7-8w
United Kingdom Warning & Monitoring Organisation, Expenditure 205w
Water authorities, Civil defence 11w
Water authorities, Pollution control 276w
Water pollution, Hazardous materials 525-6w, 629w
Water supply industry, Foreign investment in UK 525w
Water supply industry, Privatisation 275w
Wind power, Generators 326-7w

Reduced earnings allowance
382w

Redundancy
Coal mining 629-31
Export rebates 29w

Redundancy pay
Employment Training 468-9w
Insolvency 148w, 516-7w
Northern Ireland 516-7w
Women 41w

Redwood, Mr John
Debates etc.
British Shipbuilders, Privatisation (14:12:88) 949
EC budget (05:12:88) 139-40
European Council (06:12:88) 179
Questions
EC budget 421w, 643w
EC internal trade, EC action 189-92w
Nurses, Career structure 759

Rees, Rt Hon Merlyn
Debates etc.
European Council (06:12:88) 181-2
Questions
Alternatives to prison 718w

Rees, Rt Hon Merlyn—continued
Ryan, Patrick, Extradition 912

Refrigeration
Chlorofluorocarbons 156w
Goods vehicles 563w

Reg(EEC)3528/86
Forest protection 46w

Regional aid
299-300
North West region 300
Sherwood 300

Regional arts associations
Arts Council 35w

Regional development grants
Codes of practice 443w
Employment opportunities 442-3w
Fraud 442-4w
Scotland 442-4w

Regional health authorities
Resource Allocation Working Party 754

Regional planning & development
Contracts for services 301
EC internal trade 301
Northern Ireland 196w, 746w

Registered Homes Act 1984
Questions
765-6w

Reid, Dr John
Questions
Nurses, Career structure 768
Severe weather payments 451w

Religious broadcasting
Broadcasting licences 111w

Relocation of employees
Prison staff 109w

Remand centres
701w

Remand in custody
755w
Armley Prison 285w
Scotland 784w

Rent arrears
Council house rents 12

Rent control
401w

Rent officers
60w

Rental purchase
Housing benefits 456w

Rented housing
908
National mobility scheme 271w
Wales 2

Renton, Mr Tim, Minister of State at the Home Office
Questions
Broadcasting, Scotland 707w, 1075
Broadcasting controls, Satellite broadcasting 706w
Broadcasting controls, Terrorism 209w
"Broadcasting in the 90s White Paper" 209w
Broadcasting licences, Religious broadcasting 111w
Cable television, Film censorship 577-8w
Computer privacy, Disclosure of information 108-9w
Concessionary television licences, Pensioners 712w
Data Protection Act 1984 289w
"Death on the Rock" 704w
Deportation 459-60w
Europassport, Ministers 207w
Frontiers, EC internal trade 708w
Gaelic language, Television 710w

Renton, Mr Tim—continued
Immigrant detainees, Police custody 459w
Immigration controls, Genetics 460-1w
Immigration controls, Immigration officers 459w
Immigration (Restricted Right of Appeal against Deportation) (Exemption) (No 2) Order 1988 509w
Immigration rules, Children's rights 708w
Kindertransport Group 1077
Local radio, Public bodies 463w
Local radio, Radio broadcasting licences 462-3w
Local radio, Radio frequencies 463w
Members' correspondence, Administrative delays 506w
Military aircraft, Aircraft noise 466w
Obscene Publications Act 1959 701w
Passport Office, Civil service manpower 714-5w
Passport Office, Members' correspondence 722w
Passports 32w, 716w
Pay television, Television engineering 111w
Political refugees, Sri Lanka 207-8w
Satellite broadcasting, Broadcasting controls 463w
Scottish Television 1075-6
Shops Act 1950, Law reform 505w
Sunday trading 714w
Television, Franchising 712w
Television, Scotland 1076
Television channels, EC countries 707w
Television licences 111-2w
Television licences, Administrative costs 112w
Television licences, Manpower 112w
Television licences, Prosecutions 112w
Television programmes, Production costs 111w
United Reform Church, Members' correspondence 576w
Video recordings, Expenditure 111w
Vietnamese refugees, Resettlement 208w

Repairs & maintenance
Floods 515-6w
Lancaster canal 99w
Trident missiles 158-9w

Repatriation
Prisoners 208-9w

Repossession orders
House prices 309
Newport 320w

Republic of Ireland
Extradition 209-11w, 288w, 296w, 385w, 458w, 513-5w, 569w, 767, 1078

Research
Aircraft noise 770-2w
Greenhouse effect 726w
Laser isotope separation 749w
North Sea 44w
Radioactive waste disposal 725w
School violence 103w
Scotland 44w
Social science 489w

Research finance
Agricultural research 512w
AIDS 648w
Alternative energy 483w
British Antarctic Survey 648w
Defence research 69w
Environment 729w
Greenhouse effect 238w
Industrial research 168w
Iron & steel industry (13:12:88) 884
Mental illness 42w
Nuclear power 372w
Public transport 658-9w
Salmonella 238-9w, 655w
Science & technology research 342w, 648w
Scottish Marine Biological Association 44w
Sea pollution 658-9w
Seas & oceans 650w
United Kingdom Atomic Energy Authority 479w

Research finance—continued
Wave power 476w

Resettlement
Vietnamese refugees 208w

"Residence in the United Kingdom"
300-1w

Residential care
74w, 765-6w
Fees & charges 604w
Incontinence aids 336w
Licensing 672w
Scotland 672w
Social Services Inspectorate 185-6w

Residential care of children
Income support 383w

Resignations
Speech therapists 599w

Resource Allocation Working Party
755-6
Elderly 754-5
Nottingham Health Authority 755
Regional health authorities 754
Stoke-on-Trent 755

Resource management initiative
Hospitals 548w

Restart programme
148w
Interviews 310w
Lambeth 148w

Restrictive trade practices
258w
Self-employed 27w
Small businesses 27w

Retail price index
Social security benefits uprating 698w

Retail prices
Milk 581w

Retford Hospital
Property transfer 74w

Retirement pensions
53w, 426-7
Administrative delays 533w
Average earnings 383-4w
British residents abroad 182w
Earnings rules 181w, 320-2w
EC countries 182w
Public expenditure 302-3w

Reviewing Committee on the Export of Works of Art
255w

Rhondda
Housing benefits 594-5w
Social Fund 593-4w
Supplementary benefits 595w

Richardson, Ms Jo
Debates etc.
Abortion (16:12:88) 1208, 1260-2
Questions
Redundancy pay, Women 41w
Women, Equal opportunities 107w
Working mothers, Marginal tax rates 592-3w

Riddick, Mr Graham
Debates etc.
Multifibre arrangement (09:12:88) 566, 569, 608-12
Questions
Boundary Commission for England, Buckingham 289w
British Steel Corporation, Engineering industries 302
Car tax 306w
Civil servants, Career structure 421-2w
"Death on the Rock" 704w
Employment Training, Trade unions 136w
Official engagements 267w, 656w
Water pollution, Water authorities 627w

Riddick, Mr Graham—continued
Yorkshire Regional Health Authority, Performance indicators 549w
Youth employment, Closed shop 158-9

Ridley, Rt Hon Nicholas, Secretary of State for the Environment
Debates etc.
Water Bill, 2R (07:12:88) 336-44, 346-7, 348
Water Bill, 2R, Money res & Ways & means res (08:12:88) 467, 468, 469
Questions
Consultation papers, Dept of the Environment 408-12w
Dept of the Environment, Civil service dispersal 620w
Detergents, Environment protection 270w
EC Environment Council 279w
Handicapped workers, Dept of the Environment 277w
Local government finance, Capital investment 272-3w
Local government finance, Rates & rating 272w
Maxwell House, Building alterations 531w
VAT, Dept of the Environment 153-4w

Rifkind, Rt Hon Malcolm, Secretary of State for Scotland
Debates etc.
Electricity Bill, 2R, Money res & Ways & means res (13:12:88) 787-97, 799-800, 804
Public expenditure, Ministerial statements (13:12:88) 770-86
Scottish Enterprise, Ministerial statements (06:12:88) 187-201
Transport (Scotland) Bill, 2R & Money res (14:12:88) 968-76, 977, 978, 982
Questions
Handicapped workers, Scottish Office 437w
Public bodies, Public appointments 211w
School transport, Scotland 446w
Scottish Office, Cash limits 639w
VAT, Scottish Office 437w
Vocational education, Scotland 290w

Right to buy
Camden 528-9w
London boroughs 154-6w

RIMNET
see Radiation Incident Monitoring Network

River Clyst
River pollution 526w

River Don
275-6w

River Humber (Burcom Outfall) Bill (HL) 1987/88
Debates etc.
2R* (06:12:88) 151

River pollution
620w
Control of Pollution Act 1974 276w
Fishing 276w
Industrial wastes 275-6w
Pollution control 526w
River Clyst 526w
Yorkshire & Humberside 276w
Yorkshire Water Authority 400-1w

River Thames
Pollution control 897

Rivers
Land drainage 515w
Northern Ireland 515w

Road accidents
A1 48w
Children 160w
Christmas 352-3w
Lorries 366-7w, 521w
M1 244w
Minibuses 566w
Motor vehicles 661w
Motorcycles 160-1w

Road accidents—continued
NHS 520w

Road closures
AWE Burghfield 245w

Road construction
521-2w
Bottesford bypass 523-4w
Haverfordwest bypass 738w
London assessment studies 367-8w
M20 97w

Road mileage
Road works 243w

Road safety
Lorries 159w

Road safety barriers
A34 3w
M4 97w

Road signs
161w
M1 658w

Road tax
Expenditure 518w
Greater London 464w
Tax evasion 464w, 524w

Road traffic
Buildings 519w
Greater London 244w
Hammersmith Broadway 366w
Inner London boroughs 1-2w
M1 1w
M6 1w
M20 96w
M25 98-9w
Motorways 523w

Road traffic control
Metropolitan Police 459w, 507w

Road traffic offences
508w

Road traffic police
Motorways 724w

Road works
Costs 518w
M1 658w
M69 95-6w
Motorways 95w
Public utilities 161-2w
Road mileage 243w

Roads
Clwyd 7
Construction costs 519-20w
East Anglia 522w
Expenditure 2w, 7, 365w
Greater London 243-4w
Scotland 48w
Wales 7, 20w

Robbery
Sentencing 705w

Roberts, Mr Allan
Debates etc.
Water Bill, 2R (07:12:88) 358, 390, 399-404
Water Bill, 2R, Money res & Ways & means res (08:12:88) 465, 525
Questions
Central Electricity Generating Board 478w
North Sea, Sea pollution 897-8

Roberts, Mr Wyn, Minister of State for Wales
Debates etc.
Water Bill, 2R, Money res & Ways & means res (08:12:88) 459-65, 468, 470
Questions
Block grant, Clwyd 25w
Employment Training, Wales 561w
Haverfordwest bypass, Road construction 738w
Higher education administration, Wales 23w

Roberts, Mr Wyn—continued
M4 7, 20-1w
National Museum of Wales, Objects in lieu of tax 491w
PICKUP, Wales 9
Planning appeals, Wales 24w
Roads, Clwyd 7
Roads, Expenditure 7
Roads, Wales 20w
Welsh language, Curriculum 739w
Welsh Water Authority, Environment protection 19w

Robertson, Mr George
Debates etc.
Electricity Bill, 2R, Money res & Ways & means res (13:12:88) 802

Robinson, Mr Peter
Debates etc.
Elected Authorities (Northern Ireland) Bill, 2R & Money res (05:12:88) 46, 55-61
Questions
Prisons, Northern Ireland 195-6w

Rochester
Unemployment 160-1

Roe, Mrs Marion
Questions
Earned income, Women 415w
Economic growth 300w
Unemployment 134w

Rogers, Mr Allan
Debates etc.
Electricity Bill, 2R (12:12:88) 699
Questions
Housing benefits, Rhondda 594-5w
International Monetary Fund 297w
Nurses, Career structure 3-4
Public appointments, Wales 20w
Social Fund, Rhondda 593-4w
Supplementary benefits, Rhondda 595w

Rolls-Royce Aeroengines
312, 467w
Aircraft engines 297
Government assistance to industry 297

Rooker, Mr Jeff
Debates etc.
European Council (06:12:88) 182
Questions
Board & lodging charges, Social security reform 698-9w
Business statements 445
Charities, Tax evasion 428
City technology colleges 650w
Community charge 199w
Defective housing, Mortgage relief 152w
Electricity generation, Costs 477w
House of Fraser, Takeovers 638-9
Income tax, Pensioners 52w
Law enforcement, Police relations with public 724w
Nurses, Pay settlements 551-2w
Old Perry bridge 751w
Roads, East Anglia 522w
Social security recipients, Birmingham 326w
Social security recipients, Hostels 325w
Takeovers 173w
Unemployment, Parliamentary constituencies 159-60

Ross, Mr Ernie
Debates etc.
Public expenditure, Scotland (13:12:88) 776-7, 785-6
Scottish Enterprise (06:12:88) 194
Questions
Business statements 1093
Manufacturing industries, Industrial production 171w
Offshore safety, Departmental responsibilities 631-2
Palestine Liberation Organisation, Peace negotiations 1082

Ross, Mr William
Debates etc.
Elected Authorities (Northern Ireland) Bill, 2R & Money res (05:12:88) 41, 51, 61, 91-5, 101
Prevention of Terrorism (Temporary Provisions) Bill, 2R & Money res (06:12:88) 278
Questions
Extradition, Republic of Ireland 288w, 296w, 513-5w
Firearms, Amnesties 507-8w
Fisheries, Northern Ireland 512-4w
Floods, Building repairs 265w
Floods, Repairs & maintenance 515-6w
Game, Radioactivity 575-6w
Rivers, Land drainage 515w
Sheep, Radioactivity 513w
Tax collection offices, Londonderry 51-2w

Rossi, Sir Hugh
Debates etc.
Water Bill, 2R (07:12:88) 340, 353-6

Rost, Mr Peter
Debates etc.
Electricity Bill, 2R (12:12:88) 682, 716, 720-4
Questions
Gas tariffs, Industrial energy prices 632

Rotherham Health Authority
Nurses 757

Rowe, Mr Andrew
Questions
Channel tunnel, Railway transport 563w
Civil service agencies 88w
Employment opportunities, Handicapped workers 140-1w
Health, Women 757-8
Teachers, Ethnic monitoring 388w
Training, Inner city areas 297-8
Unemployment, Rochester 160-1

Rowlands, Mr Ted
Questions
Council house rents, Rent arrears 12
Employment Training, Mid Glamorgan 23-4w
Employment Training, Wales 23w

Royal Aircraft Establishment
Civil service manpower 772w
Defence land 772w

Royal College of Midwives
81-2w, 85-6w

Royal College of Nursing
81-2w, 172, 550w
Appeals 756
Nurses' training 560w

Royal College of Surgeons
440w

Royal Devon & Exeter Hospital
Radiotherapy 752-3

Royal Investments
27w, 414-5w

Royal Society for the Protection of Birds
12w
Data banks 206-7w

Royal Ulster Constabulary
263-4w
Manpower 746-7w

Royal Victoria Hospital Belfast
Motor vehicle theft 745w

RSPB
see Royal Society for the Protection of Birds

RUC
see Royal Ulster Constabulary

Ruddock, Mrs Joan
Debates etc.
Water Bill, 2R, Money res & Ways & means res (08:12:88) 492-3
Questions
Housing finance, Disposable income 627w

***Ruddock, Mrs Joan**—continued*
Lance missiles 73w
NATO, Warsaw Pact 488w
Nuclear weapons, Modernisation 499w
Official engagements 266-7w

Rugby
Breathalysers 461w

Rule 43
Prisoners 722w

***Rumbold, Mrs Angela**, Minister of State for Education and Science*
Questions
Arts, Inner London boroughs 388w
City technology colleges 650w
City technology colleges, Bradford 389w
City technology colleges, Nottingham 647w
Curriculum, Teacher training 573w
Education Reform Act 1988, Publicity 571w
English education, National Curriculum English Working Group 341w
General Certificate of Secondary Education, Universities 572w
Handicapped workers, Dept of Education & Science 164w
Inner London Staff Commission, Public appointments 490-1w
Nursery schools 650w
Teachers, Educational exchanges 387w
Teachers, Educational standards 648-9w
Teachers, Pay 165w
Teachers, Pay settlements 7w
Teachers, Recruitment 490w
Teachers' pensions, Widowers' benefits 341w
VAT, Dept of Education & Science 164-5w

Rural areas
Arts centres 36w
Average earnings 743w
Crimes of violence 713w, 1071
Employment 742w
Housing 4-5
Housing associations 531w
Unemployment 742-3w

Rural Development Commission
531w

Ryan, Patrick
(06:12:88) 173-86
Extradition 162-3w, 385w, 764-6, 909-16

***Ryder, Mr Richard**, Parliamentary Secretary, Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food*
Questions
Agricultural improvement scheme, Expenditure 380-1w
Agricultural research, National Institute of Agricultural Botany 511-2w
Agricultural research, Research finance 512w
Agricultural research, Seeds 511w
Aldrin, Licensing 202w
Animal feed, Salmonella 509-10w, 580-1w
Bracken, Health hazards 582w
Cereals, EC external trade 117-8w
Coastal protection, Expenditure 237w
Common agricultural policy, Expenditure 240-2w
EC free food scheme 118-20w
EC free food scheme, Costs 118w
EC free food scheme, Intervention stocks 119-20w
EC free food scheme, Voluntary organisations 120w
Eggs, Derbyshire 678w
Eggs, Production 777w
Eggs, Salmonella 239w, 510w, 777-8w
Environmentally sensitive areas 433w
Export rebates, EC trade 118w
Food additives 239w
Food contamination, Cumbria 431w
Food contamination, Food aid from EC 431w
Food hygiene, Publicity 120w
Food standards, Organic farming 675w

***Ryder, Mr Richard**—continued*
Forestry, Employment opportunities 678w
Fruit, Farm capital grant scheme 433w
Greenhouse effect, Coastal areas 237-8w
Greenhouse effect, Research finance 238w
Hedges & ditches 118w
Ministry of Agriculture, Food Safety (Radiation) Unit 677w
Ministry of Agriculture, Radiation hazards 379w
National Farmers' Union, Ministry of Agriculture 675w
Pollen beetles, Agricultural research 435-6w
Pollen beetles, Pest control 380w
Potato Marketing Board, Departmental publications 201w
Poultry, Salmonella 432-3w
Radioactivity, Cumbria 379-80w, 676w
Radioactivity, Pollution monitoring 676w
Radioactivity, Surveying 676w
Salmonella, Research finance 238-9w, 655w
Seas & oceans, Coastal erosion 238w
Seeds, Certification testing 776w
Set-aside schemes, Agricultural workers 677-8w
Tree felling, Licensing 678w
Wheat, Prices 434w

Ryder Committee
see Radiation Protection Working Party

Safety
Channel tunnel 657w

Safety measures
Chemicals 92-3w

***Sainsbury, Mr Tim**, Under-Secretary of State for Defence Procurement*
Questions
Aircraft noise, Research 770w
Alarm missiles, Defence contracts 498w
Arms exports, Employment 685w
Atomic Energy Research Establishment, Defence contracts 773w
AWE Burghfield, Explosions 106w, 252-3w, 584-5w
Challenger tanks 66w
Chemical & biological warfare, Defence research 344w
Defence, France 771-2w
Defence contracts 159w, 498w
Defence contracts, Argentina 157w
Defence contracts, Boeing 467-8w
Defence contracts, International cooperation 585w
Defence contracts, Offset arrangements 468w
Defence procurement 157w
Defence procurement, Defence expenditure 105w
Defence procurement, Legal profession 157w
Defence procurement, Scotland 72w
Defence research, Aerobiology 69w
Defence research, Emigration 585w
Defence research, Research finance 69w
Defence research, Universities 68-9w
Defence research, Veterinary medicine 68w
Defence research establishments, Audit 158w, 688w
Defence research establishments, Civil service agencies 159w
Defence Statistical Organisation, Privatisation 159w
Handicapped workers, Ministry of Defence 466w
Keeni Meeni Services, Advertising 686w
Ministry of Defence, Fraud 776w
Ministry of Defence, Security industry 585w
Nuclear reactors, Calder Hall 771-2w
Nuclear weapons tests 157w
Plutonium, Power station closures 252w
Procurement Executive, Air force bases 685-6w
Procurement Executive, Civil service dispersal 157-8w
Procurement Executive, Civil service manpower 773-6w

***Sainsbury, Mr Tim**—continued*
Radioactive wastes, Plymouth 772w
RAE Farnborough 773w
Royal Aircraft Establishment, Civil service manpower 772w
Royal Aircraft Establishment, Defence land 772w
Tanks, Defence contracts 69w
Tanks, General Dynamics 467w
Trident, Administrative delays 158w
Trident missiles 159w
Trident missiles, Repairs & maintenance 158-9w

St Margaret's Hospital Epping
363-4w

St Thomas' Hospital
(12:12:88) 745

Sales methods
Hearing aids 493-4w

Salmon
Fishing catches 445-6w
Rates & rating 445w
Scotland 445-6w

Salmon Advisory Committee
445w

Salmond, Mr Alex
Debates etc.
EC Fisheries Council (12:12:88) 663
Electricity Bill, 2R (12:12:88) 670, 678, 734
Electricity Bill, 2R, Money res & Ways & means res (13:12:88) 794, 795, 802, 811, 825-9, 859-60, 880-2
Oral questions, Calling of Members (06:12:88) 206
Public expenditure, Scotland (13:12:88) 777, 786
Scottish Enterprise (06:12:88) 194
Transport (Scotland) Bill, 2R & Money res (14:12:88) 1032, 1034-5, 1036, 1037-8
Questions
Broadcasting, Scotland 707w
Business statements 446-7
Nuclear Industry Radioactive Waste Executive 614w
Queen's Own Highlanders, AIDS 68w

Salmonella
602w
Animal feed 509-10w, 580-1w
Battery hens 29w
Eggs 19-24, 29w, 168-9, 187-8w, 239w, 449w, 510w, 602w, 640-2w, 678w, 689w, 758, 767-8, 768-9w, 777-8w, 1078-9
Game 448w
Poultry 381w, 432-3w
Poultry meat 449w
Research finance 238-9w, 655w
Scotland 442w

Salt House Port Eynon
Building repairs 392w

Salvage
Piper Alpha platform 333-4w

"Satanic Verses"
Prosecutions 19w

Satellite broadcasting
Broadcasting controls 463w, 706w

Satellites
Emergency planning 284w

Schizophrenia
42w
Mentally disturbed offenders 32w

Scholarships
Army 105w

School administration
Scotland 47w, 212-3w

School admission
Appeals 245w

School buildings
Building repairs 101-2w

School Discipline Inquiry
103w

School fees
Diplomatic service 314-5w

School holidays
315w
Armed forces education allowances 106w
Overseas Development Administration 253w
Technical assistance 253w

School leaving
539w
Child benefit 537w, 539-40w
Labour market 214w
Scotland 487w
Training 157-8
Youth training scheme 308w
Youth unemployment 142w, 308w

School leaving certificates
Educational qualifications 573w

School population
Scotland 290-1w

School transport
164w
Scotland 446w

School violence
Research 103w

Schools
Armed forces 344w
Arts 489w
Capital investment 388w
Departmental correspondence 9w
Police relations with public 701-2w
Racial harassment 756-7w
Technical & vocational education initiative 114-6w

Science & Engineering Research Council
165-6w

"Science & Engineering Research Council Annual Report 1987/88"
165-6w

Science & technology
British Library 255w

Science & technology policy
388w, 572w

Science & technology research
Coal mining 630
EC action 169w
Equipment 9w
Information technology 168w
Research finance 342w, 648w
Shetland 573w

Science & Technology Select Committee (HL)
Agricultural research 650-1w

Science education
Teachers 572-4w
Universities 341w

Scilly Isles
Agriculture (15:12:88) 1190

Scope of debate
(15:12:88) 1188
Speaker's rulings & statements (05:12:88) 40, 70, 84, 85, 96, (06:12:88) 278, (08:12:88) 535, (14:12:88) 987, 1032, 1050, 1051, 1053-4, (15:12:88) 1183-4, 1187, 1196

Scotch Whisky Act 1988
Questions
1082

Scotland
A1 48w
Accident & emergency departments 440w
Agriculture 637w
Air force bases 71-2w
Army bases 69-71w
Assisted places scheme 486-7w
Body searches 441w
Breast cancer 639w
Broadcasting 707w, 1075
Coal 480w
Coal fired power stations 49w
Community charge 485w, 616-7w
Community opportunities 636w
Council house rents 291-4w
Council housing 295w
Curriculum 47w
Defence expenditure 73w
Defence procurement 72w
Degrees 487w
Domestic violence 212w
EC grants & loans 296-7w
Educational administration 637w
Electricity generation 292w
Emergency planning 43w
Employment Training 485w
Extradition 296w
Eye disorders 442w
Fish conservation 672-3w
Fish farming 367w, 511w
Food poisoning 640-2w
Forest protection 46w
Forestry 43-6w, 116w, 672w
Forestry Commission 370w, 672w
Gold 781w
Government 171
Handicapped 441w
Handicapped pupils 368w
Health services 634w
Higher education 48w
Hospital waiting lists 442w
House of Commons procedure 434
Housing stock 295w
Housing support grants 295w
Hypothermia 444-5w
Land acquisition 369w
Languages education 438-9w, 784w
Legal advice & assistance (14:12:88) 1057
Legal aid 440w, (14:12:88) 1057
Licensing laws 444w
Local government staff 640w
Mental illness 42w
Midwives 779-80w
Naval bases 72w
NHS 502w
NHS finance 439w, 674w
Nuclear power stations 683w
Nurses 212w
Orthopaedics 486w
Pensioners 65w
Pesticides 369-70w
Police right of search 444w
Prosthetics 486w
Psychiatric nurses 42w
Public appointments 211w
Public expenditure (13:12:88) 770-86
Radioactive waste disposal 907-8
Radioactivity 289-90w
Rate fund contributions 295w
Regional development grants 442-4w
Remand in custody 784w
Research 44w
Residential care 672w
Roads 48w
Salmon 445-6w
Salmonella 442w
School administration 47w, 212-3w
School leaving 487w
School population 290-1w
School transport 446w
Sea pollution 441w
Seals 368w
Set-aside schemes 674w
Special education 47w, 437-8w
Special schools 114w

Scotland—continued
Student grants 439-40w, 782-4w
Teacher training 640w
Teachers 290w, 640w
Technical & vocational education initiative 114-6w
Technical education 47-8w
Television 1076
Textile industry 673w
Tobacco 635w
Transport (15:12:88) 1191-8
Tree planting 782w
Trials 638-9w
VAT 437w
Vocational education 290w
Water Research Centre 212w
Whisky 1082
Woodland grant scheme 784w
Youth training scheme 113w, 485-6w
Youth unemployment 485w

***Scott, Mr Nicholas**, Minister of State, Dept of Social Security*
Debates etc.
Young people, Social security benefits (05:12:88) 146-50
Questions
Attendance allowance, Administrative delays 451w, 532w
Attendance allowance, Children 123-4w
Attendance allowance, Social security appeals 124w
Christmas bonus, Pensioners 124w
Disabled Persons (Services Consultation & Representation) Act 1986, Mental health community care 453w
Family credit, Advisory services 124w
Family credit, Social security claims 124w, 180w
Handicap benefits, Social security recipients 532-3w
Handicap benefits, Stoke-on-Trent 382w
Handicapped, Housing benefits 63w
Handicapped workers, Dept of Social Security 321-2w
Housing benefits 122w
Housing benefits, Hospital patients 123w
Housing benefits, Social security recipients 121-2w
Income support 125w
Income support, Old people's homes 596w
Invalid care allowances, Social security benefits rules 383w
Medical appeal tribunals, Administrative delays 597w
Mobility allowance, Age 532w
Occupational pensions, Sex discrimination 754w
Prescribed industrial diseases, Merchant seamen 532w
Severe disability premium, Social security recipients 596w
Severe disability premium, Take-up 596w
Severe disablement allowance 591w
Severe weather payments 451w
Severe weather payments, Hexham 382-3w
Severe weather payments, Income support 451w
Severe weather payments, Press advertising 451w
Severe weather payments, Social security recipients 537w
Social Fund, Community care 752-3w
Social security benefits, Publicity 123w
Social security benefits, Students 123w
Social security benefits uprating, Mortgage interest rates 384w, 698w
Social security benefits uprating, Retail price index 698w
Students, NHS charges exemptions 122w
Taxation, Standard of living 125w
Unemployment benefits, Availability for work 121w
Unemployment benefits, Share fishermen 121w
Unemployment benefits, Social security benefits disqualification 121-2w
Unemployment benefits, Social security benefits rules 754-5w

Scottish & Newcastle Breweries
Takeovers 565-7w

Scottish Bus Group
(14:12:88) 968-1057

Scottish Development Agency
(06:12:88) 187-201

Scottish Enterprise
Ministerial statements (06:12:88) 187-201

"Scottish Enterprise White Paper"
(06:12:88) 187-201

Scottish health boards
Community care 673w
Contracts for services 634w
Expenditure 673w
Public appointments 671w

"Scottish Health Service"
634-5w

Scottish legal system
Property law 663w

Scottish Marine Biological Association
Research finance 44w

Scottish Office
(06:12:88) 203, 204
Cash limits 639w
Handicapped workers 437w
VAT 437w

Scottish Television
1075-6

Scottish Transport Group
Privatisation (14:12:88) 968-1057

Scottish Vocational Education Council
290w

SCOTVEC
see Scottish Vocational Education Council

Screening
AIDS 82w, 541w
Breast cancer 130-1w, 607w, 639w
Cervical cancer 164w, 447w, 552-3w

Scunthorpe Health Authority
Nurses 544-6w

SDA
see Scottish Development Agency

Sea pollution
Coastal areas 630-1w
Cumbria 281w
North Sea 896-8
Research finance 658-9w
Scotland 441w
Southend-on-Sea 630-1w

Seals
Fish farming 368w
Nature conservation 368w
Scotland 368w
Viruses 725-6w

Seas & oceans
Coastal erosion 238w
Research finance 650w

Seaton Barracks
Land acquisition 466-7w

Secondary education
Northern Ireland 746w

Secret ballot
Trade union elections 671w

Securities & Investments Board
397w, 567w

Security
Berlin 644w
Leader of the Opposition 343w

Security industry
718w
Ministry of Defence 585w

Security Service Bill 1988/89
Debates etc.
2R & Money res (15:12:88) 1104-90

Security Service Tribunal
(15:12:88) 1104-90

Security vetting
Driver & Vehicle Licensing Centre 524w

Sedgemore, Mr Brian
Debates etc.
Eggs, Salmonella (16:12:88) 1274
Elected Authorities (Northern Ireland) Bill, 2R & Money res (05:12:88) 114, 118
Transport (Scotland) Bill, 2R & Money res (14:12:88) 1044
Questions
Arts Council, Regional arts associations 35w
Barlow Clowes 169w

Seeds
Agricultural research 511w
Certification testing 776w

Self-employed
133w, 140w
Family credit 63w, 181w
Restrictive trade practices 27w

Self-regulating organisations
Financial services 259-60w, 567w

Sellafield
Euratom 329w
Nuclear fuel reprocessing 329w, 503w
Nuclear weapons 331w
Plutonium 328-9w
Radioactive waste disposal 504-5w
Radioactive wastes 49-50w

Senegal
Overseas aid 430w

Sentencing
Crimes of violence 711w
Criminal Justice Act 1988 285w
Rape 282w
Robbery 705w

Separate taxation of wife's earnings
Income tax 416w
Tax reform 53w

SERC
see Science & Engineering Research Council

Serious Fraud Office
465-6w

Service industries
Manpower 133w

Set-aside schemes
678w
Agricultural workers 674w, 677-8w
Scotland 674w

Severe disability premium
Social security recipients 596w
Take-up 596w

Severe disablement allowance
591w

Severe weather payments
451w, 762-3
Hexham 382-3w
Income support 451w
Press advertising 451w
Social security recipients 537w

Severn barrage
Electricity generation 476w

Severn bridge
Contracts 3-4w
Wales 21w

Severn-Trent Water authority
401w

Sewage
Bristol Channel 238w
Northern Ireland 399-400w

Sewage—continued
Pollution control 624-5w, 665-70w
Waste disposal 29-30w, 199-200w, 399-400w
Welsh Water Authority 665-70w

Sewers
Local authorities 155w, 411w
Private sector 282w

Sex discrimination
Occupational pensions 754w

Sex Discrimination Act 1975
Questions
475w

Sexual offences
Cruelty to children 351-2w

SF
see Sinn Fein

Share fishermen
Unemployment benefits 121w

Shareholders
British Petroleum 177w
Electricity supply industry 373w
Takeovers 174w

Shares
Britisn Steel Corporation 263w
Capital gains tax 55w
Disclosure of information 179-80w
Law reform 179-80w
Privatisation 301w

Shaw, Mr David
Questions
Heart diseases, Surgery 751
Tourism, Capital investment 147w

Shaw, Sir Giles
Debates etc.
North East Shipbuilders, Factory closures (07:12:88) 324-5
Water Bill, 2R, Money res & Ways & means res (08:12:88) 481-4

Shaw, Sir Michael
Debates etc.
EC Fisheries Council (12:12:88) 659
Questions
EC Fisheries Council 433w
Privatisation 422

Sheep
Northern Ireland 513w
Radioactivity 513w

Sheep premiums
Wales 357w

Sheerman, Mr Barry
Debates etc.
Prevention of Terrorism (Temporary Provisions) Bill, 2R & Money res (06:12:88) 260-4
Security Service Bill, 2R & Money res (15:12:88) 1174
Questions
Parole Review Committee 1074
Police, Health 704w
Prison escapes 723w

Sheffield Health Authority
Nurses 763-4w

Sheldon, Rt Hon Robert
Questions
Art works, Export controls 14-5

Shellfish
English Channel 240w

Sheltered housing
Government grants 619-20w

Shephard, Mrs Gillian
Debates etc.
Water Bill, 2R, Money res & Ways & means res (08:12:88) 498-500
Questions
EC internal trade, Publicity 171-2w

Shepherd, Mr Colin
Questions
Crimes of violence, Rural areas 713w
Family credit, Advisory services 124w
Family credit, Social security claims 124w, 180w
Hereford Cathedral, Mappa mundi 14, 36w
Local enterprise agencies 138w
Resource Allocation Working Party, Elderly 754-5

Shepherd, Mr Richard
Debates etc.
Security Service Bill, 2R & Money res (15:12:88) 1108, 1142-4, 1175-6
Questions
Intelligence services, Accountability 33w
Official secrets, International organisations 487-8w

Shersby, Mr Michael
Questions
Chlorofluorocarbons, Dry cleaning 626w
Hepatitis, Vaccination 765w
Organ donors, Departmental circulars 556w
Parking Enforcement Working Party 712-3w
Sales methods, Hearing aids 493-4w
Salmonella, Eggs 22-3

Sherwood
Regional aid 300

Shetland
Fishing catches 672w
One parent benefit 454w
Science & technology research 573w

Shipbuilding
EC grants & loans 645-6w

Shipping accidents
Compensation 97w
MV Ardlough 662w

Ships
Waste disposal 432w

Shops Act 1950
Questions
Law reform 505w

Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Debates etc.
European Council (06:12:88) 176
Questions
Pensioners, Personal income 534w

Short, Ms Clare
Debates etc.
Oral question time intervention (12:12:88) 643, (14:12:88) 905
Prevention of Terrorism (Temporary Provisions) Bill, 2R & Money res (06:12:88) 212, 225, 226, 230, 242, 243, 247, 249-53
Questions
Baton rounds, Northern Ireland 195w
Baton rounds, Police firearms 679w
Employment Training, Child care 469w
Employment Training, Finance 307-8w
Employment Training, Redundancy pay 468-9w
Export promotion, Interest rates 305-6
Industrial training schemes, Industrial injuries 670w
Nuclear safety 634
Tourist industry, Low pay 155

Short Brothers
Government shareholding 310
Privatisation 264w, 310-1, 575w

Shortage subjects
Teachers 168

SIB
see Securities & Investments Board

Sillars, Mr Jim
Debates etc.
EC budget (05:12:88) 129-30
Oral questions, Calling of Members (06:12:88) 202-4, 205

Sillars, Mr Jim—continued
Transport (Scotland) Bill, 2R & Money res (14:12:88) 1032, 1034, 1044
Young people, Social security benefits (05:12:88) 146
Questions
Body searches, Scotland 441w
Broadcasting, Scotland 1075
Deportation 459-60w
Immigrant detainees, Police custody 459w
Immigration controls, Immigration officers 459w
Immigration (Restricted Right of Appeal against Deportation) (Exemption) (No 2) Order 1988 509w
Nuclear Industry Radioactive Waste Executive 614w
Youth training scheme 1081

Sims, Mr Roger
Questions
Planning inquiries 627w

Sinclair User
Prosecutions 569-70w

Singapore
Air routes 96w

Single homeless
Greater London 324w

Single people
Personal tax allowances 417w

Sinn Fein
(05:12:88) 38-120

Skeet, Sir Trevor
Debates etc.
Electricity Bill, 2R (12:12:88) 707-9
Questions
Coal fired power stations, West Burton 684-5w
Electricity generation 681-2w
Electricity generation, Costs 682w
Electricity generation, Natural gas 584w
Foreign tourists 142w
Fossil fuelled power stations, Power station closures 683w
Natural gas, Power stations 680w
Nuclear power stations 683w
Power stations, Private sector 749-50w

Skill shortages
142w, 378w
Engineering industries 302
Finance 426
Gwent 318w
Newport 318w
South East region 213w

Skilled workers
Newport 318w
Recruitment 318w

Skills Training Agency
(05:12:88) 25-37

Skinner, Mr Dennis
Debates etc.
Abortion (16:12:88) 1222-3, 1264
British Shipbuilders, Privatisation (14:12:88) 926-7
Eggs, Salmonella (16:12:88) 1199, 1269, 1277-8
European Council (06:12:88) 185
Haseldine, PJ, Newspaper press (07:12:88) 334
Oral question time point of order (08:12:88) 419, (15:12:88) 1078, 1083-4
Oral questions, Ministers (15:12:88) 1098
Security Service Bill, 2R & Money res (15:12:88) 1182, 1183, 1187
Questions
Arkwright colliery, Methane 50w
Business statements 447, 1092
Coal mining, Dismissal 479-80w
Coal mining, Government assistance to nationalised industries 629
Concessionary television licences, Pensioners 712w

Skinner, Mr Dennis—continued
Fiore, Roberto, Extradition 640-1
Interest rates 299w
Rate support grants 619w
Restart programme 148w

Small businesses
141w
British Venture Capital Association 137w
Derbyshire 647w
Ealing 175w
Government contracts 153-4
Institute of Directors 138w
Restrictive trade practices 27w
VAT registration 137-8w

Small Firms Service
311-4w

SMBA
see Scottish Marine Biological Association

Smith, Mr Andrew
Questions
Africa, Development aid 427-8w
Blood transfusion services, Oxford 761
Business sponsorship incentive scheme, Oxford 34w
Community care 447w
Electricity supply industry, Privatisation 328w
Income tax, Pensioners 301w
Industrial investment 93w
Official engagements 117w, 266-7w, 492w, 656w
Official Secrets Bill 1988/89 706-7w
Planning inquiries, Public participation in planning 613w
Skill shortages, South East region 213w

Smith, Mr Chris
Questions
Civil servants, Opposition parties 492w
Elstree Studios, Film industry 93w
Mortgage interest rates 424-5
Supplementary benefits, Fuel bills 755w

Smith, Sir Cyril
Questions
Training, School leaving 157-8

Smith, Sir Dudley
Questions
Arms exports 344w
British Overseas Trade Board, Civil service manpower 258w
British Overseas Trade Board, Export promotion 344w

Smith, Mr Tim
Questions
Average earnings 421-2
Capital gains tax, Shares 55w
Loan guarantee scheme 137w
Nurses, Career structure 544w
Procurement, Government departments 100w
Profitability, Economic growth 301-2w
Shops Act 1950, Law reform 505w
Takeovers 167w
Treasury, Financial management initiative 50-1w

Smith houses
Leicester 904

Smoke detection
Council housing 576w
Domestic safety 577w
Elderly 33w
Fire services 576w
Local authorities 577w
Tameside Borough Council 576w

Smokeless fuels
Costs 340w
Tax allowances 203w

Smoking
Death 766-7w

Smyth, Rev Martin
Questions
Career structure, Nurses 759
Health visitors, Career structure 746w
Housing associations, Capital investment 107w
Nurses, Career structure 576w
Residential care 74w
USSR, Uspensky, Viacheslav 188-9w

Snape, Mr Peter
Questions
NHS finance, West Midlands 186w

Snowdonia national park
391-2w

Soames, Mr Nicholas
Debates etc.
Water Bill, 2R (07:12:88) 363
Questions
Art works, Objects in lieu of tax 113w
Arts finance, Ethnic minorities 13
Civil servants 17
UK trade with EC, Languages 311

Social Fund
536w
Ayr 697w
Birmingham 455w
Bradford 64-5w
Civil service manpower 181w
Community care 63-5w, 593w, 695w, 752-3w
Durham 591-2w
Expenditure 64w, 696w
Finance 64w
Fuel bills 455w
Loans 382w, 591w, 697w
Northern Ireland 106w
Rhondda 593-4w
Statistics 64w

"Social Rented Housing"
908

Social science
Research 489w

Social Security Act 1986
Questions
535w

Social security appeals
Attendance allowance 124w
Unemployment benefits 611w

Social security benefits
Cash limits 381w
Departmental leaflets 451-2w
Marginal tax rates 590w
One parent families 592w
Publicity 123w
Students 123w
Take-up 531-2w, 753w
Taxation 699-700w
Young people (05:12:88) 142-50

Social security benefits disqualification
Unemployment benefits 121-2w, 533w

Social security benefits reductions
Youth training scheme 610w

Social security benefits rules
Invalid care allowances 383w
Unemployment benefits 754-5w
Young people 324w

Social security benefits uprating
454w
Invalidity benefits 326w
Mortgage interest rates 384w, 698w
Retail price index 698w

Social Security Bill 1988/89
Debates etc.
1R (15:12:88) 1102-3

Social security claims
Death grants 182w
Family credit 124w, 180w

Social security claims—continued
Maternity benefits 181-4w
Widows' benefits 181-4w

Social security payments
Automatic credit transfer 62w
Sub post offices 62w

Social security recipients
Birmingham 326w
Child benefit 381w
Council tenants 319-20w
Dietary allowances 592w
Family credit 697w
Handicap benefits 532-3w
Heating allowances 592w
Hostels 325w
Housing benefits 121-2w, 319w
Income support 536w
Severe disability premium 596w
Severe weather payments 537w
Widows' benefits 693w

Social security reform
535-6w
Board & lodging charges 698-9w
Housing benefits 456w, 536-7w, 591w, 597w, 695w, 697w
Pensioners 65w
Widows 1080

Social Services Inspectorate
Residential care 185-6w

Social Services Select Committee
(13:12:88) 882

Socialist Workers' Party
Demonstrations 32w

Society of British Aerospace Companies
93w

Solar power
Housing 680-1w

Soley, Mr Clive
Questions
Council housing 895-6
Hammersmith Broadway, Road traffic 366w
Handicapped, Housing benefits 63w
Housing Corporation, Manpower 13-4w

Solitary confinement
Prisoners 712w

South Africa
395-6w
Arms embargoes 395w
Arms trade 397w
Coventry four 391w
Diplomatic relations 395w
Extradition 724w
Mgedezi, Tjeluvyo 315-6w
Nuclear weapons 396w

South America
Overseas trade 174-5w

South East region
896
House prices 628w
Owner occupied housing 623w
Skill shortages 213w

South East Thames Regional Health Authority
(12:12:88) 745

South Manchester Health Authority
Nurses 759-60w

South of Scotland Electricity Board
49w, 292w, 349-50w, 403w, 481w

South West Africa People's Organisation
39w

South West region
Unemployment 134w

South West Water Authority
526w

South Western Regional Health Authority
Finance 607-8w

South Yorkshire
Crime 703w
EC internal trade 172w

South Yorkshire—continued
Fire services 705w
Police 709w
Police surgeons 207w
Radioactive waste disposal 13w

Southend-on-Sea
Sea pollution 630-1w

Southern General Hospital Glasgow
Accident & emergency departments 441w

Southport
Maternity services 339w

Southport & Formby Health Authority
80-1w

Spain
Fishing vessels 202w
Motor vehicles 179w

Speaker and his deputies, For rulings & statements see separate heading

Speaker's rulings & statements
Debates etc.
Amendments & new clauses (05:12:88) 38, (06:12:88) 207, (13:12:88) 787
Members' deaths, John, Brynmor (14:12:88) 891
Orders & regulations motions (14:12:88) 1057
Procedure (05:12:88) 34, (06:12:88) 159, 228, (07:12:88) 315, 316, (08:12:88) 479, (13:12:88) 764, 766, 768, (14:12:88) 918, 1096-7
Standing Order No 20 applications, Inmos (12:12:88) 668
Standing Order No 20 applications, North East Shipbuilders (07:12:88) 331
Standing Order No 20 applications, SS Mediterran Frigo (07:12:88) 332-3

Speaker's rulings & statements
Adjournment debates (05:12:88) 145
Business statements (08:12:88) 448
Calling of Members (06:12:88) 183, 196, 203, 204, (14:12:88) 916, 955, (15:12:88) 1108, (16:12:88) 1274
Consolidated Fund debates (08:12:88) 448, (15:12:88) 1101
House of Commons galleries (14:12:88) 1031
House of Commons procedure (12:12:88) 655, (14:12:88) 916
House of Commons standing orders (14:12:88) 1031
Members' conduct (05:12:88) 114, (06:12:88) 275, (08:12:88) 533, (14:12:88) 1008, 1025, 1034, 1036, (15:12:88) 1075, 1080, 1176
Members' facilities (15:12:88) 1100
Members' interests (15:12:88) 1099, 1101
Members' interventions (05:12:88) 145, (06:12:88) 176, 182, (07:12:88) 316, 343, (09:12:88) 562, 567, 568, 610, (13:12:88) 802, 860, (14:12:88) 1035, 1052
Members' misconduct (14:12:88) 1043
Members' speeches (05:12:88) 87, (06:12:88) 207, (07:12:88) 336, 352, 356, 365, 389, (08:12:88) 459, 475, (09:12:88) 580, 585, (12:12:88) 669, 721, (13:12:88) 787, 808, 821, 825, 828, (14:12:88) 949, 1046, 1049, 1053, (15:12:88) 1100, 1105, 1136, 1141, 1149, 1185, (16:12:88) 1249
Ministerial statements (07:12:88) 333, 334-5, (08:12:88) 451, (13:12:88) 769, (16:12:88) 1199, 1220, 1221, 1223, 1224, 1228-9, 1273, 1278
Opposition parties (12:12:88) 705-6
Oral questions (05:12:88) 18, (08:12:88) 419, (15:12:88) 1098
Parliamentary privilege (15:12:88) 1101-2
Points of order (05:12:88) 24, (07:12:88) 314, (12:12:88) 677, (14:12:88) 1003, (15:12:88) 1078, 1083-4, 1100
Prime Minister's questions (08:12:88) 457, 458
Private notice questions (05:12:88) 24
Scope of debate (05:12:88) 40, 70, 84, 85, 96, (06:12:88) 278, (08:12:88) 535, (14:12:88) 987, 1032, 1050, 1051, 1053-4, (15:12:88) 1183-4, 1187, 1196

Speaker's rulings & statements—continued
Sub judice (05:12:88) 56, (15:12:88) 1100
Supplementary questions (06:12:88) 165, (08:12:88) 442, (14:12:88) 898, 899, 915, (15:12:88) 1075, 1092
Ten minutes rule (07:12:88) 336, 352, 356, 365, (08:12:88) 459, 475, (12:12:88) 669, 705-6, (15:12:88) 1100, 1105, 1136, 1141, 1149
Unparliamentary expressions (13:12:88) 780, 786, (14:12:88) 893

Spearing, Mr Nigel
Debates etc.
Eggs, Salmonella (16:12:88) 1272-3
European Council (06:12:88) 177-8
Midwives, Career structure (07:12:88) 412, 414, 415
Railway accidents, Clapham junction (12:12:88) 652
Water Bill, 2R (07:12:88) 372-4
Questions
Bus crews, Greater London 2w
Business statements 1091
Midwives, Career structure 130w
Sewers, Local authorities 411w
Sewers, Private sector 282w
United Reform Church, Members' correspondence 576w
Water authorities, Wealth 277w

Special education
Departmental publications 252w
Scotland 47w, 437-8w

Special schools
Headteachers 114w
Scotland 114w

Speech therapists
Manpower 600w
Resignations 599w

Speech therapy
Contracts 600w

Speed, Mr Keith
Questions
Armed forces, Motor vehicle registration 686w
Government buildings, Greater London 348-9w
M25, Road traffic 98-9w
Navy, Tobacco 68w

Speed limits
North Devon link road 524w

Speller, Mr Tony
Questions
Carbon dioxide, Energy consumption 275w
Council house sales, Devon 151w
Family credit, Departmental forms 593w
Gun sports 728w
Hotel & catering industry, Fees & charges 568w
Hotel & catering industry, Trading standards departments 568w
North Devon link road, Speed limits 524w
Pollution control, Bristol Channel 627w
Power station closures, Costs 627
Royal Devon & Exeter Hospital, Radiotherapy 752-3

Spicer, Sir Jim
Questions
Salmonella, Eggs 22

Spicer, Mr Michael, Under-Secretary of State for Energy
Debates etc.
Electricity Bill, 2R, Money res & Ways & means res (13:12:88) 858-63, 881-2
Electricity generation, Air pollution control (09:12:88) 624-6
Questions
Advanced gas-cooled reactors 329w
Advanced gas-cooled reactors, Construction 374w
Advanced gas-cooled reactors, Hartlepool power station 371-2w

Spicer, Mr Michael—continued
Alternative energy, Research finance 483w
Arkwright colliery, Methane 50w
Atomic Energy Research Establishment, Defence contracts 582w
Atomic Energy Research Establishment, Nuclear safeguards 332w
Berkeley power station, Nuclear fuels 49w, 103w
British Coal Corporation 630
British Coal Corporation, Coinpower 484w
Calder Hall, Power station closures 681w
Carbon dioxide, Advanced gas-cooled reactors 330w
Central Electricity Generating Board, Advertising 374w
Chapelcross power station, Power station closures 377w
Coal, Air pollution 480w
Coal, Scotland 480w
Coal fired power stations 192w
Coal fired power stations, Air pollution control 193w
Coal fired power stations, West Burton 50w, 375-6w, 684-5w
Coal mining, Dismissal 479-80w
Coal mining, Lothian 49w
Coal mining, Manpower 104w, 475w, 482w
Coal mining, North East region 481w
Coal mining, Redundancy 630-1
Coal mining, Subsidence 480w
Coal mining, Termination of employment 478w
Dept of Energy, Holidays abroad 680w
Dept of Energy, USSR 680w
Drax power station, Air pollution control 484w
EC energy policy, Electricity supply industry 682-3w
Electricity Bill 1988/89, Disclosure of information 583w
Electricity Council 633
Electricity disconnections 375w
Electricity distribution 194-5w
Electricity distribution, France 376w
Electricity distribution, Greater London 505w
Electricity generation 193-4w, 371w, 477w, 681-2w
Electricity generation, Competition 193w, 373w
Electricity generation, Costs 371w, 477w, 483-4w, 682w
Electricity generation, Departmental correspondence 192-3w
Electricity generation, Energy costs 373w
Electricity generation, Natural gas 584w
Electricity generation, Nuclear power stations 371w, 476w
Electricity generation, Radioactive wastes 479w
Electricity generation, Severn barrage 476w
Electricity generation, Tidal power 49w, 634
Electricity supply industry, Consumer protection 638
Electricity supply industry, Contracts 371w
Electricity supply industry, Insolvency 372w
Electricity supply industry, Manpower 374-5w
Electricity supply industry, Privatisation 327-8w, 372-3w, 476-7w
Electricity supply industry, Shareholders 373w
Electricity supply industry, Takeovers 372w
Electricity tariffs, Industrial energy prices 330-1w, 635-6
Electricity tariffs, Price controls 373w, 635
Electricity tariffs, Price increases 636
Energy consumption 478w
Energy Efficiency Office, Expenditure 373-4w
Energy prices, EC action 372w
Fast reactors, Energy research 583w
Fiddler's Ferry power station, Air pollution control 333w
Fossil fuelled power stations, Power station closures 683w

Spicer, Mr Michael—continued
Gas tariffs 331-2w
Greenhouse effect, Conferences 504w
Heysham power station, Construction costs 104-5w
Heysham power station, Nuclear fuels 329-30w
Hinkley Point C, Departmental correspondence 583w
Hinkley Point C, Inquiries 482w
Laser isotope separation, Research 749w
Longannet coal complex 631
Nuclear fuel reprocessing, Nuclear safeguards 503w
Nuclear fuel reprocessing, Radioactive waste disposal 503w
Nuclear fuel reprocessing, Sellafield 329w, 503w
Nuclear fuels, Exports 103w
Nuclear fusion, Nuclear weapons 332-3w
Nuclear power, Research finance 372w
Nuclear power stations 683w
Nuclear power stations, Power station closures 192w, 330w, 376w
Nuclear power stations, USA 679-80w
Nuclear reactors, Energy research 332w
Nuclear reactors, Radioactive wastes 504w
Nuclear safeguards, Torness power station 104w
Nuclear safeguards, Transport of radioactive materials 104w
Office of Electricity Regulation, Manpower 372w
Opencast Executive 631
Plutonium, Central Electricity Generating Board 328-9w
Plutonium, Electricity generation 328-9w
Plutonium, Exports 328w
Plutonium, Nuclear power stations 370-1w
Plutonium, Sellafield 329w
Plutonium, USA 328w, 749w
Power failures, Windsor 633-4, 684w
Power station closures 331w
Power stations, Competition 372w
Power stations, Construction 376w
Power stations, Cumbria 482w
Power stations, Licensing 371w
Power stations, Malta 483w
Power stations, Operating costs 105w
Power stations, Private sector 749-50w
Pressurised water reactors, Construction costs 376w
Privatisation, Air pollution control 104w
Radiation 330w
Radioactive waste disposal 636-7
Radioactive waste disposal, Costs 636
Radioactive waste disposal, Sellafield 504-5w
Radioactive wastes, Exports 725w
Radioactive wastes, Nuclear safeguards 504w
Radioactive wastes, Sellafield 49-50w
Sellafield, Nuclear weapons 331w
Smokeless fuels, Costs 340w
Solar power, Housing 680-1w
Standing charges, Pensioners 49w
Sulphur dioxide, Air pollution control 374w
Trawsfynydd power station, Electricity generation 582-3w
Trawsfynydd power station, Nuclear safety 583w
Union of Democratic Mineworkers, Wales 630
United Kingdom Atomic Energy Authority 479w
United Kingdom Atomic Energy Authority, Research finance 479w
Uranium, Electricity supply industry 680w
Uranium, Namibia 683w
Wave power, Research finance 476w
Wind power, Energy research 481w
Wind power, Generators 326-7w

Sports centres
Government grants to local authorities 734-6w

Sports Council
(16:12:88) 1279-86

Sports facilities
Community charge 345w
Lighting (16:12:88) 1279-86

"Spycatcher"
NATO 466w

Squatting
Greater London 199w

Squire, Mr Robin
Questions
Bangladesh, Overseas aid 429w
Family credit, Administrative delays 452w, 590-1w
Medical records, Manpower 693-4w
Social security benefits, Marginal tax rates 590w

Sri Lanka
Buses 28w
Political refugees 207-8w

SS Mediterran Frigo
Standing Order No 20 applications (07:12:88) 332-3

SSEB
see South of Scotland Electricity Board

Staffordshire
Nature conservation 401w

Stanbrook, Mr Ivor
Debates etc.
Eggs, Salmonella (16:12:88) 1278
Questions
Ryan, Patrick, Extradition 914

Standard of living
Community charge 586w
Privatisation 586w
Taxation 125w

Standards specifications
Exhaust emissions 623w

Standing charges
Elderly 637-8
Pensioners 49w

Standing Order No 20 applications
Inmos (12:12:88) 668
North East Shipbuilders (07:12:88) 331-2
SS Mediterran Frigo (07:12:88) 332-3

Standing Order No 35
(07:12:88) 292

Standing Order No 42
(07:12:88) 291-2

Standing Order No 43
(07:12:88) 291-2

Standing Order No 133
(07:12:88) 291-2

Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Questions
Channel tunnel, Railway transport 244w
Developing countries 643w
Exchange control, Developing countries 643w

Stationery Office
see HMSO

Statutory Instruments Joint Select Committee
(07:12:88) 293

Statutory Instruments Select Committee
(07:12:88) 293

Steel, Rt Hon David
Debates etc.
Abortion (16:12:88) 1204-5, 1209, 1211, 1214, 1218, 1219, 1220, 1228, 1251, 1265
Eggs, Salmonella (16:12:88) 1270-1
European Council (06:12:88) 175-6
Questions
Business statements 1087-8

Steel, Rt Hon David—continued
European monetary system, EC Finance Council 304w
School transport, Scotland 446w
Television, Scotland 1076
Textiles, Turkey 493w
Water pollution, Woollen industry 528w

Steen, Mr Anthony
Debates etc.
EC Fisheries Council (12:12:88) 661-2
Questions
Attendance allowance, Administrative delays 533-4w
Coastguard, Brixham 658w
Local authorities, Companies 404w
Overseas trade, Japan 645w
Retirement pensions, Administrative delays 533w
Seaton Barracks, Land acquisition 466-7w
South Western Regional Health Authority, Finance 607-8w
Vacant land 404-5w
Vacant land, Water authorities 403w

Steinberg, Mr Gerry
Questions
British Coal Corporation 479w
Dietary allowances, Social security recipients 592w
Handicap benefits, Durham 592w
Health, Pensioners 547-8w
Home Office, Empty property 721w
Interest rates, Exchange rates 299w
London Regional Transport, Bus services 517w
Manufacturing industries, Northern region 471w
Nurses, Career structure 761-4w
Social Fund, Durham 591-2w
Speech therapists, Manpower 600w
Speech therapists, Resignations 599w

Sterling
Exchange rates 101w
International trade 303

Stern, Mr Michael
Debates etc.
Electricity Bill, 2R (12:12:88) 728-30
Questions
Bombings, Guildford 113w
Energy conservation, Electricity area boards 330w
Environment protection 908
Fossil fuelled power stations, Pollution control 628
Nuclear power stations, Local authorities 635
Official engagements 266-7w, 492w, 656w
Police, Recruitment 701w
Royal College of Nursing, Nurses' training 560w
Severn bridge, Wales 21w
Skill shortages 378w

Stevens, Mr Lewis
Questions
Drug abuse, Publicity 552w
Economic growth, Productivity 300w
Police civilians, Manpower 720w

Stewart, Mr Allan
Debates etc.
Electricity Bill, 2R, Money res & Ways & means res (13:12:88) 800, 806-8
Public expenditure, Scotland (13:12:88) 775
Transport, Scotland (15:12:88) 1191-4
Questions
Heart pacemakers, Greater Glasgow Health Board 369-70w
School administration, Scotland 212-3w
Vocational education, Scotland 290w
Water Research Centre, Scotland 212w

Stewart, Mr Andy
Debates etc.
Public expenditure, Scotland (13:12:88) 778
Questions
EC internal trade, Publicity 171w
Offensive weapons 705w

Stewart, Mr Andy—continued
Regional aid, Sherwood 300
Union of Democratic Mineworkers, Wales 630

Stewart, Mr Ian, Minister of State, Northern Ireland Office
Debates etc.
Prevention of Terrorism (Temporary Provisions) Bill, 2R & Money res (06:12:88) 264-8
Questions
Baton rounds, Northern Ireland 195w
Baton rounds, Police firearms 679w
Clifford, Peter, Arrests 196w
Community policing, Newtownards 263w
Extradition, Republic of Ireland 513-5w
Handicapped workers, Northern Ireland Office 362w
McConnell, Robert, Homicide 747w
Police firearms, Theft 679w
Police stations, Comber 263-4w
Police stations, Dromara 747-8w
Prisons, Northern Ireland 195-6w
Royal Ulster Constabulary, Manpower 746-7w
VAT, Northern Ireland Office 516w

Stobhill Hospital
Accident & emergency departments 441w

Stockport
151-2

Stoke-on-Trent
Handicap benefits 382w
Resource Allocation Working Party 755
Unemployment benefits 611w

Stonehenge
Tourism 614w

Stott, Mr Roger
Questions
British Airways, Airbuses 307

Strang, Mr Gavin
Debates etc.
Prime Minister's questions, Points of order (08:12:88) 457, 458
Questions
AIDS, Screening 541w
Assisted places scheme, Scotland 486-7w
Health & Safety Executive, Finance 143w
Tourism, Balance of payments 155

"Strategy for the Science Base"
388w, 572w

Straw, Mr Jack
Questions
GCE A level 756w
Grant maintained schools 9-10w
Industrial training, EC grants & loans 758-9w
School leaving certificates, Educational qualifications 573w
Schools, Capital investment 388w
Schools, Departmental correspondence 9w
Science & technology policy 388w
Student loans 489w

Stretford
Unemployment 233w

Structure plans
Wiltshire 406w

Student grants
Handicapped students 386w, 490w
Parental contributions 757-8w
Scotland 439-40w, 782-4w
Student numbers 386-7w

Student loans
489w
Disclosure of information 388w
Higher education admission 489w
Mature students 7-8w

Student numbers
Student grants 386-7w

Student unions
10w

Student Unions Review
341-2w
Questionnaires 10w, 342w

Students
Community charge 122w
NHS charges exemptions 122w
Public order policing 32-3w, 461w
Social security benefits 123w

STV
see Scottish Television

Sub judice
Speaker's rulings & statements (05:12:88) 56, (15:12:88) 1100

Sub post offices
Social security payments 62w

Sub-machine guns
Army in Northern Ireland 686w

Subsidence
Coal mining 480w

Subsidies
Ports 563-4w

Subversion
Brooks, Tony 663-4w

Sulphur dioxide
Air pollution control 374w

Sumberg, Mr David
Questions
Council housing, Empty housing 628-9w
Domestic electrical appliances, Domestic safety 296
Kampuchea, Peace negotiations 748w
Neighbourhood watch schemes 702w
Official engagements 267w, 656w
Tax thresholds, Income tax 303w

Summerson, Mr Hugo
Debates etc.
Water Bill, 2R, Money res & Ways & means res (08:12:88) 490-2, 520
Questions
Burglary, Crime prevention 713w
Business statements 441
Employment Training 136w
Parliament, Travel guides 669w
Rates & rating, Nurses 615w

Sunday trading
714w
European Court of Justice 266w

Sunderland
(07:12:88) 315-30, 420-1

Sunderland Health Authority
603w

Supplementary benefits
Children in care 167-8
Fuel bills 755w
Greater London 755w
Northern region 453-4w
Rhondda 595w

Supplementary questions
Speaker's rulings & statements (06:12:88) 165, (08:12:88) 442, (14:12:88) 898, 899, 915, (15:12:88) 1075, 1092

Supply Estimates
(13:12:88) 874

"Supply Estimates 1988/89, Supplementary Estimates"
(13:12:88) 874

"Supply Estimates 1989/90 Votes on Account"
(13:12:88) 874

Surgery
Heart diseases 751-2
Heart pacemakers 606w

Surgical gloves
Dentists 338-9w

Surveillance
Video recordings 1071-2

Surveying
Radioactivity 676w

Swan Farm Ash-cum-Ridley
413w

Swansea
Council housing 2-3

SWAPO
see South West Africa People's Organisation

Taiwan
Overseas trade 645w

Takeovers
167w, 173w
Company finance 167w
Electricity supply industry 372w
House of Fraser 638-9
Mergers 495-7w
Monopolies & Mergers Commission 167w
Scottish & Newcastle Breweries 565-7w
Shareholders 174w
Water authorities 275w

Tameside Borough Council
Smoke detection 576w

Tanks
Defence contracts 69w
General Dynamics 467w

Tanzania
Overseas aid 27-8w

Tape recorders
Police interrogation 717w

Tax allowances
Children 303w
Forestry 45w
Income tax 644w
Pensions 420w
Smokeless fuels 203w
Training 54w

Tax avoidance
Platinum 359w

Tax burden
Child benefit 308w

Tax collection offices
Londonderry 51-2w

Tax evasion
Charities 428
Community charge 616w
Company investigations 414-5w
Inland Revenue 55-6w
Road tax 464w, 524w

Tax harmonisation
Indirect taxation 99w
Tobacco duties 58-9w

Tax rates & bands
Electricity tariffs 420-1
Income tax 303w, 416-8w, 500w
Income tax on investment incomes 416w
Interest rates 419-20, 744w
Mortgage interest rates 420-1
Personal income 422
Price increases 419-20

Tax reform
Personal taxation 302w
Separate taxation of wife's earnings 53w

Tax thresholds
Child benefit 418w
Income tax 303w

Tax yields
Corporation tax 301w
Income tax 53w
Independent Broadcasting Authority 508-9w

Tax yields—continued
Life insurance 418-9w
Mortgage interest rates 424w

Taxation
EC internal trade 417w
Environmental policy 301w
Life insurance 417-8w
Motor vehicles 307-8w
Social security benefits 699-700w
Standard of living 125w

"Taxation of Life Assurance Consultation Paper"
418w

Taxes Management Act 1970
Questions
414-5w, 422w

Taxis
Mobility of disabled 520-1w

Taylor, Mrs Ann
Debates etc.
Water Bill, 2R (07:12:88) 338
Water Bill, 2R, Money res & Ways & means res (08:12:88) 517-23, 524, 528
Questions
Consumer protection 175w
Water supply industry, Privatisation 899

Taylor, Mr Ian
Questions
Mergers 309
Official engagements 266-7w
Profit sharing 100w
Society of British Aerospace Companies 93w
Taxation, EC internal trade 417w
Unemployment, EC countries 145w

Taylor, Rt Hon John David
Questions
Community policing, Newtownards 263w
Educational visits, Armagh 264w
Electricity distribution, Rathlin Island 195w
Extradition, Republic of Ireland 569w
Food industry, Milk 679w
Members' correspondence, Administrative delays 400w
Ministers, Northern Ireland 678-80w
Nurses, Ards Hospital 360w
Nurses, Belvoir Hospital 360w
Nurses, Career structure 107w
Nurses, Forster Green Hospital 360w
Nurses, Purdysburn Hospital 361w
Police stations, Comber 263-4w
Royal Victoria Hospital Belfast, Motor vehicle theft 745w

Taylor, Mr Matthew
Debates etc.
Railway accidents, Clapham junction (12:12:88) 651
Water Bill, 2R, Money res & Ways & means res (08:12:88) 533-7
Questions
Charter 88, Electoral reform 506w
Council housing, Tenants' rights 895
Defective housing, Mundic blocks 271w
Energy Efficiency Office 482w
Excise duties, Lead free petrol 300w
Income support, Residential care of children 383w
Overseas aid, Women 425w
Radon gas 406w
Radon gas, House renovation grants 406w
Radon gas, Housing 406-7w
Tenants' choice, Council house sales 169

Taylor, Mr Teddy
Debates etc.
EC budget (05:12:88) 122, 128-30
Questions
Aliens, Voting rights 462w
Antidumping, EC action 172w
Business statements 1091
Civil service recruitment 51w
Court of Auditors, Annual reports 743-4w

Taylor, Mr Teddy—continued
EC budget 57w
EC budget, Loans 56w
EC budget contributions 56w
EC budget, UK contributions 56-7w, 305w
European Council, Terrorism 655w
Financial Intermediaries' Managers' & Brokers' Association, Financial institutions 299
Financial services, EC action 397w
Financial services, Investment 397w
Industrial democracy, EC action 40w
Insurance, EC action 745w
Iran, Visas 748-9w
Lorries, EC action 520w
Minibuses, EC action 566w
Official engagements 117w
Passports 32w
Scottish Television 1075-6
Sea pollution, Coastal areas 630-1w
Sunday trading, European Court of Justice 266w
Television channels, EC countries 707w

Teacher training
102w
Curriculum 573w
Languages education 640w
Scotland 640w

Teachers
Early retirement 290w
EC countries 165w
Educational exchanges 387w
Educational standards 648-9w
Ethnic monitoring 388w
Languages education 490w, 640w, 784w
Pay 165w, 309w
Pay settlements 7w
Recruitment 102-3w, 490w
Science education 572-4w
Scotland 290w, 640w
Shortage subjects 168

Teachers' pensions
Widowers' benefits 341w

Teaching hospitals
Physiotherapy (12:12:88) 745
Public petitions (12:12:88) 745

Tebbit, Rt Hon Norman
Questions
Parking offences 508w
Road traffic offences 508w

Technical & vocational education initiative
142-3w
Schools 114-6w
Scotland 114-6w

Technical assistance
School holidays 253w

Technical education
Educational finance 47-8w
Scotland 47-8w

Telephones
Rathlin Island 265w

Television
Franchising 712w
Gaelic language 710w
Scotland 1076

Television channels
EC countries 707w

Television engineering
Pay television 111w

Television licences
111-2w
Administrative costs 112w
Manpower 112w
Prosecutions 112w

Television programmes
209w
Production costs 111w

Telford Development Corporation

Telford Development Corporation—continued
Housing 622w

Temple-Morris, Mr Peter
Questions
Crimes of violence, Rural areas 1071

10 Downing Street
Contracts for services 391w
Expenditure 267w, 391w

Ten minutes rule
Speaker's rulings & statements (07:12:88) 336, 352, 356, 365, (08:12:88) 459, 475, (12:12:88) 669, 705-6, (15:12:88) 1100, 1105, 1136, 1141, 1149

Tenant eviction
Gwent 320w

Tenants' choice
274w
Council house sales 169
Council housing 894
Wales 11

Tenants' rights
Council housing 895

Termination of employment
Coal mining 478w
Ministers of religion 561w

Territorial Army
69-71w

Terrorism
Arrests 287-8w
Broadcasting controls 209w
Candidates (05:12:88) 38-120
EC countries 711w
European Council 655w
European Court of Human Rights 711w
House of Commons divisions 170
Northern Ireland (06:12:88) 207-82
Opposition 1078
Police right of search 287w

Testing
Water meters 281-2w

Textile industry
Industrial production 673w
Industrial training 142w
Scotland 673w

Textiles
Exports 398-9w
Turkey 493w

TGWU
see Transport & General Workers' Union

Thames Water Authority
Land acquisition 898-9

Thatcher, Rt Hon Margaret, Prime Minister, First Lord of the Treasury and Minister for the Civil Service
Debates etc.
European Council, Ministerial statements (06:12:88) 173-86
Questions
Arms control, USSR 431-4
Barnsley 117w
Bed & breakfast accommodation 656w
Central Policy Review Staff, Costs 390w
Challenger tanks, Defence procurement 431
Channel tunnel, Railway network 169
Children in care, Supplementary benefits 167-8
Civil servants, Emigration 389w
Civil servants, Opposition parties 492w
Civil servants, Travel restrictions 268w
Civil servants' political activities 434
Community Care Review, Departmental correspondence 492w
Conventional weapons, USSR 1081-2
Defence expenditure, USSR 433
Disaster relief, Armenia 434
Eggs, Salmonella 168-9, 767-8, 1078-9
Employment opportunities, Northern region 491w

Thatcher, Rt Hon Margaret—continued
European Commission, Public appointments 116w, 266w, 491w
European Council, Terrorism 655w
Extradition, Republic of Ireland 767, 1078
Government, Scotland 171
Grangemouth 1080
"Green Gauntlet" 266w
Greenhouse effect 1079-80
Haseldine, Patrick, Newspaper press 492w
House of Commons divisions, Terrorism 170
House of Commons procedure, Scotland 434
House of Commons questions, Costs 268w
Intelligence services 265w
Junior Ministers 656w
Lie detectors, Intelligence services 268-9w
Ministerial changes, Departmental correspondence 655w
Ministers, Departmental responsibilities 163w
Ministers, Food hygiene 163w
Ministers' visits abroad, Mass media 267w
Neave, Airey, Members' correspondence 656w
Nuclear accidents, Emergency planning 389w
Nuclear accidents, USSR 390w
Nuclear weapons, USA 389-90w
Nurses, Career structure 169, 172, 768
Nurses, Pay settlements 390w
Official engagements 117w, 266-7w, 492w, 656w
Official gifts, Expenditure 267-8w, 390w
Oil pollution, Milford Haven 168
Palestine Liberation Organisation, Peace negotiations 1079, 1082
Pensioners 1081
Postal services, Monopoly 766
Pravda, Government achievements 170-1
Prime Minister, Ministerial policy advisors 267w
Prime Minister, Railway transport 656-7w
Prime Minister's Policy Unit 268w
Railway accidents, Clapham junction 764, 1080
Ryan, Patrick, Extradition 764-6
Security, Leader of the Opposition 343w
South Africa, Coventry four 391w
Sunday trading, European Court of Justice 266w
Teachers, Shortage subjects 168
10 Downing Street, Contracts for services 391w
10 Downing Street, Expenditure 267w, 391w
Tenants' choice, Council house sales 169
Unemployment, Wales 1081
USSR 117w
Whisky, Scotland 1082
Youth training scheme 170, 1081

Theft
Palace of Westminster 257-8w
Pension books 60w
Police firearms 679w

Thomas, Dr Dafydd Elis
Debates etc.
European Council (06:12:88) 179-80
Rate support grants, Wales (08:12:88) 453
Water Bill, 2R (07:12:88) 359
Water Bill, 2R, Money res & Ways & means res (08:12:88) 461, 463
Questions
Agriculture, Open University 776w
Aircraft noise 770w
Aircraft noise, Low flying 770-1w
Aircraft noise, Research 770-2w
Armed forces, Travel restrictions 771-2w
Calder Hall, Power station closures 681w
Chemical weapons 685w
Chlorofluorocarbons, Electronics industry 726w
Chlorofluorocarbons, Japan 630w
Civil servants, Emigration 389w
Defence, France 771-2w
Defence research, Emigration 585w
Dept of Energy, Holidays abroad 680w

Thomas, Dr Dafydd Elis—continued
Dept of Energy, USSR 680w
Dept of the Environment, Holidays abroad 725w
EC energy policy, Electricity supply industry 682-3w
Electricity Bill 1988/89, Disclosure of information 583w
Electricity generation, Costs 483-4w
Energy consumption, Property transfer 684w
Fast reactors, Energy research 583w
Government Communications Headquarters, USSR 488w
"Green Gauntlet" 266w
Greenhouse effect, Conferences 504w
Greenhouse effect, European Commission 750w
Greenhouse effect, Research 726w
Hinkley Point C, Departmental correspondence 583w
Hinkley Point C, Inquiries 482w
Housing, Wales 5
Laser isotope separation, Research 749w
Low flying, Public meetings 772w
Military aircraft, Low flying 769-70w
Military exercises, Nuclear power stations 770w
Nuclear accidents, Emergency planning 389w
Nuclear accidents, USSR 390w
Nuclear fuel reprocessing, Nuclear safeguards 503w
Nuclear fuel reprocessing, Sellafield 503w
Nuclear reactors, Calder Hall 771-2w
Nuclear reactors, Radioactive wastes 504w
Nuclear safeguards, Nuclear fuel reprocessing 488w
Nuclear weapons, USA 389-90w
Plutonium, USA 749w
Radioactive waste disposal 630w
Radioactive waste disposal, Computer applications 724-5w
Radioactive waste disposal, Costs 725w
Radioactive waste disposal, Radiation hazards 750w
Radioactive waste disposal, Research 725w
Radioactive wastes, Exports 725w
Radioactive wastes, Nuclear safeguards 504w
Radioactive wastes, Plymouth 772w
Seals, Viruses 725-6w
Social science, Research 489w
Solar power, Housing 680-1w
Trawsfynydd power station, Electricity generation 582-3w
Trawsfynydd power station, Nuclear safety 583w
Uranium, Namibia 683w
Welsh Water Authority 21w

***Thompson, Mr Donald**, Parliamentary Secretary for Agriculture*
Debates etc.
Livestock, Hormones (12:12:88) 748-50
Questions
Agriculture, Open University 776w
Animal feed, Salmonella 581w
Animal feed, Wastes 777-8w
Animals, Tuberculosis 676w
Badgers, Bovine tuberculosis 239-40w
Bovine somatotropin 120w
Bovine somatotropin, Agricultural land 431w
Bovine somatotropin, Animal welfare 431w
Bovine spongiform encephalopathy, EC countries 119w
Butter, Intervention stocks 582w
Dairy farming, Production quotas 119w
Dairy products, New Zealand 430w
Deer, Tuberculosis 676-7w
Eggs, Salmonella 29w
Export rebates, Redundancy 29w
Farm incomes 581-2w
Fish, Pollution monitoring 201w
Fish farming, White fish 511w
Fishing vessels, EC grants & loans 201-2w
Fishing vessels, Fishery protection 202w
Fishing vessels, Spain 202w

Thompson, Mr Donald—continued
Handicapped workers, Ministry of Agriculture 240w
Intervention Board, Computer applications 28-9w
Medicines (Hormone Growth Promoters) (Prohibition of Use) Regulations 1986 778w
Milk, Production quotas 510-1w
Milk, Retail prices 581w
Ministry of Agriculture, Computers in Government departments 29w
Poultry, Animal husbandry 432w
Poultry, Salmonella 381w
Prawns, Fish conservation 778w
Radioactivity, Nuclear accidents 675w
Radioactivity, Pollution monitoring 675w
Sewage, Bristol Channel 238w
Sewage, Waste disposal 29-30w
Shellfish, English Channel 240w
Veterinary services 380w
Waste disposal, Ships 432w

Thompson, Mr Jack
Debates etc.
Electricity Bill, 2R (12:12:88) 717-20
Questions
British Coal Corporation 479w
Interest rates 299w
Salmonella, Eggs 23

Thompson, Mr Patrick
Debates etc.
Security Service Bill, 2R & Money res (15:12:88) 1148, 1167-8
Questions
Broadcasting controls, Satellite broadcasting 706w
Council tenants 895
Economic growth, Unemployment 304w
Electricity distribution 194-5w
Overseas aid 428w

Thorn EMI
(12:12:88) 668

Thornton, Mr Malcolm
Questions
Drugs, Parallel imports 767w

Thurnham, Mr Peter
Debates etc.
Abortion (16:12:88) 1201, 1207, 1216, 1226, 1227-8, 1229-33, 1243
North East Shipbuilders, Factory closures (07:12:88) 328
Questions
Air routes, Singapore 96w
Arts finance, Private sector 37w
Business statements 1090
Chlorofluorocarbons, Refrigeration 156w
Coal mining, Working hours 629
Electrical technology, Professional qualifications 296-7
Electricity supply industry, Privatisation 476w
Family credit, Social security recipients 697w
House of Commons accommodation, Members 669w
Property development, Vacant land 282w
Rape, Greater Manchester 354w
"Satanic Verses", Prosecutions 19w
School admission, Appeals 245w
Smoke detection, Elderly 33w
Urinary system disorders, Bolton General Hospital 546w

Tidal power
Electricity generation 49w, 634

Tidy Britain Group
Motorway service areas 407-8w

Tied housing
Domestic rates 726w
Forestry Commission 46-7w

Tigre
39w

Time limits
(16:12:88) 1200-67

Tobacco
Children 721w
Navy 68w
Prosecutions 635w
Scotland 635w

Tobacco duties
Inquiries 422w
Tax harmonisation 58-9w

"Top Up Loans for Students White Paper"
388w

Torbay Borough Council
169

Torness power station
Nuclear safeguards 104w

Torquay
Planning permission 153w

Total allowable catches
White fish (12:12:88) 656-67

Touche Ross
26w

Tourism
148w
Balance of payments 155
Capital investment 147w, 236w
Government grants 41-2w, 141w
Invisible exports 154-5
Stonehenge 614w
Urban areas 147w

Tourism Review Committee
148w

Tourist boards
Tourist information 154

Tourist industry
41w, 141w, 213w
Low pay 155
Manpower 236w
Private investment 471w

Tourist information
Opening hours 154
Tourist boards 154

Town & country planning
Dorset 905
Planning authorities 905
Wales 561w
Water authorities 16w, 412w

Town & Country Planning General Development Order 1988
Questions
199w, 622w, 905-6
Clay Pigeon Shooting Association 617w
Gun sports 729w

Townend, Mr John
Debates etc.
Public expenditure, Scotland (13:12:88) 779-80
Questions
Tax rates & bands, Personal income 422

Townsend, Mr Cyril D
Questions
Dept of Trade & Industry, Civil service dispersal 173-4w
International Fund for Animal Welfare 730w

Trade competitiveness
168w

Trade union elections
Secret ballot 671w

Trade union membership
Government Communications Headquarters 16-8

***Trade union membership**—continued*
Prison Officers' Association 207w

Trade union officials
Facilities agreements 139w

Trade unions
Employment Training 136w

Trades Union Congress
136w, 174w
Employment Training 166-7

Trading standards departments
Hotel & catering industry 568w

Training
(05:12:88) 25-37, 137w, 152
Child minding 689-90w
Companies 152
Dept of Social Security local offices 124w
Financial services 259w
Food hygiene 602-3w
Inner city areas 297-8
Prisoners 354-5w
School leaving 157-8
Tax allowances 54w
Unemployment 156-7
Voluntary organisations 671w
Young people 145w

Training Agency
136-7w, (06:12:88) 187-201, 635-6w
Community work 610w
Voluntary projects programme 635-6w

Training allowances
377-8w, 472w, 538-40w
Youth training scheme 148w

Training & enterprise councils
(05:12:88) 25-37, 137w
Industrial training 151-2

Training Commission
136-7w, 140w, 142w, 149w
Compensation 149w

Tranquillisers
Drug abuse 84-5w

Transplant surgery
86-7w
Heart diseases 604w

Transport
Foreign tourists 742w
Scotland (15:12:88) 1191-8

Transport & General Workers' Union
Employment Training 166-7

Transport & Road Research Laboratory
Motor vehicle safety 661w

Transport of radioactive materials
Nuclear safeguards 104w
Plutonium 583w

Transport (Scotland) Bill 1988/89
Debates etc.
2R & Money res (14:12:88) 968-1057

Trauma centres
555w

Travel allowances
Diplomatic service 315w

Travel guides
Parliament 669w

Travel restrictions
Armed forces 771-2w
Civil servants 268w

Trawsfynydd power station
Electricity generation 582-3w
Nuclear safety 583w

Treasury
Financial management initiative 50-1w
Handicapped workers 203w

Treaties
Animal welfare 351w

Tredinnick, Mr David
Debates etc.
Multifibre arrangement (09:12:88) 559, 567, 605-6, 609, 610
Transport (Scotland) Bill, 2R & Money res (14:12:88) 1025

***Tredinnick, Mr David**—continued*
Questions
Broadcasting controls, Satellite broadcasting 706w

Tree felling
Licensing 678w

Tree planting
Scotland 782w
Wildlife & Countryside Act 1981 782w

Trent Regional Health Authority
74w
Hospital waiting lists 128w
Locums 446w

Trespass
Railway property 661w

Trials
Scotland 638-9w

Trident
Administrative delays 158w

Trident missiles
159w
Repairs & maintenance 158-9w

***Trippier, Mr David**, Under-Secretary of State for the Environment*
Questions
Bed & breakfast accommodation 729w
Building regulations, Energy conservation 270w
Council house rents 200-1w, 401w
Council house sales 625w
Council house sales, Devon 151w
Council house waiting lists, Derbyshire 527-8w
Council house waiting lists, Leicester 901-2
Council housing 894-6
Council housing, Empty housing 153w, 628-9w
Council housing, Housing stock 273w
Council housing, Leicester 902
Council housing, Local government functions 529w
Council housing, Local government property 730w
Council housing, Property transfer 894
Council housing, Tenants' rights 895
Council tenants 895
Defective housing, House renovation grants 411-2w
Defective housing, Housing Defects Act 1984 411w
Defective housing, Mortgage relief 152w
Defective housing, Mundic blocks 271w
Denis-Wild houses, Mortgages 624w
"East Thames-side Housing Study Report" 270-1w
EC Environment Council 153w
Estate Action, Expenditure 613w, 625-6w
Homelessness 198w, 617w
Homelessness, Calderdale 154w
Homelessness, Greater London 617w
Homelessness, Local authorities 618w
Hostels, Harrow 346w
House condition survey 153w
House prices, Personal income 627w
House prices, South East region 628w
Housing, Telford Development Corporation 622w
Housing associations, Charities 151w
Housing associations, Owner occupied housing 633w
Housing associations, Rural areas 531w
Housing cooperatives 152w
Housing Corporation, Housing & handicapped 151-2w
Housing Corporation, Housing finance 631-3w
Housing Corporation, Manpower 13-4w
Housing finance 530w
Housing finance, Disposable income 627w
Housing investment programmes, Government grants to local authorities 625w
Housing investment programmes, Islington 404w

***Trippier, Mr David**—continued*
Housing investment programmes, Local authorities 274w
Housing market, East Anglia 623-4w
Housing stock 273w
Housing subsidies, Costs 152w
Land use, Waste disposal 263-4w
Leasehold housing, North West region 621w
Mortgage defaulters 626-7w
Multiple occupation 613w
Owner occupied housing, Derbyshire 269w
Owner occupied housing, South East region 623w
Private rented housing, Council house waiting lists 729w
Radon gas, House renovation grants 406w
Radon gas, Housing 406-7w
Rented housing 908
Rented housing, National mobility scheme 271w
Right to buy, Camden 528-9w
Right to buy, London boroughs 154-6w
Sheltered housing, Government grants 619-20w
Smith houses, Leicester 904
South East region 896
Squatting, Greater London 199w
Tenants' choice 274w
Truscon low rise houses, Liverpool 14-5w
Urban programme, Local government expenditure 154w
Vacant land 404-5w
Vacant land, Inner city areas 623w
Vacant land, Water authorities 403w

Tropical products
398w

Trotter, Mr Neville
Debates etc.
British Shipbuilders, Privatisation (14:12:88) 927-30
North East Shipbuilders, Factory closures (07:12:88) 319
Questions
Glue sniffing, Health education 102w
Glue sniffing, Young people 131w
Intoxicating Substances (Supply) Act 1985, Prosecutions 110w

TRRL
see Transport & Road Research Laboratory

Truscon low rise houses
Liverpool 14-5w

Tuberculosis
Animals 676w
Deer 676-7w

TUC
see Trades Union Congress

Turkey
Prisoners 394w
Textiles 493w

Turner, Mr Dennis
Questions
BBC, Broadcasting 713w
Confederation of British Industry, Interest rates 430-1
Industry, Interest rates 173w
Water Bill 1988/89 619w

Turnley, John
747w

Twinn, Dr Ian
Questions
Disposable income 306w
Employment 134w
Estate Action, Expenditure 625-6w
Inner cities initiative, Private sector 170w

UDM
see Union of Democratic Mineworkers

UDR
see Ulster Defence Regiment

UFC
see Universities' Funding Council

UGC
see University Grants Committee

UKAEA
see United Kingdom Atomic Energy Authority

UKWMO
see United Kingdom Warning & Monitoring Organisation

Ulster Defence Regiment
687-8w

UN
see United Nations

UN agencies
UK contributions 429-30w

UN Convention on Torture
40w, 351w

Unemployment
134w, 537-8w
Castle Point 160
East Midlands 135w
EC countries 145w
Economic growth 304w
Economic regions 134w
Greater London 134w, 136w
Gwent 21w
Labour market 378w
Lancashire 135w
Lincolnshire 135-6w
Newport 21w
North West region 155-6
Northern region 135w
Nottingham 378w
Parliamentary constituencies 159-60
Part-time employment 161-6
Rochester 160-1
Rural areas 742-3w
South West region 134w
Statistics 135w, 234-6w, 378w, 537w
Stretford 233w
Training 156-7
Wales 1081
West Midlands 150w
Workington 160
Yorkshire & Humberside 134w

Unemployment benefit offices
134w

Unemployment benefits
Availability for work 121w
Chesterfield 533w
Coventry 326w
Hard core unemployed 452-3w
Share fishermen 121w
Social security appeals 611w
Social security benefits disqualification 121-2w, 533w
Social security benefits rules 754-5w
Stoke-on-Trent 611w

Unemployment trap
415w, 418w

UNESCO
254w

UNICEF
425w
Vaccination 641-2

Uniform business rate
North West region 156
Nottingham 272w
Rating revaluations 277w

Union of Democratic Mineworkers
Wales 630

Unit trusts
EC internal trade 298-9

United Kingdom Atomic Energy Authority
192w, 332w, 479w, 582-3w, 749w, 773w
Research finance 479w

United Kingdom Warning & Monitoring Organisation
Expenditure 205w

United Nations
40w, 351w, 429-30w, 570w, 644
Child health 73w
Kampuchea 40w

United Reform Church
Members' correspondence 576w

Universities
Defence research 68-9w
Educational finance 649w
General Certificate of Secondary Education 572w
Science education 341w
Veterinary services 8-9w

Universities' Funding Council
649w

University Grants Committee
648w

Unparliamentary expressions
Speaker's rulings & statements (13:12:88) 780, 786, (14:12:88) 893

Uranium
Electricity supply industry 680w
Namibia 683w

Urban areas
Electronic surveillance 701w
Tourism 147w

Urban programme
Local authorities 732-4w
Local government expenditure 154w

Urinary system disorders
Bolton General Hospital 546w

USA
Air routes 162w, (14:12:88) 1059-64
Chemical weapons 157w
Nuclear power stations 679-80w
Nuclear weapons 389-90w
Plutonium 328w, 749w

Uspensky, Viacheslav
USSR 188-9w

USSR
117w
Arms control 431-4
Conventional weapons 1081-2
Defence expenditure 433
Dept of Energy 680w
Government Communications Headquarters 488w
Jews 350w
Nuclear accidents 390w
Overseas trade 173w
Uspensky, Viacheslav 188-9w

Vacancies
470-1w
Greater London 148w, 378w
Greater Manchester 216-32w
Youth training scheme 144w, 472w

Vacant land
404-5w
Electricity supply industry 403w
Inner city areas 623w
Property development 282w
Water authorities 403w
Welsh Water Authority 22w

Vaccination
Children 450w
Hepatitis 765w
NHS charges 540w
UNICEF 641-2

VAT
Charities 427-8
Construction 587w
Dept of Education & Science 164-5w
Dept of Employment 236w
Dept of Energy 329w

VAT—continued
Dept of Health 185w
Dept of Social Security 321w
Dept of the Environment 153-4w
Dept of Trade & Industry 93w
Dept of Transport 243w
European Court of Justice 93w, 153-4w, 158w, 164-5w, 185w, 189w, 206w, 236w, 243w, 318w, 321w, 329w, 437w, 516w
Foreign & Commonwealth Office 189w
Funerals 501w
Government grants 437w
Home Office 206w
Medical equipment 586-7w
Ministry of Defence 158w
NHS 502w, 587w
Northern Ireland Office 516w
Scotland 437w
Scottish Office 437w
Welsh Office 318w

VAT registration
133w
New businesses 306w
Small businesses 137-8w

VAT zero rated goods
Village halls 59w

Vaz, Mr Keith
Debates etc.
Multifibre arrangement (09:12:88) 560, 562
Police, Public petitions (08:12:88) 545
Questions
Arts Council grants, Ethnic minorities 33w
Council house waiting lists, Leicester 901-2
Inner city areas, Central-local government relations 298
Police, Leicestershire 462w

Veterinary medicine
8-9w
Defence research 68w

Veterinary services
380w
Universities 8-9w

Video equipment
Expenditure 111w

Video recordings
Expenditure 111w
Surveillance 1071-2

Vietnamese refugees
Hong Kong 38w
Resettlement 208w

Viggers, Mr Peter, Under-Secretary of State for Northern Ireland
Questions
Electricity distribution, Rathlin Island 195w, 265w
Fisheries, Northern Ireland 512-4w
Floods, Repairs & maintenance 515-6w
Food industry, Milk 679w
Harland & Wolff, Privatisation 574-5w
Insolvency, Redundancy pay 516-7w
MacBride principles, Members' correspondence 516w
Regional planning & development, Northern Ireland 196w, 746w
Rivers, Land drainage 515w
Sheep, Radioactivity 513w
Short Brothers, Privatisation 264w, 575w

Village halls
VAT zero rated goods 59w

Viruses
Seals 725-6w

Visas
Bangladesh 394w
Iran 748-9w

Vocational education
Educational qualifications 290w
Midwives 603-4w
Scotland 290w

Vocational guidance

Vocational guidance—continued
Inner London boroughs 473-4w
Local education authorities 214-6w

Voluntary organisations
EC free food scheme 120w
Home Office 704w
Nature conservation 13w
Training 671w

Voluntary projects programme
Glasgow 636-7w
Recruitment 637w
Training Agency 635-6w

Voluntary schools
Private education 252w

Voluntary work
Natural Environment Research Council 11w

Voting rights
Aliens 462w

Waddington, Rt Hon David, *Parliamentary Secretary to the Treasury*
Debates etc.
Water Bill, 2R, Money res & Ways & means res (08:12:88) 528

Wakefield Health Authority
Cook-chill catering 82w

Wakeham, Rt Hon John, *Lord President of the Council and Leader of the House of Commons*
Debates etc.
North East Shipbuilders, House of Commons debates (07:12:88) 332
Questions
Business statements 435-47, 1085-96
House of Commons accommodation, Members 669w
House of Commons accommodation, Members' facilities 580w
House of Commons accommodation, Members' staff 580w
House of Commons (Services) Select Committee, Members' facilities 579-80w
Ministers, Pay 256-8w
Palace of Westminster, Theft 257-8w
Parliament, Travel guides 669w

Waldegrave, Mr William, *Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office*
Questions
Arms control, Conferences 316-7w
Bangladesh, Visas 394w
British residents abroad, Homicide 37-8w
Conventional weapons, Military balance 570w
Diplomatic service, Civil proceedings 317w
Diplomatic service, Education allowances 315w
Diplomatic service, School fees 314-5w
Government Communications Headquarters, USSR 488w
Iraq, Diplomatic service 38w, 570w
Kampuchea, Art works 350w
Kampuchea, United Nations 40w
NATO, Warsaw Pact 488w
Nuclear disarmament, Nuclear Non Proliferation Treaty 316w
Nuclear safeguards, Nuclear fuel reprocessing 488w
Nuclear test ban 317w
Palestine Liberation Organisation, Peace negotiations 39w, 396w
South Africa, Nuclear weapons 396w
Turkey, Prisoners 394w
UN Convention on Torture 40w, 351w
USSR, Jews 350w
Vietnamese refugees, Hong Kong 38w
Wallenberg, Raoul 351w

Wales
Acid rain 391-2w
Agricultural research 357-8w
Artificial fertilisers 357w

Wales—continued
Bovine somatotropin 357w
Business sponsorship incentive scheme 34w
Children 20w
Common sheep meat regime 7-9
Community care 356w
Council house rents 9-10, 12
Council house sales 21w
EC free food scheme 92w
EC grants & loans 739w
Elderly 90-1w, 317w
Employment schemes 20w
Employment Training 23w, 561w
Environment 10
European Agricultural Guidance & Guarantee Fund 738w
European Investment Bank 739w
European Regional Development Fund 737-8w
Forestry 669w
Geriatrics 663-6w
Government grants to local authorities 6
Higher education administration 23w
Homelessness 1-2
Hospital waiting lists 163-4w, 561w
Housing 4-6, 11
Housing finance 740w
Industry 318w
Interest rates 6-8
Local authority associations 6
Location of industry 91w
Low flying 772w
Mental health community care 392w
Mental health services 356-7w
NHS finance 92w
Nurses 19-20w, 164w, 391w, 737w
Nursing homes 664w
Owner occupied housing 24w
PICKUP 9
Planning appeals 24w, 393w
Planning permission 393w
Pollution control 10-1
Public appointments 20w
Rate support grants 393w
Rented housing 2
Roads 7, 20w
Severn bridge 21w
Sheep premiums 357w
Tenants' choice 11
Town & country planning 561w
Unemployment 1081
Union of Democratic Mineworkers 630
Wastes 318w
Water charges 317w

Wales Railway Centre
12

Walker, Mr Bill
Debates etc.
Eggs, Salmonella (16:12:88) 1276
Electricity Bill, 2R, Money res & Ways & means res (13:12:88) 827
Oral questions, Calling of Members (06:12:88) 204
Public expenditure, Scotland (13:12:88) 776
Scottish Enterprise (06:12:88) 193
Transport (Scotland) Bill, 2R & Money res (14:12:88) 980, 982, 990, 994-6, 1002, 1034
Questions
Airbus Industrie 307
Business statements 439, 1090-1
Heating, Pensioners 762
Radioactive waste disposal, Scotland 907-8
Scottish Office, Cash limits 639w
Sri Lanka, Buses 28w
Television, Scotland 1076
Whisky, Scotland 1082

Walker, Peter
8

Walker, Rt Hon Peter, *Secretary of State for Wales*
Debates etc.
Rate support grants, Ministerial statements (08:12:88) 449-56
Questions
Agricultural research, Wales 357-8w
Artificial fertilisers, Wales 357w

Walker, Rt Hon Peter—continued
Bovine somatotropin, Wales 357w
Common sheep meat regime, Wales 7-9
EC free food scheme, Wales 92w
EC grants & loans, Wales 739w
Employment schemes, Newport 319w
Employment schemes, Wales 20w
Employment Training, Mid Glamorgan 23-4w
Employment Training, Wales 23w
Environment, Wales 10
European Agricultural Guidance & Guarantee Fund, Wales 738w
European Investment Bank, Wales 739w
European Regional Development Fund, Wales 737-8w
Forestry, Employment opportunities 669w
Gwynedd Health Authority, Finance 21w
Handicapped workers, Welsh Office 317w
Housing finance, Wales 740w
Industry, Wales 318w
Interest rates, Wales 6-8
Local authority associations, Wales 6
Location of industry, Wales 91w
Pesticides, Agricultural research 318w
Pollution control, Wales 10-1
Public appointments, Wales 20w
Salt House Port Eynon, Building repairs 392w
Severn bridge, Wales 21w
Sheep premiums, Wales 357w
Skill shortages, Newport 318w
Skilled workers, Recruitment 318w
Town & country planning, Wales 561w
Unemployment, Newport 21w
VAT, Welsh Office 318w
Wales Railway Centre 12
Welsh agricultural & food products marketing initiative 392-3w
Welsh agricultural & food products marketing initiative, Costs 392w
Welsh Development Agency 163w
Welsh Water Authority 21w

Wall, Mr Pat
Debates etc.
Multifibre arrangement (09:12:88) 612-5

Wallace, Mr James
Debates etc.
EC Fisheries Council (12:12:88) 660
Electricity Bill, 2R (12:12:88) 705-6
Scottish Enterprise (06:12:88) 198
Transport (Scotland) Bill, 2R & Money res (14:12:88) 969, 1046
Questions
Bovine somatotropin, Animal welfare 431w
Business statements 437
Charter 88, Judiciary 506w
Debts, Rain forests 429w
Food contamination, Food aid from EC 431w
Monopolies & Mergers Commission 174w
Nurses, Career structure 185w
One parent benefit, Shetland 454w
Ozone layer 622w
Pollution monitoring, North Sea 441w
Polychlorinated biphenyl, North Sea 633-4w
Post Office Counters, Monopolies & Mergers Commission 497w
Training, Companies 152
Waste disposal, Electrical technology 405w
Waste disposal, Ships 432w
Wind power, Energy research 481w
Youth unemployment, School leaving 142w

Wallenberg, Raoul
351w

Waller, Mr Gary
Debates etc.
Multifibre arrangement (09:12:88) 580, 586-91
Questions
Football, Identity cards 612-3w
GATT 398w
UN agencies, UK contributions 429-30w

Walley, Ms Joan
Debates etc.
Water Bill, 2R (07:12:88) 367
Questions
Cervical cancer, North Staffordshire Health Authority 336w
Cervical cancer, Screening 447w
Child minding, Training 689-90w
Defective housing, House renovation grants 411-2w
Defective housing, Housing Defects Act 1984 411w
District health authorities, Lead free petrol 129w
Handicap benefits, Stoke-on-Trent 382w
Incontinence aids, Residential care 336w
"Law on Child Care & Family Services White Paper" 690w
Lead free petrol 903-4
Listed buildings 402w
National Rivers Authority, Legal profession 752w
National Rivers Authority, Welsh Water Authority 358w
Nature conservation, Staffordshire 401w
Nurses, Career structure 169
Smokeless fuels, Costs 340w
Tax allowances, Smokeless fuels 203w
Unemployment benefits, Social security appeals 611w
Unemployment benefits, Stoke-on-Trent 611w
United Kingdom Atomic Energy Authority, Research finance 479w

Waltham Forest
Magistrates 664w

Waltham Forest Health Authority
Hospital beds 557-8w
Hospital patients 557-8w

Wandsworth
Employment Training 538w

Wandsworth Health Authority
552w

Wandsworth Prison
Prison visits 721w

War pensioners' mobility supplements
532-3w

Ward, Mr John
Debates etc.
Railway accidents, Clapham junction (12:12:88) 650
Questions
Energy supply, Private sector 478w
Public expenditure, National income 304w

Wardell, Mr Gareth
Debates etc.
Rate support grants, Wales (08:12:88) 454
Water Bill, 2R (07:12:88) 368-70
Questions
Animal welfare, Treaties 351w
Balance of payments 298w
M4 7, 20-1w
National insurance contributions, Company pensions 597w
Prescription charges, Limited list prescribing 604-5w
Salt House Port Eynon, Building repairs 392w
Sewage, Bristol Channel 238w
Sewage, Waste disposal 29-30w
Wastes, Wales 318w
Welsh Water Authority, Water pollution 24-5w

Wardle, Mr Charles
Questions
Doctors, Pay 607w

Wareing, Mr Robert N
Debates etc.
European Council (06:12:88) 183
Questions
Benzodiazepines, Prescriptions 551w
Business sponsorship incentive scheme, Liverpool 34w

Wareing, Mr Robert N—continued
Business statements 443
Committee on Safety of Medicines 83-4w, 129-30w
Committee on Safety of Medicines, Expenditure 82-3w
Committee on Safety of Medicines, Finance 84w
Committee on Safety of Medicines, Public appointments 83w, 130w
Committee on Safety of Medicines, Women 83-4w
Croxteth Hall 14w
Drug abuse, Medical treatments 691-2w
Drug side effects, Disclosure of information 82w
Football League, Identity cards 728w
Health services, Government grants to voluntary organisations 692w
Homelessness, Greater London 617w
Privatisation, Advertising 423w
Tax allowances, Children 303w
Tranquillisers, Drug abuse 84-5w
Truscon low rise houses, Liverpool 14-5w

Warren Spring Laboratory
Members' correspondence 493w

Warsaw Pact
499w
NATO 488w

Waste disposal
Chlorofluorocarbons 727w
Electrical technology 405w
Hazardous wastes 12w, 614w
Industrial wastes 30w
Land use 263-4w
Sewage 29-30w, 199-200w, 399-400w
Ships 432w

Wastes
Animal feed 777-8w
Wales 318w

Water abstraction
Water authorities 750w

Water authorities
620w
Civil defence 11w
Government grants 11w
Income 277w
Land acquisition 413w
Land ownership & tenure 348w, 613w
Local government land 276-7w
Pollution control 276w
Privatisation (07:12:88) 336-408, (08:12:88) 459-544
Public sector assets 621w, 628w
Public sector borrowing 348w
Takeovers 275w
Town & country planning 16w, 412w
Vacant land 403w
Water abstraction 750w
Water pollution 627w
Water supply disconnections 752w
Wealth 277w

Water Bill 1988/89
Debates etc.
2R (07:12:88) 336-408
2R, Money res & Ways & means res (08:12:88) 459-544
Questions
619w
Dept of Health 555w

Water charges
412w
Wales 317w

Water meters
Costs 281w
Testing 281-2w

Water pollution
906
Civil service manpower 621w
Hazardous materials 525-6w, 629w
Nitrates 751w
Nottingham 12w

Water pollution—continued
Pollution control 413-4w
Water authorities 627w
Welsh Water Authority 24-5w
Woollen industry 528w

Water Research Centre
Scotland 212w

Water supply
EC law 408w
Greater London 408w

Water supply disconnections
Water authorities 752w

Water supply industry
Capital investment 619w
EC grants & loans 280w
Environment protection 279-80w
Foreign investment in UK 525w
Land ownership & tenure 22w
Local government land 280w
Privatisation 155w, 275w, 279-80w, 529-30w, 899

Watnall
Radiation Incident Monitoring Network 197w

Watts, Mr John
Debates etc.
Abortion (16:12:88) 1200-6, 1238, 1266-7
Employment opportunities (05:12:88) 35
Questions
Building Societies Act 1986 644w
Manufacturing industries, Industrial production 171w

Wave power
Research finance 476w

WDA
see Welsh Development Agency

Wealth
Water authorities 277w

Weedkillers
Bracken 630w

Wells, Mr Bowen
Debates etc.
North East Shipbuilders, Factory closures (07:12:88) 322
Questions
Senegal, Overseas aid 430w

Welsh, Mr Andrew
Questions
Agriculture, Interest rates 637w
Broadcasting, Scotland 707w
Business statements 439
House of Commons accommodation, Members' facilities 580w
House of Commons accommodation, Members' staff 580w
Nuclear Industry Radioactive Waste Executive 614w

Welsh agricultural & food products marketing initiative
392-3w
Costs 392w

Welsh Arts Council
36w

Welsh Development Agency
163w, 392w

Welsh language
Curriculum 739w

Welsh Office
Handicapped workers 317w
VAT 318w

Welsh Water Authority
21w
Environment protection 19w
Land acquisition 22w, 358w
Land ownership & tenure 21-2w
National Rivers Authority 358w

Welsh Water Authority—continued
Sewage 665-70w
Vacant land 22w
Water pollution 24-5w

Wessex Cancer Trust
587w

West Burton
Coal fired power stations 50w, 375-6w, 684-5w

West Germany
Electricity tariffs 330-1w

West Midlands
Business sponsorship incentive scheme 34w
NHS finance 186w
Unemployment 150w

West Midlands Regional Health Authority
186w

West Yorkshire
Fire services 705w

West Yorkshire Fire & Civil Defence Authority
Fire services 351w

Western European Union
570w

Western Infirmary
Accident & emergency departments 292w

Westminster City Council
396-7w
Rate support grants 347w

Westminster Hall
Monuments 530w

WEU
see Western European Union

Wheat
Prices 434w

Wheel clamps
508w

Wheelchairs
556w, 605-6w
Disablement Services Authority 605w
Expenditure 605w
Muscular dystrophy 605w

Wheeler, Mr John
Debates etc.
Security Service Bill, 2R & Money res (15:12:88) 1136-8
Questions
Identity cards 1073-4
Members' correspondence, Administrative delays 506w

Whisky
Japan 173w
Scotland 1082
UK trade with EC 311

White fish
Fish farming 511w
Total allowable catches (12:12:88) 656-67

Whitney, Mr Ray
Debates etc.
Security Service Bill, 2R & Money res (15:12:88) 1111, 1114, 1127, 1132, 1169

WHO
see World Health Organisation

Widdecombe, Miss Ann
Debates etc.
Abortion (16:12:88) 1235, 1237, 1238, 1239, 1240, 1241, 1251-3
Questions
Takeovers, Shareholders 174w
Tourist industry 141w

Widowers' benefits
Teachers' pensions 341w

Widows
Age 694w
Social security reform 1080

Widows' benefits
Pensions 694-5w
Social security claims 181-4w
Social security recipients 693w

Wigan Health Authority
Nurses 692-4w

Wigley, Mr Dafydd
Debates etc.
Abortion (16:12:88) 1219, 1224-7, 1264
Eggs, Salmonella (16:12:88) 1271-2
Prime Minister's questions, Points of order (08:12:88) 458
Rate support grants, Wales (08:12:88) 455
Water Bill, 2R (07:12:88) 393-5
Water Bill, 2R, Money res & Ways & means res (08:12:88) 459-60, 470
Questions
Arms exports, Employment 685w
Community care, Wales 356w
Defence procurement 157w
Enterprise allowance scheme 166
Gwynedd Health Authority, Finance 21w
Higher education administration, Wales 23w
Mental health services, Expenditure 450w
Mental health services, Wales 356-7w
Town & country planning, Wales 561w
Unemployment, Economic regions 134w
Water charges, Wales 317w
Welsh Arts Council 36w

Wilding Committee
see Arts Support Review Group

Wildlife & Countryside Act 1981
Questions
Judgments 11-2w
Tree planting 782w

Williams, Rt Hon Alan
Debates etc.
Abortion (16:12:88) 1222
Hasckline, PJ, Newspaper press (07:12:88) 334
North East Shipbuilders, House of Commons debates (07:12:88) 331-2
Prime Minister's questions, Points of order (08:12:88) 457-8
Questions
Community charge, Driver & Vehicle Licensing Centre 485w
Dept of Energy, Offices 482w
Driver & Vehicle Licensing Centre, Community charge 97w
Driver & Vehicle Licensing Centre, Security vetting 524w

Williams, Mr Alan W
Debates etc.
Electricity Bill, 2R (12:12:88) 723-4
Water Bill, 2R, Money res & Ways & means res (08:12:88) 514-6
Questions
Animal feed, Salmonella 509-10w, 580-1w
Council house waiting lists, Carmarthen 1-2
Food poisoning 601w
Food poisoning, Food hygiene 602w
Poultry, Salmonella 381w
Salmonella, Eggs 689w
Salmonella, Research finance 655w

Wiltshire, Mr David
Debates etc.
Elected Authorities (Northern Ireland) Bill, 2R & Money res (05:12:88) 87, 89, 95-7
Questions
Council housing 894-5
Cruelty to children 1067

Wilson, Mr Brian
Debates etc.
EC budget (05:12:88) 129, 136-7
EC Fisheries Council (12:12:88) 666-7
Members' interests (15:12:88) 1099
Transport (Scotland) Bill, 2R & Money res (14:12:88) 976-86, 988, 995, 1005-6, 1027, 1028-9, 1046-55
Young people, Social security benefits (05:12:88) 142-4, 145, 146, 148, 149

Wilson, Mr Brian—continued
Questions
Armed forces deployment, Hong Kong 773w
Ayrshire & Arran Health Board, Nurses 779-82w
Community charge, Millport 444w
Coventry four, Arms embargoes 587w
Extradition, South Africa 724w
Gold, Mining 781w
Prime Minister, Railway transport 656-7w
Regional development grants, Employment opportunities 442-3w
Regional development grants, Fraud 442-3w
Salmon, Fishing catches 445-6w
Salmon, Rates & rating 445w
South Africa 395-6w
South Africa, Coventry four 391w
UK trade with EC, Whisky 311
Wildlife & Countryside Act 1981, Tree planting 782w
Youth training scheme 170
Youth training scheme, Dumfries & Galloway 43-4w

Wiltshire
Structure plans 406w

Wind power
Energy research 481w
Generators 326-7w

Windsor
Power failures 633-4, 684w

Winnick, Mr David
Debates etc.
European Council (06:12:88) 184
Haseldine, PJ, Newspaper press (07:12:88) 333-4
Oral question time point of order (07:12:88) 313
Security Service Bill, 2R & Money res (15:12:88) 1105, 1106, 1138-42, 1177
Questions
Bed & breakfast accommodation 656w, 729w
Business statements 446-7
Civil service unions 16-7
Council housing, Local government property 730w
Extradition, Italy 722-3w
Fiore, Roberto, Extradition 723w
Heating allowances, Pensioners 321w
Housing benefits, Social security reform 597w, 697w
Journalists, Press conferences 297w
Junior Ministers 656w
MI5 722w
Private rented housing, Council house waiting lists 729w
Westminster Hall, Monuments 530w

Winterton, Mrs Ann
Questions
Abortion, Coroners 1066
Cost of living, Economic regions 149w
Namibia, Ethnic groups 39w

Winterton, Mr Nicholas
Debates etc.
Eggs, Salmonella (16:12:88) 1270
Multifibre arrangement (09:12:88) 561, 570-5, 585
Questions
Angola, Eastern Europe 394-5w
Angola, Peace negotiations 395w
Financial Intermediaries' Managers' & Brokers' Association 26w, 259w
Financial Intermediaries' Managers' & Brokers' Association, Codes of practice 567w
Financial Intermediaries' Managers' & Brokers' Association, Legal remedies 567w
Financial services, Company investigations 259w
Financial services, Licensing 260w
Financial services, Self-regulating organisations 259-60w, 567w

Winterton, Mr Nicholas—continued
Financial services, Training 259w
Industrial training, Textile industry 142w
Paper, Recycling 495-6w

Wiseland Investment Group
414-5w

Women
Committee on Safety of Medicines 83-4w
Earned income 415w
Equal opportunities 107w
Health 757-8
Industrial training 146-7w
Mental health 555w
NHS administration 340w
Overseas aid 425w
Police surgeons 207w
Redundancy pay 41w
Youth training scheme 144-5w

Women's employment
Recruitment 140w

Women's National Commission
555w

Wood
Rain forests 350w

Wood, Mr Timothy
Questions
HOTOL, Aerospace industry 173w
HOTOL, International cooperation 304
Police, Efficiency scrutinies 715w
Technical & vocational education initiative 142-3w

Woodland grant scheme
Forestry 45-6w
Scotland 784w

Woollen industry
Export promotion 262-3w
Water pollution 528w

Woolwich
Bombings 113w, 708w

Working hours
Coal mining 629
Youth employment 139w

Working mothers
Marginal tax rates 592-3w

Workington
Unemployment 160

World Bank
429w, 643w

World Health Organisation
108w, 339w

World Wide Fund for Nature
266w

Worthington, Mr Tony
Debates etc.
Scottish Enterprise (06:12:88) 200
Security Service Bill, 2R & Money res (15:12:88) 1154-5
Questions
Interest rates 299w
Passports 716w
Science & technology research, EC action 169w

Wray, Mr Jimmy
Debates etc.
Public expenditure, Scotland (13:12:88) 783
Transport (Scotland) Bill, 2R & Money res (14:12:88) 1008-10
Water Bill, 2R (07:12:88) 381-3
Questions
Alternative energy, Research finance 483w
Chemical & biological warfare, Defence research 344w
Chlorofluorocarbons, Ozone layer 346-7w
Eye disorders, Glasgow 442w
Handicapped, Scotland 441w
Hospital waiting lists, Scotland 442w
Hypothermia, Publicity 449-50w
Hypothermia, Scotland 444-5w
Inflation 101w
Mergers, Takeovers 495-7w
Research, North Sea 44w
Salmonella, Eggs 449w
Salmonella, Scotland 442w
Science education, Teachers 572-4w
Scottish Marine Biological Association, Research finance 44w
South Africa, Nuclear weapons 396w
United Kingdom Atomic Energy Authority 479w
Water authorities, Local government land 276-7w
Water authorities, Town & country planning 16w, 412w
Water supply industry, Privatisation 279-80w, 529-30w

WRC
see Water Research Centre

Wrexham Maelor Borough Council
Council house rents 9-10

Wright, Peter
466w

Writing down allowances
51w

WWF
see World Wide Fund for Nature

Yeo, Mr Tim
Questions
AIDS, Screening 541w
China, Overseas aid 429w
Housing market, East Anglia 623-4w
Overseas investment, Public sector assets 203w
Service industries, Manpower 133w

Yorkshire & Humberside
Radon gas 197w
River pollution 276w
Unemployment 134w

Yorkshire Regional Health Authority
Hospitals 554w
Performance indicators 549w

Yorkshire Water Authority
River pollution 400-1w

Young, Mr David
Questions
Day nurseries 473w
Dept of Social Security, Civil service dispersal 597w
Economic League, Recruitment 539w

Young, Mr David—continued
Employee reports, Disclosure of information 539w
Employment, Day nurseries 611w
Medical treatments, Bolton 340w

Young, Sir George
Questions
Community Care Review 763
Homelessness, Young people 324w
Jobclubs 141w
Single homeless, Greater London 324w

Young offenders
Parent & child 1077-8

Young people
Engineering industries 302
Glue sniffing 131w
Homelessness 324w
Income support 595-6w
Pregnancy 131w
Social security benefits (05:12:88) 142-50
Social security benefits rules 324w
Training 145w

Youth employment
159
Closed shop 158-9
Conditions of employment 158-9, 165-6
Equal pay 158
Working hours 139w

Youth Training Board
671w

Youth training scheme
(05:12:88) 142-50, 143w, 170, 472w, 609w, 1081
Ayrshire 43-4w
Board & lodging charges 472w
Bridging allowances 609w
Death 472-3w
Derbyshire 151w, 471w
Dumfries & Galloway 43-4w
Ethnic minorities 144w, 608-9w, 669-70w, 741w
Expenditure 609w
Income support 325w
Industrial health & safety 143w
Lothian 487w
Manpower 539-40w
Northern region 149-50w
Nottingham 538w
Publicity 609w
School leaving 308w
Scotland 113w, 485-6w
Social security benefits reductions 610w
Take-up 143w
Take-up of employment 145-60w
Training allowances 148w
Vacancies 144w, 472w
Women 144-5w

Youth unemployment
Eccles 134w
School leaving 142w, 308w
Scotland 485w

Yugoslavia
Common customs tariffs (15:12:88) 1190

Zimbabwe
Exchange control 40w